



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

**THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL POLITICS OF HEROIC MASCULINITY IN
TWENTIETH CENTURY IRELAND: IMAGING MICHAEL COLLINS**

by

DAMIEN ROBERT CARBERRY

**THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF PH.D.
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND
MAYNOOTH**

SUPERVISOR OF RESEARCH: Dr. Dympna McLoughlin

JANUARY 2007

The social and cultural politics of heroic masculinity in twentieth century Ireland: imaging Michael Collins.

by

Damien Robert Carberry

Summary

This thesis examines the socially and culturally defined character of masculinities through a case study of the heroic legacy of Michael Collins. Utilising a multi-disciplinary methodology the study investigates; both biographical and prominent written historical material, Neil Jordan's movie, Collins' contribution to the Treaty debates of 1921-22, his private correspondence with Kitty Kiernan and a selection of remembrance rhetoric pertaining to him over the course of the twentieth century. This treatise interprets Michael Collins from a different perspective than previous analyses. The methodology is fashioned by a desire to develop a more substantial and comprehensive body of material that addresses the histories of masculinities in Ireland. Priority is given to determining the influence of socially and culturally defined expectations of masculinities on conceptualisations and perceptions of the heroic image and conversely for the influence and relevance this image has for the historical identity of Michael Collins. The dissertation addresses the complex and socially determined political nature of that composition, where politics is understood firstly as the social and cultural intricacies that influence gender configuration, and secondly as the ideology of political power. In six chapters, an outline, contextualisation and examination of the selected sources are undertaken incorporating the use of contemporary theories of masculinities and comparative histories of masculinities studies. The application of prominent interdisciplinary theoretical and comparative material that informs the composite nature of masculinities is also employed. These are discussed and set in context in the specific methodologies of the relevant chapters. Careful consideration is directed towards discovering definable male characteristics that appear so obvious as to render their gendered significance invisible to conventional historical analysis.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents Robert and Ann
for a lifetime of unconditional love.

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Acknowledgments	i
Introduction	1
<u>Chapter one:</u> Literature review.....	6
<u>Chapter two:</u> Written images of heroic masculinities: biographies, history and Michael Collins.....	25
<u>Chapter three:</u> Imaging the masculine medium in Neil Jordan's <i>Michael Collins</i>	71
<u>Chapter four:</u> Public man, emotional politics: Michael Collins, principled masculinities and the Treaty debates of 1921-22	114
<u>Chapter five:</u> Private man, emotional masculinities: the letters of Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan	143
<u>Chapter six:</u> Imaging masculinities in the rhetoric and discourse of Michael Collins Commemoration	191
Conclusion	234
Bibliography	236

Acknowledgments

There are many people I would like to thank for their help along this journey, some in an academic capacity and others for their friendship and support in my undertaking of this project and others for both. Top of the list are Deirdre and Gabriel McAlister for being in my life; Deirdre for your love, constant encouragement; academically for the invaluable proof reading of the various drafts; Gabriel for her love, patience and understanding. Thanks to Professor Vincent Comerford, head of the Department of History, NUI Maynooth, for his encouragement, advice, support and professionalism in relation to this project. To; my supervisor Dr. Dympna McLoughlin for her backing and guidance with this thesis; my very good friends, Paul Connell and Ken Crotty whose intellectual commentary, but more particularly their warm friendship are treasured assets. A very special word of thanks to Dr. Fergus Campbell whose interest in the masculinities dimension of this project sustained my own moments of doubt and provided inspiration and encouragement as to its merits. To; Professor Colm Lennon for his assistance with the latter stages of the project, Dr. Chris Morash, Department of English, NUI Maynooth, for his help with the movie chapter; Professor Peter Hart for direction on sources and for insight on Michael Collins; Dr. Terence Dooley for a copy of an original unpublished script for Jordan's movie; Chrissy Osborne, for kindly agreeing to meet and talk and for rare photographs of Michael Collins and his family; Nora Owen for her lengthy interview and a copy of *The West Cork People*; Dr. Georgina Laragy who has been there in times of need; Bill Martin of the Collins 22 Society for all his help; Teresa McAlister for her proof reading; Ann Donoghue and Catherine Heslin at the Department of History NUI Maynooth, for putting up with my numerous intrusions. Thanks to the staff at the following libraries for their assistance and professional courtesy; John Paul library NUI Maynooth; National Library of Ireland. Thanks you to the staff at the National Archives of Ireland for their assistance and accommodation of requests to photograph files and documents.

A very special acknowledgment and appreciation to my brothers Edwin and Rónan, and my sisters Áine and Veronica for their love and belief in me.

Introduction

This thesis examines the socially and culturally defined character of masculinities through a case study of the heroic legacy of Michael Collins. Utilising a multi-disciplinary methodology the study analyses both biographical and prominent written historical material, Neil Jordan's movie, Collins's contribution to the Treaty debates of 1921-22, his private correspondence with Kitty Kiernan and a selection of remembrance rhetoric pertaining to him over the course of the twentieth century.

Definitions and understandings of manhood, manliness, maleness, masculinity and/or terms used to describe activities, behaviours and practices associated with men in any given society are contested arenas of delineation. These cultural and social characterisations are not without ambiguity nor do they go unchallenged. They are fluid and interchangeable and conditional through association with distinctive cultural and social interpretations that underpin their meaning. The current theoretical premise acknowledges the multiplicities of masculinities that exist within any given society, being contingent upon time, space, place, class and race. There is in effect no one true fixed definition of masculinity applicable to all men and all situations.¹ Under these conditions, developing methodologies of analysis becomes the greatest challenge facing the researcher of gender histories. In the Irish context an area that offers a wealth of unexplored analytical material is the associated arena of politics, militarism and the nation-state.

The treatise interprets Michael Collins from a different perspective than previous work. The methodology is fashioned by a desire to develop a more substantial and comprehensive body of material that addresses the histories of masculinities in Ireland. Some men feature prominently in the Irish historical record, both in terms of historical characters and the historians who write about them. Paradoxically, there is an absence of studies that addresses the issue of men *as men*. Under these conditions men as gendered beings are invisible to themselves. Addressing this anomaly involves considering and exploring what motivates men to act, behave and perform these roles. Moreover, in order to understand the nature of Irish masculinities we need to understand

¹ See R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, 1995), for a theoretical discussion and a selection of case studies on this issue.

how it has influenced Irish history. This involves examining the changing nature of masculinities within the larger context of social, political, economic and religious events that have characterised Irish history. Equally, advancing a more comprehensive understanding of Irish history necessitates the development a paradigm that explores how men have defined their identities through the evolution of these same social, political, economic and religious experiences and events.

The thesis gives priority to determining the influence of these socially and culturally defined expectations of masculinities on conceptualisations and perceptions of the heroic image and conversely for the influence and relevance this image has for the historical identity of Michael Collins. The dissertation addresses the complex and socially determined political nature of that composition, where politics is understood firstly as the social and cultural intricacies that influence gender configuration, and secondly as the ideology of political power. In six chapters, an outline and examination of selected sources is undertaken incorporating the use of contemporary theories of masculinities and comparative histories of masculinities studies. The application of prominent inter-disciplinary theoretical and comparative material that informs the composite nature of masculinities is employed. These are discussed and set in context in the methodology of the relevant chapters. Careful consideration is directed towards discovering definable male characteristics that appear so obvious as to render their gendered significance invisible to conventional historical analysis.

As already discussed, historically men have dominated political and military life. Important questions to bear in mind throughout the course of this thesis are; what constitute men's roles and activities as men? How do men view themselves, measure their achievement and define the behaviours that deem them masculine? Do men stand back and question their roles as being socially and culturally determined? Are there expectations of manliness and manhood that impel men to act the way they do?

As the title of the project states, the theme of imaging is central, for how these descriptive and visual representations and perceptions of Michael Collins inform conceptualisations of the hero's masculine characteristics. In this thesis imaging is taken to mean the process through which Collins's masculinities are ascribed and discussed in relation to his historical legacy. This also provides a method of examining the ways in which he viewed and imaged his own masculinities. Comparing and contrasting these

prescribed masculine attributes to illuminate the politics of gender identity is a central feature of the work. Ultimately such images and their hermeneutic content demonstrate how the transfer of knowledge through time and space is contingent upon informing our conceptualisation of heroic masculine qualities and the social, cultural and political nature of gender identity.

In order to set this investigation in its contextual framework chapter one reviews existing published historical literature on Michael Collins before turning to discuss the origins and development of the histories of masculinities. The Collins literature tells his story in a specific manner, following the pattern set by his first biographer, Hayden Talbot.² With the exception of Peter Hart's publication³, all the accounts portray a hagiographic image of Collins, casting him as the heroic protagonist and catalyst for political change in Ireland. The historical writing on Collins reveals the absence of a thought-provoking gendered analysis of this popular icon of Irish history. The reviews of the histories of masculinities reveals how, from the initial studies that reflected a focus on 'male sex role', the theoretical underpinning that now informs the canon emphasises the socially and culturally constructed nature and multiple manifestations of masculinity – masculinities – and treating men's practices as an integral component of the overall gender dynamic.

Through an analysis of images of masculinities chapter two examines the published biographical and related prominent historical literature on Michael Collins, providing a rich source from which to begin such an investigation. The Collins literature informs us that he was a complex and multi-faceted character. Viewed through a gendered lens, their numerical quantity alone is a testament to historical fascination with the concept of heroism and by implication the functioning practices of masculinities. The masculine images of Collins that are written in these accounts tell a particular interpretative history of his achievements. Equally, they reveal influences and factors that shaped his decisions and life and thus his masculinities. They are examined to see how the biographers conceptualise, perceive and present his legacy through a careful

² Hayden Talbot, *Michael Collins' own story: told to Hayden Talbot* (London, 1923). (Hereafter referred to as Talbot, *Michael Collins*).

³ Peter Hart, *Mick: the real Michael Collins* (Oxford, 2005). (Hereafter referred to as, Hart, *Mick*).

consideration of the social, cultural, political and military influences they deem important in shaping Collins' private and public life.

