From left: Constance Markievicz as a debutante in 1886, stirring soup in the Liberty Hall kitchen and with a revolver.

COURTESY OF: KILMAINHAM GAOL MUSEUM (17PC-1K43-08); SOUTH DUBLIN LIBRARIES HET LEVEN COLLECTION; SOUTH DUBLIN LIBRARIES JOHN MULLEN COLLECTION

Below: Eva Gore-Booth with her sister, Constance Markievicz

'Comrades'

Eva Gore-Booth

The peaceful night that round me flows,
Breaks through your iron prison doors,
Free through the world your spirit goes,
Forbidden hands are clasping yours.
The wind is our confederate,
The night has left her doors ajar,
We meet beyond earth's barred gate,
Where all the world's wild Rebels are.

AN ASSESSMENT
DR LUCY COLLINS

EVA GORE-BOOTH, poet and activist, was the sister of Constance Markievicz. Both women rejected their privileged upbringing in different ways: Constance became a revolutionary nationalist while Eva chose pacifism and social reform.

Though the sisters disagreed on the subject of violent rebellion, 'Comrades' powerfully expresses their deep personal bond — its simplicity reflects the poet's need to speak of feelings unfettered by the descriptive detail of everyday life.

Night, traditionally a time for poetic reflection on mortality, offers release; single syllable words aptly express the flow of emotion across all obstacles and the convergence of these two lives.

The sisters were convinced of their power to communicate telepathically since childhood, and here their instinctive closeness finds poetic form.

In the spirit of love and solidarity the poem charts a move beyond earthly states towards spiritual transcendence — the place of pure feeling where idealists unite.

Dr Lucy Collins is a lecturer in English at University College Dublin (UCD). She is the curator of 'Reading 1916', launching tomorrow night, an exhibition at UCD Special Collections

1916 story needed was a Joan of Arc, a Liberty storming the barricades, ideally immortalised in some sort of Hibernicised Delacroix painting. They found it in a rebel Countess.

Markievicz was perfect in many ways. She had been handed down a death sentence; she had been dramatic in her surrender and arrest; and she had been a leader of men. Unlike the women of Cumann na mBan who had been consigned to the roles of cooks, nurses, and messengers, she was an equal and not a subordinate. However, this was only half the reason Markievicz best fit the bill. She had also died relatively early on, in 1927, before the paint had dried on the canvass of Ireland's "four glorious years."

Roy Foster has recently examined the lives of revolutionary women after independence. Eclipsed behind Markievicz were a host of other women activists, among them Kathleen Lynn, Margaret Skinnider, Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, and Madeleine ffrench-Mullen. One who is worth examining briefly here is Jennie Wyse Power. Ten years Markievicz's senior, Wyse Power was a veteran of the Ladies' Land League, she campaigned in the first Sinn Féin by-election of 1908. Before the Rising, she ran a vegetarian restaurant on Henry Street which became a focal point for all shades of advanced politics in the city. Indicating the proximity of Jennie Wyse Power to the leadership of the IRB, it was in her restaurant that the leaders of the Rising signed the Proclamation.

> *Markievicz became valuable to propagandists because she was dead. Unlike Lynn, Skinnider, Sheehy Skeffington, or ffrench-Mullen, she could not speak back and pose awkward questions about what the revolution had achieved in terms of gender equality*

After independence however, Wyse Power lived on. A leading pro-treaty Cumann na mBan member, she became a Cumann na nGaedheal senator in 1922 but broke from the party in 1925. As an independent senator, she railed against economically and gender-regressive legislation including the hotly-debated 1927 Juries Bill. She lived on until the 25th anniversary of the Rising in 1941.

Constance Markievicz became valuable to propagandists because she was dead. Unlike Lynn, Skinnider, Sheehy Skeffington, or ffrench-Mullen, she could not speak back and pose awkward questions about what the revolution had achieved in terms of gender equality. After 1927, Markievicz was exactly where those who crafted the mythologised 1916 wanted her — she could be seen but not heard.

Dr Conor Mulvagh is a lecturer in Irish History at the School of History at University College Dublin (UCD) with special responsibility for the Decade of Commemorations. He is the author of 'Irish Days, Indian Memories - VV Giri and Indian Law Students at University College Dublin, 1913-16', which launches today. Dr Mulvagh is co-ordinating Globalising the Rising, a conference taking place in UCD tomorrow and Saturday, February 5th and 6th, which will consider the impact and legacy of 1916 on global political systems: www.ucd.ie/centenaries/events-calendar