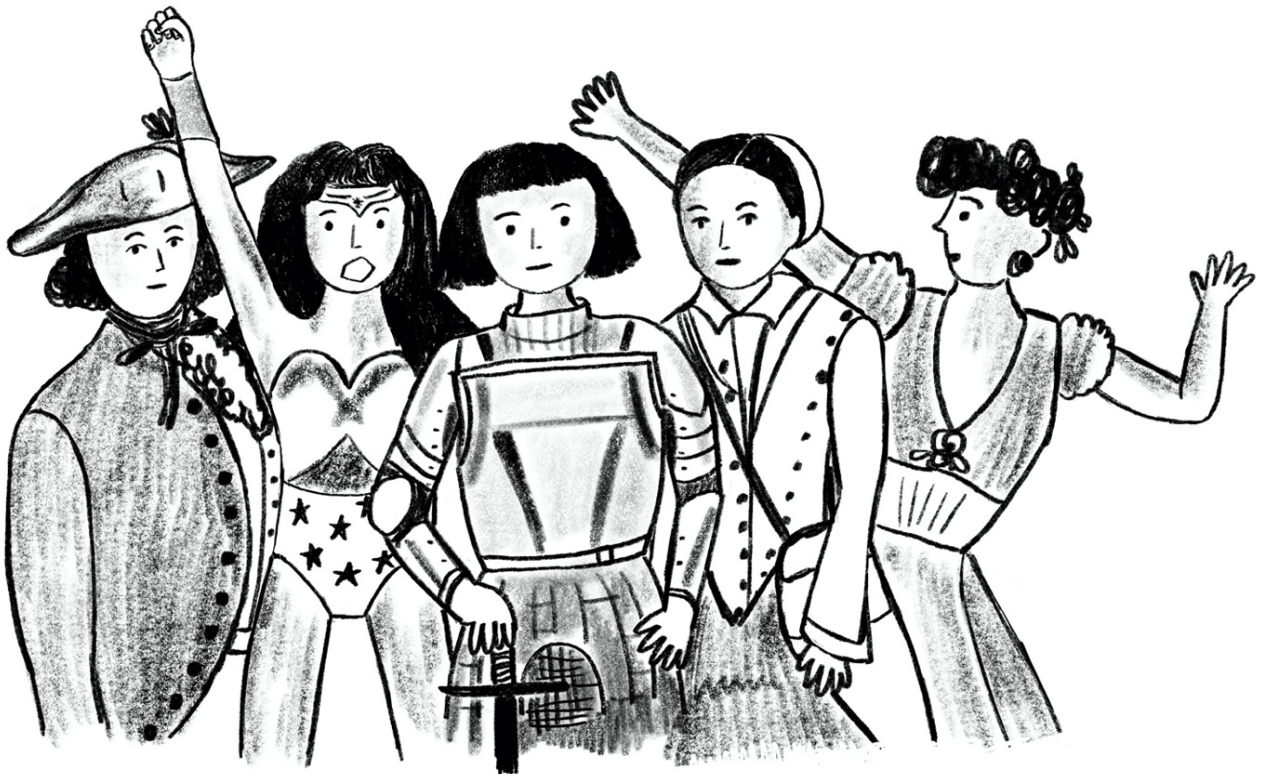


Illustration by Nanni Ralph



CFP

# WONDER WOMEN & REBEL GIRLS:

## WOMEN WARRIORS IN THE MEDIA, 18<sup>TH</sup>-21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES

4<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Centre for War Studies, University College Dublin

Online Workshop

Keynote: Dr Emma Butcher (University of Leicester)

'War Girls: Youthful Soldiers and Writers in the Age of Modern War' (provisional title)

The explosive popularity of recent films such as *Wonder Woman* (2017) and initiatives like *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls* (2016; 2018) reflects a growing appetite in today's media for depictions of women on the front lines, 'strong' female action heroes taking up roles other than victim, girlfriend, or grieving widow. At the same time, however, the waging of war off-screen continues to test the limits of policies of gender equality, with women's admission to combat positions in the military only granted in the last few years in many countries and opposition to it remaining widespread. The complex interaction between

media representation and reality in the sphere of women and war has a long history. Women have been formally and informally excluded from armies for centuries, including an outright ban in 1790s Revolutionary France in response to women's attempts to petition for change, and marginalized in military history. Beneath the surface, of course, exceptions are everywhere: from joining armies in disguise to winning open acceptance and even leading troops into the field, women have taken part in innumerable conflicts across the world throughout history, but the narratives around their roles remain contested. Women soldiers' tales are more often seen as semi-fictional sources than authoritative pieces of military history, and frequently their histories have to be read through the biases and preferences of male colonial and military officers and foreign travelers. Even where media places women warriors front of stage, inequalities in representation along the lines of both sexuality and race may continue - for example, *Wonder Woman's* Black twin sister Nubia did not feature in the film. In most modern scholarship, women's participation in war remains separate from general surveys of conflict, while historical depictions of women who fight have rarely been studied in comparison with those of today.

This workshop therefore aims to explore the unfolding contemporary phenomenon of women warriors on screen and in print within a larger historical context, from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and in any geographical context. We particularly encourage and welcome proposals which examine the experiences of Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC), as well as those of LGBTQ+ people. While the focus of the workshop is on women who took up arms, papers could also explore the blurred boundaries of women's war experience through time, reflecting on the multiple auxiliary ways in which they have participated. For the purposes of this workshop, the definition of 'women' includes anyone identifying as such.

Suggested themes include:

- Autobiographical and biographical accounts, photography, film, literature and journalism about and by female soldiers, fighters or combatants, broadly defined, both fictional and non-fictional, and the reception these received
- Challenges of telling women's stories today, whether in scholarship, media, or museums
- Commemoration, celebration and/or criticism of women at war, both in state military bodies and armed insurrections, terrorism or guerrilla warfare
- Connections between discourse about female fighters and actual opportunities in the military, or the legal and political status of women and girls
- Definitions, e.g. 'warrior' vs. 'soldier', and the connotations attached to each
- Propaganda, symbolism and allegory
- Women and girls as producers and consumers of media about war

Submissions are particularly welcome from PhD students and ECRs, and from scholars in all relevant disciplines, as well as heritage professionals, journalists, broadcasters, and writers.

**Guidelines for submission:**

This is an online workshop, which will take place over the course of one day on GMT+1. Please indicate your time zone when applying, so that we can adapt the schedule accordingly. Speakers will be asked to pre-record their papers (of max. 20 minutes each) with the support of a professional video editor, producing a high-quality version of your talk which with your permission will then be shared online after the event. Efforts will be made throughout to offer as many informal networking opportunities as possible, including an optional social activity in the evening.

Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words, plus a short biographical note, to [wonderwomenworkshop@gmail.com](mailto:wonderwomenworkshop@gmail.com) by 15 June. Replies will be sent by 19 June.

Further questions can be directed to Dr Matilda Greig, UCD Centre for War Studies ([matilda.greig@ucd.ie](mailto:matilda.greig@ucd.ie)).

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