Neil Jordan's filmic interpretation of Collins is an important source for understanding his masculinities, 'projected' by the director's interpretation of him. The movie had a tremendous impact when it was released in 1996, therefore it is a vital source for investigating the issue of heroic legacy viewed through the masculinities in the film. In chapter three I utilise the DVD version of the movie to explore these images of Collins masculinities for how they emphasise aspects of his personality, as a means of highlighting his contribution to Irish political life. Moreover, this influences the way Collins is presented in a favourable light, despite instigating other men to carry out acts of incredible violence.

In chapter four the Dáil Éireann debates on the Treaty that took place between December 1921 and January 1922 are investigated. These historical documents, available at <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/en.toc.D.T.html>, disclose how Michael Collins viewed his own masculinities, revealed in the images of manhood he summoned to defend his political position and argue for acceptance of the Treaty's terms. Furthermore, this male dominated public arena of political activity has been theorised by male political thinkers down throughout the centuries. Issues of rationality, emotion, reason and virtue have dictated the functioning practice within its remit. Therefore it doesn't take a great stretch of imagination to realise that these reflect a male-centric premise. Thorough an exploration of the emotional contributions of Collins and a selection of male and female deputies, issues concerning, rationality, reason, principle and emotion are also investigated. The framework for the analysis is discussed in the opening section of the chapter.

Published in 1983 León Ó'Broin's edited volume of the private correspondence between Michael Collins and his fiancée, Kitty Kiernan, reveals issues surrounding emotion and masculinities in his private life. In chapter five these are examined in order to assess the way in which he deals with private emotion. The evidence in the letters shows that Collins found it very difficult to discuss emotional love. However, these correspondences emerge as an important source of emotional outlet for issues of anxiety, stress and frustration that he felt as a result of his political activities. They show

that Collins was a practical and logical thinker, both in terms of how he dealt with his public duties and in the way he handled his private emotions.

In chapter six the issue of imaging Collins as a heroic figure is examined through the rhetoric and discourse of selected commemoration speeches spanning the course of the twentieth century. Taken from a selection of national and regional newspapers their context and content is examined, revealing images of masculinities that were summoned to commemorate Collins legacy. They reveal how heroism and its inherent masculinities are historically contingent and definable through personal interpretation and perception of the speakers in question. Furthermore, they have deep significance for their relationship to political issues pertinent at time of delivery.

Developing the scope of the histories of masculinities for the Irish context is a fundamental consideration of this project.

Chapter one

Review of literature

This chapter is concerned with setting in context the gendered paradigm of the historical investigation being undertaken in this thesis. In the first section, the biographical and relevant historical material concerning the personal life and public career of Michael Collins is outlined. The biographies and selected documentary material from the impressive catalogue of literature depicting the life and times of Michael Collins is examined with a view to highlighting the lack of a gendered analysis. It is argued that Collins, as such a popular icon, is an ideal figure to examine as a means of elucidating the socially and culturally constructed nature of masculine identity. This is followed by an appraisal of the literature addressing histories of masculinities. The theoretical developments are traced from the early seminal works, which focused on the 'male sex role', down to current theoretical frameworks that conceptualise masculinity by its multiple interpretations of meaning. Such understandings view male gender roles as culturally and socially specific and part of the overall gender framework. Michael Collins is one of the most written about personalities in Irish twentieth century history. Ten biographical accounts, together with a substantial number of related books and articles, compile the impressive corpus of material addressing his contribution to Ireland's historical landscape. From Hayden Talbot's 1923 biographical publication, to Michael T. Foy's 2005¹ analysis of his intelligence operations, Collins is a character that fascinates historians and popular writers alike. Yet nobody, apart from Eileen Morgan's modest assessment of Neil Jordan's movie, addresses the composite nature of Collins's masculinity.²

Reviewing 'Michael Collins'

Hayden Talbot was the first author to write a biography of Collins. His account, *Michael Collins's own story* (1923),³ sets the pattern which subsequent biographers

¹ Michael T. Foy, *Michael Collins's intelligence war: the struggle between the British and the IRA* (Gloucestershire, 2005). (Hereafter referred to as Foy, *Michael Collins's intelligence war*).

² Eileen Morgan, 'Ireland's lost action hero: *Michael Collins*, a secret history of Irish masculinity' in *New Hibernia Review*, ii, no. 1 (Spring 1998), pp 26-42. (Hereafter referred to as Morgan, 'Lost action hero'). This article is set in context later in this chapter.

³ Talbot, *Michael Collins*.

emulate. Talbot had met and interviewed Collins, but the book was incomplete when he was killed at Béalnabláth in 1922.⁴ The resulting publication purports to reveal the intricacies of Collins's political life. Its release, so close to the death of Collins, has been viewed as an attempt to cash in on the sense of loss felt by the nation. The book stirred controversy, not least for the fact that the author permitted it to be adapted for serialisation. 'The secret history of Michael Collins' by a 'Bodyguard' had the dead leader cavorting across the pages of the *World's Pictorial News*, vanquishing Englishmen on the back of a white charger.⁵ Many felt that this was disrespectful, and that it tainted the legacy and memory of Collins.⁶

Talbot's version gives an account of the 1916 Rising, the terror of the Black and Tans, and the War of Independence, all from Collins's perspective. The book deals with the reasons why Collins and Griffith decided to sign the Treaty, suggesting that their actions were motivated by a sense of political practicality and not by an egoistic desire to be headline seeking heroes. Eamon de Valera emerges as the fly in the ointment, ignoring the practical political realities in order to advance *his* own agenda.

The biography written by Collins's contemporary Piaras Beaslai is the only one to be commissioned as a commemorative act.⁷ Officially sanctioned by the new Free State government, *Michael Collins and the making of a New Ireland* appeared in November 1926 in two volumes.⁸ Unlike Talbot's book, it also had the approval of the Cumann na nGael party and most importantly the Collins family. However, it too attracted no little degree of controversy. Its compilation was subject to close government scrutiny and the drafts were thoroughly reviewed before being allowed to be forwarded for publication. Following the Talbot experience, the book was banned from serialisation in any newspaper.⁹

The first of the two volumes deals with Collins's early years, growing up on his homestead in West Cork, his move to London, involvement in the rising and his role in the War of Independence, through to the collapse of English rule in Ireland. The second

⁴ Michael Collins was killed in an ambush at Béalnabláth, Co. Cork on 22 August 1922. At the time he was Commander-in-Chief of the Free State army.

⁵ Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: history and memory, 1923-2000* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 75, (hereafter referred to as Dolan, *Civil War*).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁸ Piaras Beaslai, *Michael Collins and the making of New Ireland* (2 vols, Dublin, 1926), (hereafter referred to as Beaslai, *Michael Collins*).

⁹ For background and history of the book's release see Dolan, *Civil War*, pp 73-5; also Deirdre McMahon, 'A worthy monument to a great man' in *Bullán: an Irish historical journal*, ii, no. 2 (Winter/Spring 1996), pp 55-65, for an analysis of Beaslai's biography.

volume starts with an analysis of de Valera's contrary actions in America, and how he caused a split in the Irish American support base. The actions of the Black and Tans are contrasted with Collins's role as instigator of the 'underground warfare' as a means of fighting and removing the enemy from Irish soil. Collins is afforded a central role for his work in ridding the nation of this threat. Beaslai goes on to deal with the Truce, the Treaty negotiations, and the internal division that resulted in the Civil War and Collins's efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement to the fratricidal conflict. The account reads like a chronicle of a revolutionary career, as roughly two-thirds of the content deals with Collins's revolutionary activities. In his conclusion he describes Collins as the strongest and bravest man of his generation.

In 1937 Frank O'Connor published a biography entitled *The Big Fellow*.¹⁰ The book is based around interviews with former comrades of Collins. For O'Connor, Collins should be remembered as a political realist. Although he doesn't delve very deeply into his childhood he credits Collins's upbringing as having a great influence on what he was later to become, exalting his reading skill and power of interpretation as being crucial in shaping the intellect of the young boy. O'Connor's story begins in 1916, placing Collins with the great men who took a stand in the symbolic temple of nationalist aspirations- the GPO.¹¹ Collins's innate goodness and sense of fair play with people is highlighted. The Collins that comes across in this account is a man whose main aim was to get the job done in the most efficient manner possible by dealing practically with events and circumstances as they occurred. For O'Connor, Collins epitomises the revolution. Although adhering to historical conventions, O'Connor's descriptive writing style gives the book the feel of an adventure drama in which Collins is the exemplary revolutionary.

A period of some twenty-one years elapsed before the appearance of the next biography. Rex Taylor's *Michael Collins* (1958)¹² attracted considerable derision, particularly because of the subsequent mysterious 'disappearance' of some of the sources the author claims to have used in writing the book. Taylor depicts Collins as a man of two-halves, the public man and the 'secret' man, and likens him to an actor on a stage. In his introduction, Taylor describes himself as an outsider and therefore claims

¹⁰ Frank O'Connor, *The big fellow: Michael Collins and the Irish Revolution* (Revised ed., Dublin, 1965), (hereafter referred to as, O'Connor, *The big fellow*). This biography was originally published in 1937.

¹¹ G.P.O., the General Post Office in O'Connell St., (now then as Sackville St.) Dublin, was the main battle site of the 1916 Rising. It was upon the steps of the G.P.O. that Padraig Pearse read aloud the Proclamation.

¹² Rex Taylor, *Michael Collins* (London, 1958), (hereafter referred to as Taylor, *Michael Collins*).

to come to the subject with no political agenda - a bold claim when one considers the subjective nature of historical analysis. He sketches Collins's early years, from his upbringing, to his time spent in London preparing for his involvement in The Rising. Collins subsequent rise to prominence in the Sinn Féin movement is accredited to abilities he displayed and friendships acquired whilst in detention in Frongoch internment camp in Wales. Collins is placed at the centre of the organisational network of intelligence that later defined the fighting that took place in Dublin during the War of Independence. A substantial segment is devoted to the intricacies of the Treaty negotiations and the complexities faced there within. Dedicating a deal of time to the treaty debates, Taylor focuses on the contrasting personalities of Collins and de Valera as a means of highlighting Collins's political realism. Emphasis is placed on the difficult political position in which Collins found himself, torn between loyalties of friendship and political necessity. Taylor describes Collins's death as uniting a nation in shock and grief. Despite the issue of the missing sources,¹³ Taylor's account has been and is a reference for subsequent historical accounts.

Margery Forester's *Michael Collins* (1971)¹⁴ follows the same chronological formulae of earlier accounts. Collins's childhood is set in context as the son of a tenant farmer with nationalist tendencies. His years and influences in London, followed by participation in the 1916 Rising are discussed, as is his period of internment in Frongoch. Like previous biographies, his role in the rise of Sinn Féin as a political entity, and the tactics used against the Black and Tans and the Dublin Metropolitan Police are all prominent features. The Treaty and subsequent debates are covered with Collins's deep love of Ireland being cited as making him a suitable candidate for the political job at hand, the difficult task of negotiating a Treaty. In conclusion, Forester claims that the length of time that has passed since Collins's death will allow his achievements to be viewed with greater clarity. For all those of his generation the mention of Collins's name inspires a pride in his stated belief that it was possible to build a Free Ireland.

In 1980 León Ó Broin published a 'pocket size' biography of Collins. Comprising 150 pages, this account provides an overview of Collins's life. The structural format is again similar to the other biographies, in tracing Collins's from childhood prodigy and

¹³ See McMahon, 'A worthy monument', p.

¹⁴ Margery Forester, *Michael Collins: the lost leader* (Dublin, 1971), (hereafter referred to as Forester, *Michael Collins*).

revolutionary activist to political and military leader of the fledgling state.¹⁵ Ó Broin is also the editor of *In great haste* (1983),¹⁶ the published collection of the private letters of Michael Collins and his fiancée Kitty Kiernan.

Tim Pat Coogan's *Michael Collins*,¹⁷ published in 1990 to mark the centenary of Collins's birth, received wide and popular acclaim. Often regarded as the most comprehensive biography of Collins, the formula of the story differs from the others only in its attention to detail. The book credits Collins as the founder of modern urban guerrilla warfare. It highlights his incredible energy levels and organisational abilities. The contrasting images of de Valera are a prominent feature and Collins's loss to the Irish state and nation is set in the context of de Valera's subsequent longevity of political and social influence on the Irish landscape. Collins is the central figure around which all else revolves.

James Mackay's *Michael Collins: a life* (1996) projects Collins as one of the truly all-time great heroes placing him in the upper echelons of the twentieth century's foremost political and military figures.¹⁸ Like previous accounts, Collins is projected from boy prodigy to revolutionary leader. Born for the role and a natural organizer, Mackay claims that he was capable of doing the work of four men. He posits that Ireland would have had a different economic history had Collins lived and finishes by exalting his dead corpse in its fitting resting place – in Glasnevin cemetery, Dublin, among the heroic dead of Ireland.

Colm Connolly's account of Collins was published in 1996. The inside sleeve claims it to be the first illustrated biography of Michael Collins. It contains some excellent photographs of both Collins and the period that defined his historical legacy. It gives an overview of his life and like the other publications follows the same pattern from Collins's upbringing, his introduction to an involvement in revolutionary activities and subsequent elevation in Irish political life.¹⁹ The book is based on Connolly's previously released four part TV series, entitled *The Shadow of Béalnabláth*,²⁰ which deals with the

¹⁵ León Ó Broin, *Michael Collins* (Dublin, 1980), (hereafter referred to as, Ó Broin, *Michael Collins*).

¹⁶ León Ó Broin (ed.), *In great haste: the letters of Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan* (Dublin, 1983), (hereafter referred to as Ó Broin (ed.), *In great haste*).

¹⁷ Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins: a biography* (London, 1990). (Hereafter referred to as Coogan, *Michael Collins*). This same biography is published in the United State under the title, *Michael Collins: the man who made Ireland*.

¹⁸ James Mackay, *Michael Collins, a life* (Edinburgh, 1996). (Hereafter known as Mackay, *Michael Collins*). Mackay is not alone in this assertion as most of the other accounts attest to the same fact.

¹⁹ Colm Connolly, *Michael Collins* (London, 1989), (hereafter referred to as Connolly, *Michael Collins*).

²⁰ Colm Connolly, *The shadow of Béalnabláth* (RTE television documentary, Dublin, 1989).

life and death of Collins. Chrissy Osborne's, *Michael Collins* (2003)²¹ is an unreferenced popular account that reflects the author's efforts to reveal the man behind the mask. The book focuses on the role of some of the women in his life, subjects that stirred his personal interest, such as his interest in Irish blue terrier dogs and nuances in other people's behaviour that irritated him.

Women in Collins's life

Meda Ryan's, *Michael Collins and the women in his life* (1996) concentrates on the role of women in both his private and public life. Tracing female influences from his childhood through to his death, Ryan rather generally claims that women brought out the best in Collins and he brought out the best in women. In Susan Killeen, his girlfriend from his time in London he had a friend who remained loyal to him throughout his life. His trustworthy and courageous secretary, Sinead Mason, is credited with saving him from capture on several occasions. Madeline (Dilly) Dickers acted as a secret agent for him. Moya Llewelyn Davies and Hazel Lavery acted as conduits between the British and Collins. Kitty Kiernan brought out his true romantic passion. Other women who had contact with him through their efforts in the national struggle are also featured in this narrative of Collins's life.²²

Other prominent historical material

T. Ryle Dwyer's *Michael Collins: the man who won the war* (1990),²³ is the story of a man with a captivating leadership quality who succeeded in destabilising the British administration in Ireland, thus inspiring a nation with feats both authentic and imaginary. The book briefly sketches Collins's childhood influences, examines his time in London and participation in the Rising, before devoting itself to Collins the revolutionary leader, ending at the announcement of the Truce that brought an end to the War of Independence. His other publication *Michael Collins and The Treaty*

²¹ Chrissy Osborne, *Michael Collins: himself* (Cork, 2003). (Hereafter referred to as, Osborne, *Michael Collins*).

²² Meda Ryan, *Michael Collins and the women in his life* (Cork, 1996). (Hereafter referred to as, Ryan, *Collins and the women in his life*) This book was republished in 2006 under the title, *Michael Collins and the women who spied for Ireland* (Cork, 2006).

²³ T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins: the man who won the war* (Cork, 1990). (Hereafter referred to as, Dwyer, *The man who won the war*).

(1981)²⁴ is an analysis of the different political views and more particularly the ideological perspective of Collins and de Valera. The author presents a justification for Collins's decision to sign the Treaty claiming that it was a step forward in the political life of a fledgling state. Dwyer is also the author of a joint biography of Collins and de Valera.²⁵

In *Michael Collins in his own words* (1997),²⁶ Francis Costello uses a selection of Collins's writings, speeches, letters and memorabilia to trace his life from his childhood to his death. Edited by Justin Nelson, *Michael Collins: the final days* (1997)²⁷ contains a collection of articles, documents and photographs relating to the public life of Michael Collins, from his participation in the 1916 Rising until his death in 1922. The articles are a mixture of contemporary and historical writings that read like a eulogy to Collins. A. T. Q Stewart's, *Michael Collins: the secret file* (1997)²⁸ contains a collection of photocopies of 102 original police documents, compiled between January 1917 and March 1920, with a thirty-six-page introduction by Stewart. The documents are a mixture of undercover detective reports and officers' responses to the issue of catching Collins. The publication highlights the difficulty the police had in compiling an accurate profile of Collins.

Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh's *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish state* (1998)²⁹ comprises a collection of thirteen academic essays that considers various aspects of Michael Collins's legacy. For instance, J. J. Lee writes about the challenge presented in writing biography of Collins, Deirdre McMahon comments on biographers Piarras Beaslai and Rex Taylor. Some of the other topics consider, Collins the military leader, the place of heroic biographies in popular culture, Collins's legacy in Irish history and the issue of his involvement in Northern Ireland both prior to and following the Treaty.

²⁴ T. Ryle Dwyer, *Michael Collins and the Treaty: his differences with de Valera* (Cork, 1981). (Hereafter referred to as, Dwyer, *Michael Collins and the Treaty*)

²⁵ T. Ryle Dwyer, *Big fellow, long fellow: a joint biography of Collins and de Valera* (New York, 1998).

²⁶ Francis Costello (ed.), *Michael Collins in his own words* (Dublin, 1997). (Hereafter referred to as, Costello, *Michael Collins*).

²⁷ Justin Nelson (ed.), *Michael Collins: the final days* (Dublin, 1997). (Hereafter referred to as, Nelson (ed.), *Michael Collins*).

²⁸ A. T. Q. Stewart, *Michael Collins: the secret file* (Belfast, 1997). (Hereafter referred to as, Stewart, *The secret file*).

²⁹ Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh (eds), *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish State* (Cork, 1998). (Hereafter referred to as, Doherty and Keogh, *Michael Collins*)

The death of Michael Collins

Three accounts have been written regarding issues and circumstances surrounding the death of Michael Collins. Published in 1981, John Feehan's, *The shooting of Michael Collins*³⁰ gives an overview of Collins life before delving into an analysis of the events and controversies surrounding the circumstances his death. Dismissing the suggestion that a ricochet bullet killed Collins, Feehan asks whether it was murder or an accident. After an examination of both theories, he determines that the evidence is inconclusive, calling on the then government to exhume the body in order to once and for all solve the debate.

Meda Ryan's, *The day Michael Collins was shot* (1996)³¹ begins in a similar fashion, sketching the career of Collins from boy prodigy to revolutionary activist. Similarly, the author considers the various conflicting reports and material evidence both leading up to during and following the fateful incident. She concludes that the bullet was fired from the Lee-Enfield rifle of Sonny Neill, a member of the party involved in the ambush on the convoy in which Collins was travelling.

Patrick J. Twohig's, *The dark secret of Béalnabláth* (1991)³² considers the stories of prominent people on both sides in the Civil War, who participated in the ambush. The author concludes that because of the nature of history speculation will continue as to who shot Collins. For him, there are many contenders although Sonny O'Neill seems the most likely.

A critical biography of Collins; an alternative interpretation

Peter Hart's, *Mick: the real Michael Collins* (2005)³³ is the first biography to critically evaluate him as a historical figure. In his introduction the author argues for the need to take Collins out of the realm of hagiography. The Collins that emerges in this account is a political and military opportunist who ruthlessly seized the opportunity presented to him to grasp political power. Hart claims that Collins talked up both his role in the London IRB and his progressively upward moves into better jobs. Equally, he questions other biographers reference to Collins's athletic achievements, claiming the competition was of a low standard. Hart's Collins is driven by a desire for power and is prepared to

³⁰ John M. Feehan, *The shooting of Michael Collins: murder or accident* (Cork, 1981). (Hereafter referred to as, Feehan, *Michael Collins*).

³¹ Meda Ryan, *The day Michael Collins was shot* (Cork, 1989). (Hereafter referred to as, Ryan, *The day Michael Collins was shot*).

³² Patrick J. Twohig, *The dark secret of Béalnabláth* (Ballincollig, Cork, 1991).

³³ Peter Hart, *Mick: the real Michael Collins* (Oxford, 2005). (Hereafter referred to as, Hart, *Mick*).

shed friendships if they block that pathway. The book reflects the author's attempt to separate the facts from the legend. Moreover, the tone of the content reads more like a police report than a traditional biography. Collins is accused of unleashing violence that he couldn't control. For Hart, Collins's legacies are the independent state that exist today, partition of the country and the IRA.

The book received mixed reviews, not surprisingly with particular disdain exhibited from members of the Collins extended family.³⁴ They felt that Hart deliberately set out to sully the name of Collins. Tim Pat Coogan, whilst admitting that Hart is a man of undoubted ability, accuses him of adopting 'the technique not of the historian but of the contrarian journalist who secures attention by advancing bizarre opinions,'³⁵ going on to say that 'he has attempted to filter out the logic.'³⁶ On the other hand, Fintan O'Toole praises Hart's skill as a historian particularly for the forensic manner in which he writes. He agrees with the author, that this book will be the seminal point for further studies on Collins. However, he also acknowledges that even before his death Collins meant more to both admirers and enemies than the clinical character of Hart's account. Furthermore, the ruthless mythical figure that stirred and continues to stir the imagination will still exist beyond any critical analysis of him.³⁷

Recent publications include another analysis by T. Ryle Dwyer entitled *The Squad* (2005), which deals with the development of and issues pertaining to the intelligence network of Michael Collins between 1919-20.³⁸ Michael T. Foy's *Michael Collins's intelligence war* (2005) addresses the same issue.³⁹

Histories of masculinities

The following section briefly outlines the origins of masculinities studies and reviews histories of masculinities that advanced its development both as a method of enhancing historical analysis and as a means of providing a more comprehensive understanding and awareness of the social and cultural complexities of gender identity.

³⁴ I was informed of this in a personal interview with Nora Owen, former minister for justice and grandniece of Collins. Personal interview notes in my possession. Similarly, in an interview with Chrissy Osborne, she informed me of the same thing.

³⁵ Tim Pat Coogan, 'Reviews' in *History Ireland*, xiii, no. 6 (November/December 2005), p. 60.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 61.

³⁷ Fintan O'Toole, 'Who was the real Michael Collins? The organiser' in *New Republic*, ccxxxiv, no., 9 (March 2005), pp 34-7.

³⁸ T. Ryle Dwyer, *The squad; and the intelligence operations of Michael Collins* (Cork, 2005).

³⁹ Foy, *Michael Collins's intelligence war*.

The histories of masculinities have their origins in the USA. Prior to the 1970s masculinity was conceptualised and understood through the theories of 'male sex role', thus suggesting that male characteristics were rooted in biological essentialism. Moreover, these qualities were considered to possess some innate qualities inherent in the natural progression of manliness. Such approaches were primarily based on psychodynamic theoretical considerations of identity formation. Masculinity was seen as a consistent conceptualisation of specific traits and characteristics that constituted its definition. These perspectives sought to discover the natural/inherent form of male identity thus implying that masculinity was not influenced by social and cultural considerations. 'Implicitly, masculinity was [seen as] a single, coherent construct, and the ideal man was active, rational, strong, and community-oriented.'⁴⁰ Namely, masculinity was viewed as an ideal form of manliness and failure to reach the ideal was perceived as a sign of underlying mental health problems. Furthermore, these weaknesses tended to be identified as feminine, thus polarising conceptualisations and understanding of manliness in opposition to femininity. Initially, being overly or hyper-masculine was not seen as a particularly worrying issue.⁴¹ But following World War II concerns such as juvenile delinquency and failure to comply with legitimate authority were viewed as being aggressive manifestations of its comportment. 'It is important to note that the theoretical developments that emerged from this explicitly gender-oriented theorizing simplified Freud's original discussion of gender and were not adopted by other psychodynamically oriented theorists.'⁴² However, in the 1970s approaches to the study of masculinity began to utilise a historical dimension to the subject. Consequently, publications documenting histories of specific masculinities began to emerge.

In general, the development of social history provided a more expansive approach to the subject and new analytical topics were incorporated in the discipline, offering more extensive and inclusive possibilities for understanding the past. Equally, social history allowed for the development of different methodological approaches to historical study.

⁴⁰ Andrew P. Smiler, 'Thirty years after the discovery of gender: psychological concepts and measures of masculinity' in *Sex Roles: a Journal of Research*, i, nos. 1-2 (January 2004), p. 17.

⁴¹ For example the genre of the Western movie reflects this premise.

⁴² Daniel Wickberg, 'Heterosexual white male: some recent inversions in American cultural history' in *The Journal of American history*, xcii, no. 2 (June 2005), p. 138.

One such advancement was the emergence of second wave feminist studies in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴³

This social movement addressed the prejudiced nature of women's subordinate position in the gender order. They argued that women were individuals in their own right and therefore should enjoy the same social freedom and opportunities as men. For many men, the challenging of these hitherto perceived 'natural' ideas of men's social status brought into question the nature of their own masculinity. Within the United States the emergence of concepts such as 'free-love' and the anti-war/establishment protests, signalled a climate of social change and upheaval. There was a need to re-think old ideologies and chart new directions in political and social life.

In this climate of change some men felt disillusioned and disaffected as a consequence. One of the most recognisable and striking examples of this was the alienation felt by many young male soldiers returning from the Vietnam War. A conflict, which in the mid-1960s was promoted in the US as a necessity to stifle the growing threat of Communism, by the early 1970s had become as focus of derision and disgust. Not alone did the combatants receive no hero's welcome home, but, were faced with challenges to their understanding of a masculinity that had previously been considered part of a natural social progression. Faced with these and other challenges to their positions in this changing social landscape, some men sought to address these problems. One such process was the origins and development of histories of masculinities. 'For men, the 1970s marked the beginning of the study of men as men and no longer as idealized, nongendered humans.'⁴⁴

Published in 1974, Peter Filene's, *Him/Her/Self*,⁴⁵ is a seminal work in the histories of masculinities. The author outlines what he sees as the progression of the self-image through the 'sex roles' of middle-class men and women from the mid-nineteenth century to its date of publication. The work's strength lay in its attempt to trace the relationship between male and female self-images and roles. In *The horrors of a half known life*, G. J. Barker-Benfield (1976)⁴⁶ examines the condition of manhood and

⁴³ Wickberg, 'Heterosexual white male', pp 136-57.

⁴⁴ Andrew P. Smiler, 'Thirty years after the discovery of gender', p. 20. Furthermore, many movies have been made about this period and capture experiences of some of these men, for example; *The deer hunter*, *Platoon*, *Full metal jacket* and *Born of the fourth of July*.

⁴⁵ Peter Filene, *Him/her/self: sex roles in modern America* (New York, 1974).

⁴⁶ G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The horrors of a half known life: male attitudes toward women and sexuality in nineteenth century America* (London, 1976).

misogyny in nineteenth-century USA, the elimination of the practice of midwifery, negative attitudes regarding female sexuality and the origins of gynaecology. Peter Stearn (1979) provides a history of masculinity, tracing its transformation in Western society during the changeover from agrarianism to industrialism.⁴⁷ This book is a historical synthesis of men's social roles covering broad time spectrums, such as pre-industrial men, the impact of the industrial revolution, differences between working and middle-class men and the status of American manhood in the 1970s. Joe Dubbert's *A man's place* (1979)⁴⁸ explores the theme of identity formation, in particular the ways in which middle and upper class American men have developed their roles and values from the early nineteenth century onwards. The author focuses on the disappearance of the frontier, the effect of the great depression, the experience of GIs in the Second World War and men's reactions to both the Vietnam conflict and the emergence of second wave feminism. Elizabeth and Joseph Pleck's 1980 edited volume, *The American man*, is a collection of seventeen essays that trace the changing roles of American men from the 1600s to the 1970s.⁴⁹

From these origins, histories of masculinities have developed in new ways and theoretical directions and are currently an inherent component of gender studies. The original works still reflected a historical approach based on the premise of 'men's sex roles', with the aim of developing a history of men as gendered persons.⁵⁰ These early works occupied a humble area of academic study that subsequently expanded into to a rich body of material – particularly in the US – that reflects a gendered approach to historical studies. However, gender studies were not originally inclusive of men's social practices. As discussed, in the early days 'masculinity was primarily described by the 'male sex role theory', which suggested that biological males actively attempt to acquire attributes that affirm their biological identity in an effort to become more mature.'⁵¹ Influenced by feminist theories, the 1970s witness the first attempts to document histories of masculinities. The important point of departure, which began to emerge in the 1980s, was the admission that masculinity was not an inherent natural characteristic

⁴⁷ Peter Stearn, *Be a man! Males in modern society* (New York, 1979).

⁴⁸ Joe L. Dubbert, *A man's place: masculinity in transition* (New Jersey, 1979).

⁴⁹ Elizabeth H. Pleck and Joseph H Pleck (eds), *The American man* (New Jersey, 1980).

⁵⁰ John Tosh, 'Hegemonic masculinity and the history of gender' in Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (eds), *Masculinities in politics and war: gendering modern history* (Manchester, 2004), p. 41.

⁵¹ Andrew P. Smiler, 'Thirty years after the discovery of gender: psychological concepts and measures of masculinity', p. 22. See also, Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis' in *The American Historical Review*, xci, no. 5 (December 1986), pp 1053-75.

but was conditioned by social and cultural considerations. Increasingly the developing publications began to reflect this premise. 'When, in 1986, Joan Scott published her now classic article, 'Gender: a useful category of analysis', she was elegantly codifying and propagating among [American] historians as a whole what was by that time a rich, theoretical discussion of gender and history.'⁵²

For his 1983 study of the Jacksonian era in the USA, David Pugh utilised psychological and historical grounding to examine the cult of masculinity that was formed during this period, considering how it influenced by and contingent upon popular culture.⁵³ Utilising sources such as family business records, architectural designs, diaries, wills and trusts, newspapers, prescriptive literature, sermons, manuscript census tracts, the papers of philanthropic societies, popular fiction, and poetry, Davidoff and Hall's *Family fortunes* (1987) examines how the English middle class constructed its own institutions, material culture and values during the industrial revolution.⁵⁴ In *Manliness and morality* (1987), Mangan and Walvin bring together a collection of case studies that explore the roots, appeal and impact of the cult of manliness within middle class Britain and America from 1800 to 1940.⁵⁵ Mark Carnes (1989)⁵⁶ examines men's attraction to and participation in secret organizations such as the Freemasons. The author concludes that the appeal of the rituals that defined such groups was derived from a desire to reject the religious, social and institutional requirements of Victorian society. Mary Clawson's *Constructing Brotherhood* (1989)⁵⁷ utilizes Masonic lodge material to explore the significance of elitist membership, fraternal rituals and how the views expressed within such groups were positioned in relation to the emergence of industrialized capitalist society in late nineteenth century United States. In *The remasculinization of America* Susan Jeffords (1989)⁵⁸ elucidates gendered configurations of masculine representation through films, narratives, criticism, novels, essays, and short stories mainly written by veterans of the Vietnam War.

⁵² Toby L. Ditz, 'The new men's history and the peculiar absence of gendered power: some remedies from early American gender history' in *Gender and History*, xvi, no 1 (April 2004), p. 1.

⁵³ David G. Pugh, *Sons of Liberty: the masculine mind in Nineteenth Century America* (Westport, Conn., 1983).

⁵⁴ L. Davidoff, and C. Hall, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850* (London, 1987).

⁵⁵ J.A. Mangan, and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and morality: middle class masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York, 1987).

⁵⁶ Mark C. Carnes, *Secret ritual and manhood in Victorian America* (New York, 1989).

⁵⁷ Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing brotherhood: class, gender, and fraternalism* (Princeton, 1989).

⁵⁸ Susan Jeffords, *The remasculinisation of America: gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington, 1989).

The 1990s witnessed the emergence of third wave feminism and consequently the histories of masculinities slowly began to embrace the theoretical perspective expressed in their literature. Men's studies grappled with these new developments, and the critique that their methodologies excluded women's roles in fashioning the gender order. The emergence of Robert Bly's *Iron John* (1990) signalled a rethinking of approaches to the study of masculinity. In his attempt to historically identify the male archetypal figure from the mythological legacies in the Greek tales, Bly argued that men possessed a distinct identity separated from women, the wild man within.⁵⁹ Crucially, Bly ignored the cultural and social origins of these tales, thus effectively rendering his argument somewhat void of credence. However, the subsequent critique of his work signalled the need for a new methodology for examining the composite nature of what constitutes masculinity. These new approaches were reflective of developments in third wave feminism. Michael Kimmell's, *Against the Tide* (1992) is an example of these changing perspectives. The author, who describes himself as a pro-feminist man, presents a documentary history of men who supported women's equality since the founding of the country.⁶⁰ Masculinity was now being viewed as a part of the social and cultural process and thus part of a gendered order that included and was conditioned by social and cultural issues raised in feminist writings.

For the historical perspective historians of men's studies were now faced with the issue of how best to utilize their resources and develop methodologies that were inclusive of these new developments. Anthony Rotundo's acclaimed *American Manhood*⁶¹ is a study of changing historical conceptions of manhood, breaking new ground by uncovering the internal struggles and shifting paradigms that have informed the American male self-perception. In Britain John Tosh has led the field in this department. Co-edited with Michel Roper, *Manful Assertions* (1991) aimed 'to demonstrate that masculinity has a history, and that this history entails a complex interweaving of power with both imagined and lived masculine identities.'⁶²

In *Soldier Heroes* (1994) Graham Dawson explores the imagining of masculinities within British adventure stories. By examining such characters as Sir Henry Havelock and T. E. Lawrence, the author considers the link between boyhood fantasies and the

⁵⁹ Robert Bly, *Iron John: a book about men* (Rockport, Mass., 1990).

⁶⁰ Michael Kimmell, *Against the tide: pro-feminist men in the United States, 1776-1990* (Boston, 1992).

⁶¹ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American manhood: transformations in masculinity from the revolution to the modern era* (New York, 1993).

⁶² Michael Roper and John Tosh (eds), *Manful Assertions: masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London, 1990), p. 19.

socially, culturally and politically constructed nature of the male heroic ideal.⁶³ In 1995 Joanna Bourke investigated the effect of disfiguration from wounds received in war on the conceptualisation of masculine identity as these 'disfigured' men attempted to rebuild normal social relations in its aftermath.⁶⁴ These and other works began to highlight multi-dimensional aspects of masculinity.

Consequently, masculinity as a single entity was problematic as a term applicable to all of men's practices. Borrowing the theoretical underpinnings of third wave feminism, R. W. Connell's *Masculinities* (1995)⁶⁵ argued for the use of the term masculinities in developing paradigms for examining masculine identity. Being contingent on social and cultural considerations, masculinities is a much more inclusive term in understanding men's practices. Acknowledging the difficulties in defining gender identity Connell argued that the definitions of 'manhood', 'manliness', 'maleness', or terms used to describe activities, behaviours and practices associated with men in any given society, are contested arenas of delineation. These social characterizations are not without ambiguity nor do they go unchallenged. They are fluid and interchangeable and conditional through association with distinctive cultural and social interpretations that underpin their meaning. The emergent premise acknowledges the multiplicities of masculinities that exist within any given society, being contingent upon time, space and place. For Connell, there is in effect no one true fixed definition of masculinity applicable to all men and all situations. Under these accepted circumstances developing methodologies of analysis becomes the greatest challenge facing the researcher of gender history. Masculinities are part of the gendered order, not separate, but contingent on the same social conditions the constitute femininity – albeit, in most instances, with different results and consequences.

Moreover, in the United States histories of masculinities began to expand to include ethnic groupings and class consideration as the concept of socially and culturally influenced identity formation gained momentum. Edited by Don Belton, *Speak My Name* (1995)⁶⁶ brings together a collection of essays penned by a variety of Black male writers whose personal narratives and histories explore topics of injustice, racism,

⁶³ Graham Dawson, *Soldier heroes: British adventure, empire and the imagining of masculinities* (London, 1994). (Hereafter referred to as Dawson, *Soldier heroes*).

⁶⁴ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the male: men's bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (London, 1996). (Hereafter referred to as Bourke, *Dismembering the male*).

⁶⁵ R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995). (Hereafter referred to as Connell, *Masculinities*).

⁶⁶ Don Belton (ed.), *Speak my name: black men on masculinity and the American dream* (Boston, 1995).

prejudice, love, family, marriage, and survival. Marcellus Blount and George P. Cunningham's, *Representing Black Men* (1996)⁶⁷, deals with issues of race gender and sexuality. This compilation of essays addresses concerns such as men's relationship to feminism, developments in male sexuality and issues concerning race and cultural background that inform conceptualisations of masculinity. Michael Kimmel's *Manhood in America* (1996)⁶⁸ reflects a desire to conceptualise masculinities from a cultural perspective. The author traces the historically changing nature of perceptions of manhood from the eighteenth and nineteenth century history through the concept of the self-made man. By the twentieth century the end of the 'American frontier', the emergence of industrialisation, the effect of two World Wars and the great depression brought new challenges for American men.

In Britain Michele Cohen's *Fashioning masculinity* (1996)⁶⁹, investigates the role played by the French language and conceptions of otherness in shaping ideas about the education and self-fashioning of gentlemen in eighteenth and nineteenth-century England. George L. Mosse's *The Image of Man* (1996)⁷⁰ considers the paradox of the masculine stereotypes or exemplars, for their influence on the definition or understanding of masculinity in nineteenth and twentieth century Germany. In *An intimate history of Killing* (1999)⁷¹ Joanna Bourke controversially claims that the disorder of normal social relations in times of warfare lead, men (and women) to carry out and even enjoy committing act of brutality, that under normal conditions they would find impossible, even to contemplate let alone commit. John Tosh's, *A man's place* (1999),⁷² utilizes private correspondence and family records of an attorney, a tax official, a doctor, a mill owner, a banker and a schoolmaster to highlight how subjective life experience shaped the masculinities of these men. Psychoanalytical perspectives too re-emerged as a mode of investigating masculinities, embracing the cultural and social configuration of gender specific practices in its methodology. Christopher Lane's *The*

⁶⁷ Marcellus Blount and George P. Cunningham (eds), *Representing black men* (New York, 1996).

⁶⁸ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: a cultural history* (New York, 1996).

⁶⁹ Michele Cohen, *Fashioning masculinity: national identity and language in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1996).

⁷⁰ George L. Mosse, *The image of man: the creation of modern masculinity* (Oxford, 1996). (Hereafter referred to as Mosse, *The image of man*).

⁷¹ Joanna Bourke, *An intimate history of killing: face-to-face killing in twentieth-century warfare* (London, 1999). (Hereafter referred to as Bourke, *Intimate history of killing*).

⁷² John Tosh, *A man's place: masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England* (London, 1999).

burdens of intimacy (1999),⁷³ is a work that examines the ways in which relations of intimacy and desire pose a threat to individual identity for men in Victorian literature. Lane investigates the work of authors such as Thomas Hardy, Algernon Swinburne, Henry James, and E. M. Forster, focusing on the erotically charged, and often violent, friendships of Victorian men (with other men and with women) from both a historical and psychoanalytic perspective.

The twenty first century witnessed the continuation of these trends. The issue of culturally informed conceptions and perceptions of gender identity now informs the gender order. Masculinities are understood not as a separate concept to femininity, but part of the gendered order that informs both genders. The configuration meanings of male and female are culturally and socially specific, contingent on class, race, ethnicity, and defined by the politics of their functioning practices. Ideas of what it means to be a man and a woman are conditional upon a multiplicity of factors that are socially delineated categories for describing what men and women do. Within this context many publications emerged tracing the relationship between masculinity, politics and militarism.

Joshua Goldstein's *War and gender* (2001)⁷⁴ draws on research from across a range of academic disciplines the author investigates the cross-cultural consistency of gender roles in war arguing that there is universal social consistency within cultures that conditions young boys to become warriors. In *From Chivalry to Terrorism* (2003),⁷⁵ Leo Braudy investigates the interplay between war and masculinity, predominantly in Europe, from the Middle Ages to the present. Focusing the attachment of meaning to issues such as armour, uniforms, literature, sport and sexuality, the author considers subjects such as the heroic warrior, the emergence of the nation-state, advances in technology, changing social conditions and the marginalisation of women, in the definition of masculine identity. Dudink, Hagemann and Tosh's, *Masculinities in politics and war* (2004),⁷⁶ cover topics from the American Revolution to the Second

⁷³ Christopher Lane, *The burden of intimacy: psychoanalysis and Victorian masculinity* (Chicago, 1999).

⁷⁴ Joshua Goldstein, *War and gender: how gender shapes the war system and vice versa* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001). (Hereafter referred to as Goldstein, *War and gender*).

⁷⁵ Leo Braudy, *From chivalry to terrorism: war and the changing nature of masculinity* (New York, 2003). (Hereafter referred to as Braudy, *From chivalry to terrorism*).

⁷⁶ Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (eds), *Masculinities in politics and war: gendering modern history* (Manchester, 2004). (Hereafter referred to as, Dudink et al, *Masculinities in politics and war*).

World War, whilst addressing the social and cultural construction of masculinities that shaped and were shaped by men's participation in politics and warfare. Michael Kimmel's, *The history of men* (2005),⁷⁷ explores the historical construction of masculinities in America and Britain and how ideas of masculinities change and alter over time. These changes are socially and culturally driven and have served to shape and are shaped by historical events. The author covers such notions as fantasies of male escape, the feminisation of the male body in late nineteenth and twentieth century America, the influence of baseball, the legacy of the cowboy image, and pro-feminist men's support for gender equality. Through two case studies he considers the nature of masculinity in seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain, focusing on the effect of female infidelity, male dress codes and homosexual desire as expressed in the upper classes. Other publications, authors and theorists will be discussed throughout the text of the thesis where their ideas are incorporated into and/or influence the methodological considerations of the relevant chapters.

Despite these developments the historical record to date lacks such in-depth specific critically evaluative accounts that examine the historical nature of masculinity in an Irish context. A body of material within feminist studies has illuminated the roles of some women in Irish history, particularly concerning issues of nationalism, sexuality, medicine and work. The lack of a substantial corresponding body of histories of masculinities represents a significant disparity in the Irish historical research. There are however a few journal articles and essays in edited volumes that address the topic from a historical perspective, the most prominent of which I will now outline.

Focusing on writings from the Young Ireland movement's newspapers and ballads, Sean Ryder examines the nationalist gendering of discourse, especially the way in which cultural nationalism produced an idealized version of national identity which identified subjectivity exclusively with masculinity, thus reproducing the gender roles and representations of bourgeois ideology in general.⁷⁸ Joanna Bourke, investigates the role of men in the domestic setting at the turn of the twentieth century.⁷⁹ Patrick McDevitt's article deliberates the gendered composition of Gaelic football and hurling

⁷⁷ Michael Kimmel, *The history of men: essays on the history of American and British masculinities* (New York, 2005).

⁷⁸ Sean Ryder, 'Gender and discourse of "Young Ireland" cultural nationalism' in Timothy Foley, Lionel Pilkington and Elizabeth Tilley (eds), *Gender and colonialism* (Galway, 1995), pp 210-21.

⁷⁹ Joanna Bourke, 'The ideal man: Irish masculinity and the home, 1880-1914' in Marilyn Cohen and Nancy Curtin (eds), *Reclaiming gender: transgressive identities in modern Ireland* (New York, 1999), pp 93-106.

from 1884 to 1916, tracking their relationship to ideas of nationalism, the body, anti-colonialism and the Famine.⁸⁰ Catherine Nash considers the geographically and historically conceptualised nature of nationalism and masculinity in the works of Standish O'Grady.⁸¹ Eileen Morgan deliberates aspects of the violent masculine content of Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* and compares it to issues pertaining to the then fledgling peace process in Northern Ireland.⁸² Such studies, whilst welcome, only scratch the surface of the potential that histories of masculinities have for unwrapping the complexities that constitute the lives of men. Due to their diverse and varied nature masculinities studies have the potential to enhance an understanding of the historically changing nature of men's roles and practices.

⁸⁰ Patrick F. McDevitt, 'Muscular Catholicism: nationalism, masculinity and Gaelic team sports, 1884-1916' in *Gender and History*, ix, no. 2 (August 1997), pp 262-84.

⁸¹ Catherine Nash, 'Men again: Irish masculinity, nature, and nationhood in the early twentieth century' in *Ecumene*, iii, no. 4 (1996), pp 427-53.

⁸² Morgan, 'lost action hero'.

Chapter two

Written images of heroic masculinities: biographies, history and

Michael Collins

Collins's career is a paradigm of the tragedy of modern Ireland, the suffering, the waste of talent, the hope, the bedevilling effects of history and nomenclature whereby one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. Like Prometheus, Collins stole fire. Like Prometheus he paid for his feat and much of what he set about doing remains undone. But his name burns brightly wherever the Irish meet. Michael Collins was the man who made modern Ireland possible.¹

He was Ireland's greatest Irishman and to him we owe the freedom that we now enjoy, he died defending the authority of the elected Government of the Country. His work, his name and fame will be for the students of Ireland's History and be a shining star to guide them. God give his gallant soul eternal rest.²

This chapter examines biographical accounts and related historical writing concerning the life and career of Michael Collins, in order to determine the politically related, gender specific nature of written images of his masculinities that are portrayed by the authors in defining their interpretation of his contribution to the Irish historical record. Considered collectively, the canon of material is investigated to discern specific patterns of masculine images that emerge in the portrayal of Collins.

The Collins biographies present a series of written images based on the various individual interpretations of his life. When a writer describes the human subject, in this case Collins, they attempt to capture in words his physical attributes, behaviour, characteristics, influences and human qualities. In the texts, these are relayed through socially recognisable words, phrases and descriptions. In reading the accounts the reader recognises and internalises these descriptions, cerebrally 're-creating' their own interpretation of these images based on socially and cultural recognisable

¹ Tim Pat Coogan, 'Foreword' in Michael Collins, *The path to freedom* (Revised ed, Dublin, 1996). Originally published posthumously in 1922. Also available at: <http://www.generalmichaelcollins.com/M1%20Collins%20Growing%20up/Foreword.html> (15 January, 2005), (Hereafter known as Coogan, 'Foreword', *Path to freedom*).

² General Sean MacEoin, 'Ireland's greatest Irishman' in Nelson (ed.), *Michael Collins*, p. 107.

understandings of their gendered meaning. In the case of a public figure such as Collins, these images have significance for the political history contained in the texts. For example, as a male, descriptions of Collins communicate to the reader, images of masculine codes and practices, providing the basis through which they form their own mental impression of this political and military figure. Equally, the related historical material – in examining specific aspects of Collins's life and career – contains similar imagery and follows comparable conventions to the biographical accounts. These masculine images give an impression of Collins's influences, personality and political motivation, but they also fit a particular genre of nationalistic heroism. In claiming that his biography 'will be the first to book to really establish a base from which future historians can work,'³ Peter Hart argues that all previous accounts have adhered to the format of the story laid down by Collins and his followers, influenced in particular by Talbot's version of Collins's life.⁴ Moreover, 'one defining difference between the 1920s and '30s and the 1990s is what constitutes appropriate and attractive behaviour by a male hero. Collins is always seen as an archetypically Irish man, as a well as charismatic and admirable to women.'⁵ This may be an oversimplification of the issue, but nevertheless highlights the changing and socially and culturally contingent definition of heroic masculinity.

By examining written historical representations of Collins's masculinities, this chapter will consider the interpretative nature of gender identity as depicted in the texts. Towards this end, the investigation focuses on how both public and private images of Collins are presented in order to inform the historical significance of his contribution to the political legacy of Ireland. Using subjective biographical material in this way facilitates the identification of patterns of masculine images that conform to nationalist heroic imaging. The biographical accounts all follow a particular pattern in how they tell the Collins story. Likewise, the related historical material adheres to a similar configuration. Crucially, authors such as Talbot, Beaslai and Frank O'Connor were contemporaries of Collins and therefore closer to the original sources and particularly in Talbot's case, contain Collins's own recollections. Their publications, along with

³ Hart, *Michael Collins*, p. xx.

⁴ Ibid., p. xiv.

⁵ Ibid., p. xix.

Taylor's controversial biography⁶, provided subsequent authors with images of Collins that they incorporated into their accounts, images that remained unchallenged until Peter Hart's interpretation appeared.

This chapter investigates the masculinities of Collins as imaged in these texts. The major themes explored are, his boyhood; time spent in London; involvement in the Rising; his spell in Frongoch internment camp; the War of Independence; the Treaty; the Civil War and his untimely death. These areas are investigated in order to highlight the fashion in which Collins is recounted, through evocation of particular masculine images. However, before proceeding to the gendered analysis of these themes, it is necessary to briefly discuss the general nature of biographies, the images they present of their subject and their use in the context of this chapter.

The biographical image

In contemporary society, biographies are commonplace in the array of literature on the shelves of most bookstores. The biography is an account of individuality and character.⁷ For Michael Collins, his biographers have illustrated many facets of his public and private personality. The quotes at the beginning of this chapter are indicative of the positive nostalgic language used to describe and encapsulate the historical epitaph of their subject. In general, the texts emphasised his warmth of character, ruthlessness, efficiency, and sensitivity. The accounts provide images of his public and private personality with a view towards developing a broader understanding of this individual and the significance of the events for which he is remembered. In short, these written life histories attempted to capture the essence of Collins. Revealed in the biography is a mixture of the public and private domain of his life. In this sense the private becomes public, implicitly shaping the historical image of Collins. An example from Rex Taylor's biography provides evidence of this fascination with the private dimension of Collins's personality:

⁶ Controversial because of the 'disappearance' of source the author claimed he used in writing the book. See Deirdre McMahon, 'A worthy monument'.

⁷ For a discussion on different approaches to writing historical biographies see, Lloyd E. Ambrosius (ed.), *Writing biography: historians and their craft* (Nebraska, 2004).

The other 'half' of the man is to be found only in his letters, notes, and diaries...It is a fleeting glimpse of the real Collins, the man who secretly withdrew into himself on certain emotional occasions. In this 'secret half' of his character may be found the serious-minded intellectual; the man of restless impatience, which sometimes concealed a state of near panic; the part which had a tendency, at times, to bask in the praise showered on him; the great emotion – in short, the part which contained all of his shortcomings and his weaknesses. It is only fair to add, however, that he was well aware of these shortcomings and weakness, and he fought strongly to repress them.⁸

The way a biographer merges the public and private life of the subject is crucial for defining the acceptability of his image. Graham Dawson argues that in a biographical account 'aspects of [the subject's] private authentic character are drawn into the public domain and become components of a public image that in turn inescapably affects how the private person will in future be seen.'⁹ To portray these private characteristics, the behaviours and actions of the individual are subject to an interpretation based on social and cultural understandings of their meaning. One such method of investigating this is through a gendered analysis. For example, Michael Collins's character is unfolded through the writer's descriptions and the reader's understandings of the social and cultural codes that constitute the given imagery. Implicit and not always obvious in this quagmire of descriptions are the gendered connotations that inform an understanding of the individual, in other words, the masculine imagery. Inherently, the biographies reveal that masculinities are shaped in relation to the social and political environment to which the individual is exposed. Moreover, the historical nature of the works reveals the cultural dimensions to the idea of masculinities, and remembering Michael Collins involves the 're-creation' of a series of gendered images to inform an understanding of his public and private life, based on both the writer's presentation and the reader's understanding and interpretation of their meaning.

The biography, in effect, contains a series of written sketches that provide a portrait of its subject. Figuratively, these images assume a life of their own, imaged in the texts and imagined through individual and collective perceptions of the readership. However,

⁸ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 13.

⁹ Dawson, *Soldier heroes*, p. 127.

attempting to re-create the most 'authentic' description possible is fraught with difficulties and poses particular problems for the author. J. J. Lee's comments on the problems associated with a Collins biography are insightful in this regard:

Collins was a protean personality, who had a knack of making himself all things to all men, and of leaving people with the view of him that he wanted them to have. One legacy of Collins is that there are many legacies of Collins...It was precisely because Collins combined in himself a cluster of personality types and behaviour patterns, from the man of action to the contemplative, from the soldier to the politician, from the bureaucrat to the self-publicist, from the impulsive to the calculating, from the charmer to the tough, from the sensitive to the ruthless, from the conspirator to the statesman, that he was so formidable a personality.¹⁰

Lee's observations have such strong resonance for the social and cultural politics of masculine identity, both in the multiplicity of masculinities and the role of perception in defining gender specific behaviour. In this paragraph Lee succinctly expounds the nature and essence of the historical imaging process under investigation in this chapter, namely, how images of masculinities both inform and portray the political significance of the heroic figure. His remarks highlight the subjective social and cultural nature of gender politics. Although Collins's experiences shaped his masculinities, the historical recounting of those experiences reflects the cultural and political dimension of masculinity, where culture represents the social and political ideal of masculine specific behaviour, as recorded in a historical text. Therefore, understanding masculinities is relational to understanding the historical events for which the biographical subject is remembered.

For Stephen Whitehead 'masculinity is both *illusion* and *reality*. Thus it is coming to understand how this apparent paradox is sustained that is the key to appreciating the social, political, [cultural] and individual importance of masculinities.'¹¹ This points to the deduction that there is not one 'true' fixed masculine definition of Collins just as there is no one true fixed definition of masculinity. Therefore any image of him must be

¹⁰ J. J. Lee, 'The challenge of a Collins biography' in Doherty and Keogh (eds), p. 22.

¹¹ Stephen M. Whitehead, *Men and masculinities* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 42. See in particular, pp 8-43, for an in-depth discussion on this topic.

conceptualised in the context of historical events in order to understand how masculine identity is negotiated, interpreted and/or understood. Moreover, for a gendered analysis of the historical subject as imaged in biographies, an awareness of these multiple dimensions is an important consideration.

The Collins biographies present a series of images based on the interpretation of historical evidence relating to his life. The first of these patterns, concerning the influences of his childhood, is where this analysis begins.

Childhood

When discussing Michael Collins's childhood many of the biographers highlight male influences they consider to have been significant in shaping and fashioning his adult life and political legacy. Boyhood anecdotes are interpreted as foreshadowing the future greatness of the man. The physical and social environment in which the young Collins grew up is portrayed as shaping his future destiny. Piaras Beaslai gives prodigious importance to Collins's childhood in Woodfield, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, claiming that 'Michael, from his earliest days, was in contact with men and books that filled his mind with thoughts of the struggle for Irish freedom.'¹² Fifty years later another biographer Margery Forester agrees with the premise of this interpretation claiming that, 'the way of life at Woodfield in which Michael Collins was to spend his childhood is the key to all that he was later to become.'¹³ Through the benefit of retrospective revelation, the budding potential of the hero is unwrapped by way of a series of gender specific images. For Beaslai, Collins's revolutionary potential was infused by men with nationalist political persuasions, coupled with the young boy's passion for reading. The male contact is seen as an important feature in the young boy's development. The heroic figure himself is said to have viewed his childhood with nostalgic reverence, as the place where his inspiration was derived:

His reading regularly outdistanced his powers of reflection, and whenever we seek the source of action in him it is always in the world of his childhood that we find it. When excited, he dropped back into the

¹² Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, pp 8-9.

¹³ Forester, *The lost leader*, pp 5-6.

dialect of his West Cork home, as in his dreams he dropped back into the place itself, into memories of its fields, its little whitewashed cottages, Jimmy Santry's forge and tales he heard in it. There was rarely a creature so compact of his own childhood.¹⁴

These depictions are presented in such way as to make it possible for the reader to identify with the concept of childhood, where the father figure plays a prominent role in shaping the child's personality. Indeed these may be considered as representations of an idealised self-image that reflect cultural and social conventions regarding the socialisation process of childhood. Collins is quoted as saying that, 'all my early life I lived in childish wonder of my father. Although I was a lad of seven when he died, he had already inspired me with implicit faith in his goodness.'¹⁵ Embellishing the story with images that evoke a similarity to the childhood of the heroic mythical figure Cú Chulainn, many biographers have focused on how Collins's talents were developed from an early age. In this sense, the pattern of the heroic child prodigy is evoked.¹⁶ Commenting on the young Collins's influences, Rex Taylor credits both his father's effect and the cultural landscape into which he was born as being important factors in the development of young Michael's political mindset:

The tender years of the young Michael are a record of influences, beginning with that of his father. All these influences centred upon one thing: they created in him at his most impressionable age a rapidly awakening interest in Irish patriotic affairs. The fact that he was reared in a district famous for its allegiance to the Irish cause served further to guarantee a continuation of the interest aroused by these influences.¹⁷

For this passage, the masculine imagery of a bonding father/son relationship is the inspiration for the ideology of Irish nationalism in the young boy. All influences are nationalist centred – the father and the landscape are his patriotic inspirations. In these descriptions of Collins's childhood, the relationship between masculinity and

¹⁴ O'Connor, *The big fellow*, p. 5.

¹⁵ Michael Collins, in Talbot, *Michael Collins*, p. 22. The comments attributed to Collins in the Talbot biography are accounts of interviews the author recorded with him.

¹⁶ For background on the childhood of Cú Chulainn, see Tom P. Cross and Clark Harris Slover (eds), *Ancient Irish Tales* (New York, 1996), pp 137-52.

¹⁷ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 25.

nationalism is presented through image association in a subliminal gendered and social configuration – the inspirational influence of grown men in the life of the young Collins, a point acknowledged by Peter Hart. He writes that ‘one consequence of losing a father so young was that Collins’s path of adulthood had many father figures to guide the way, from teacher to older friends in London and Dublin. Whether he looked for them or attracted them, they were instrumental in launching his career as a revolutionary.’¹⁸

Joshua Goldstein, in *War and gender*, argues that ‘cultures reproduce – through the socialization of children – adult gender roles suited to the nearly universal need of societies to be prepared for the possibility of war.’¹⁹ Whether this statement has universal credence or not is for another forum, but the Collins biographies utilise nostalgic reflection of his political and military achievements to emphasise how childhood influences shaped the young boy to become a great military and political leader. It is this retrospective focus on gender specific practices that allow such distinctions to be drawn. The child learns from the environment to which he is exposed. The young mind is shaped and influenced by his surrounding. Although he died when Michael was six years old, the role of his father in young Michael’s life is linked to the revolutionary spirit that defines Collins’s legacy. Keeping within the premise of previous analyses John M. Feehan comments that ‘young Michael had a particularly close and friendly relationship with his father and seems to have gleaned from this relationship a wisdom beyond his years.’²⁰ For James Mackay, ‘an old man who had such a wealth of experience and an extraordinary range of skills and accomplishments, both practical and cerebral, must have been a source of wonderment to an impressionable boy.’²¹

The importance of such analogies cannot be underestimated in shaping the historical image of Collins in the literature. The father/son relationship is presented as an idealised masculine image of bonding and identity and is an important aspect in the formation of the self-image. Collins is recorded as saying; ‘I was a reverential kid. Reverence was

¹⁸ Hart, *Michael Collins*, pp 6-7.

¹⁹ Goldstein, *War and gender*, p. 288.

²⁰ Feehan, *The shooting of Michael Collins*, p. 16.

²¹ Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 21.

not only instilled into me by my father; it seemed a natural trait.'²² He continues, 'when an Irish boy in those days feasted on real bacon – to the accompaniment of his father's reminiscent comments – the spirit of nationalism was breathed into him.'²³

R. W. Connell argues that 'gender identity is established by emotional interaction between parents and children.'²⁴ Whatever its contradiction and flaws, the father/son relationship is an image ingrained in the social and cultural politics of gender identity. In presenting this relationship in the manner that they do, many of the biographies reinforce the gendered connotations in an empathetic and sentimental way. For Beaslai, 'that so remarkable a son should have a remarkable father is not, perhaps, surprising, and old Michael was a remarkable man indeed.'²⁵ Osborne notes that, 'Michael was only seven[*] when his father died in March 1897 but those few years together made a great impression on the small boy.'²⁶ Forester asserts that as a young boy 'Michael's father was the supreme being in his life...His influence on Michael's character and outlook was profound.'²⁷

In these examples the fatherly influence is the foundation on which the boyhood heroic image is moulded. In the context of Irish nationalism, they reinforce this particular male interaction as a positive component of masculine identity: Collins's father's influence directs the boy towards his public duty:

Many of the characteristics of Michael senior were predominant in his youngest son, even at an early age. Young Michael had the same intensity as his father, the same determination, the same spirit of good fellowship, and his outlook was that of the born scholar.²⁸

The male child is the template on to which the personality and political motivation is moulded and shaped, with the provision of the fatherly role model, as a central component of the blueprint. For the biographies, Collins's relationship with his father is

²² Michael Collins, in Talbot, *Michael Collins*, p. 23.

²³ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁴ Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 14.

²⁵ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. 1, p. 3.

²⁶ Osborne, *Michael Collins*, p. 17. [*]This is a mistake on the author's behalf. Collins was actually six years and four months old at the time of his father's death, having been born on 10 October 1890.

²⁷ Forester, *Michael Collins*, pp 7-8.

²⁸ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p 24.

presented as an important dynamic for establishing his nationalist credentials. Following this genders specific pattern, and the one recorded by Collins as per Talbot's history of him, other biographers reinforce this dynamic. Viewed retrospectively, it is this prominent image of gender socialisation that establishes the emotional and idealised self-image of the hero's childhood in how it shaped his political outlook. Whether truth, speculation or the reiteration of Collins's idealised self-image regarding this relationship, the biographers' reference, over the course of the twentieth century, to this father/son relationship, as a means of asserting Collins's political manhood, is a prominent feature of their interpretations.

Women

Childhood images in the biographies also present occasions where Collins is portrayed in the domestic sphere, surrounded by the stimuli of and doted upon by women. Beaslai writes, 'as often happens with the youngest children in large Irish families, the care of him devolved largely on his eldest sisters, Maggie, Hannie and Mary, who showered on him a wealth of affection.'²⁹ For Forester, 'although his mother had to leave much of his care to the older children her influence was a gentle and stimulating one.'³⁰ Some interpretations suggest that these early female influences helped define his future relationship with women because of the respect and admiration that was garnered in his youth:

Coming from a family in which women were in the majority and where his mother Marianne was in charge after the death of his father, he early got used to the idea of strong, resourceful women. The adored youngest son of the household, he found it natural that women should love and admire him. He in turn appreciated and admired them.³¹

For the biographies, these influences are not directly linked to the ideology of nationalism, but instead provide balancing feminine influence on his personality and gendered identity. They present the female inspiration, in terms of the effect they had on

²⁹ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. 1, p. 4. Beaslai spoke to members of Collins's family when researching for his biography.

³⁰ Forester, *Michael Collins*, p. 7.

³¹ Ryan, *The women in his life*, p. 13.

his domestic and emotional development. Apart from Meda Ryan, the other accounts that touch on the subject of domesticity or the influence of women in his early development only do so briefly and many don't mention it at all.³² Based on privately held family papers and diaries of many of Collins's contemporaries,³³ Ryan's book is more concerned with the women who acted as spies and informers for Collins than with domestic and relationship issues. Women are credited with helping him, yet he remains the central focus, the male exemplar of a political revolutionary. It is the influences that contribute to the public deeds for which he is remembered that are the important analogies being drawn in the majority of the biographies. Male inspirations on the development of Collins's 'nationalist' masculinity are the primary focus for discussions.

Other male influences

In the absence of his father the main influences, in term of the development of Collins's revolutionary outlook comes from male figures outside of the home. As a method of gendered analysis, the social sciences acknowledge the configuration of masculinity within the institutional setting, for instance, applicable to the structural apparatuses of the state, workplaces and in schools.³⁴ The influence of his teacher was seen by Beaslai as implicit in the development of the young Collins's nationalist masculinity – an example of another stereotyped image of man/boy that augments the progression of the hero's development:

At the early age of four and a half years Michael was sent to school to the Lisavaird National School, then taught by the late Mr. Denis Lyons. Denis Lyons was a remarkable man, and his influence at that early age had much to do with forming Michael's patriotic ideas.³⁵

³² Osborne, *Michael Collins*. This unreferenced popular biography contains a chapter on his romantic involvement with women. pp 64-85. Vincent McDowell's *Michael Collins and the brotherhood* (Dublin, 1997), makes claims regarding Collins and his sexual liaisons with other women. This is discussed in the letters chapter. Coogan question how happy Marianne Collins could have been given the difference of age between herself and Michael's father coupled with the effort needed to run the farm and raise eight children.

³³ For a list of the private sources consulted by the author see Ryan, *The women in his life*, p. 212.

³⁴ R.W. Connell, 'The social organisation of masculinity' in Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett (eds), *The masculinities reader* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 35.

³⁵ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. 1, p. 5. Lisavaird is 3 miles from the Collins family homestead of Woodfield

Similarly for Taylor, 'the influence that Denis Lyons exercised on his young pupil was that of a patriot.'³⁶ Forester noted that 'Denis Lyons was to prove as influential in moulding his capabilities in class as his father was in his home environment.'³⁷ For Neeson, 'Young Michael went to the local school where he came under the influence of a teacher, Denis Lyons, who was to play a considerable part in moulding his character...He was a man of strong personality in addition to being a teacher and his formative influence on the already impressionable four-year old Collins was thus very great.'³⁸ Similarly Mackay contended that, 'what had been so ably begun by old Michael was continued by Denis Lyons, one of those truly exceptional schoolmasters whose influence on their students lasts a lifetime.'³⁹

Furthermore, outside the domesticity of the home another male figure is afforded prominent recognition for the influence he had on the development of Collins's nationalist passions:

The blacksmith's forge has always been one of the great assembly points of the Irish countryside and is one of those places with a very special attraction for young boys who delight in blowing the bellows and tending the nervous horses for the busy smith. It was here that Collins heard from the lips of [James] Santry stories of ancient Irish heroes, of rebellion, of famine, of evictions and hanging and above all of the local hero, O'Donovan Rossa, then still alive, whose savage treatment and torture in English jails had become part of the folk tradition of the West Cork countryside.⁴⁰

The centrality of the forge within the culture of the rural Irish community, the magnetism of the setting and the sense of adventure such a place must have presented for young boys make it a kind of unofficial institutional setting, a prominent feature of the cultural landscape. For Mackay, 'another powerful influence on the young boy [Michael Collins] was James Santry.'⁴¹ It is easy to imagine how a young boy would be

³⁶ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 25.

³⁷ Forester, *Michael Collins*, p. 11.

³⁸ Neeson, *The life and death of Michael Collins*, pp 13-4.

³⁹ Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 21.

⁴⁰ Feehan, *Michael Collins*, p. 18.

⁴¹ Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 22.

influenced by the aura of the place and filled with a sense of wonderment at the sight of such a male figure. The rugged hands-on physicality of the blacksmith's work, itself presents a powerful image of masculinity conceptualised through focus on the male body. In a letter to a friend Collins acknowledged the influence of these two men on his youthful mind. 'In Denis Lyons and James Santry I had my first tutors capable of, because of their personalities alone, infusing into me the pride of the Irish as a race.'⁴²

These biographical examples serve to illustrate the separation of the public and private domain as influencing factors in the shaping of the hero's masculinity. The accounts record that Collins's masculine image was fashioned in both the private and public spheres where female signifies the former and male connotes the later. The subliminal nature of male gender identity is reinforced through these associations, and the image portrayed is a strongly dichotomously male-centric gendered one. As a youngster, the men accredited with influencing his later developments are afforded significant influence on the mindset of the young Collins. Their ideals are the harbingers of the boy's later developments. The youth is the template onto which the ideal is imprinted in a gender specific way. The ideological mind is being shaped, juxtaposed with the masculine traits necessary to achieve these aims. The prominent people who were influential in instilling his revolutionary zeal were all male. For the biographies, feminine influence on the young hero's development is confined to the private domestic sphere, thus projecting images of gender and nationalism in male-centric terms.

London

Michael Collins would spend nine and a half years, almost a third of his life, living and working in London.⁴³

Transition to manhood: female influence and masculine identity

A crucial issue in the transition from boy to man involves the severing of emotional links with the parental home. Furthermore, Michael Collins's mother died while he was

⁴² Michael Collins, letter to Kevin O'Brien 16 October 1916, in Taylor, *Michael Collins*, pp 25-6.

⁴³ Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 27.

living in London thus breaking the maternal link with parental domesticity. However, in the adolescent development of the heroic figure the need to stress this emotional separation is significant for how the hero's development is perceived:

One's seventeenth year is an impressionable age at which to see your mother follow the father you hardly knew into the grave.⁴⁴

In her examination of heroic narratives Margery Hourihan argues that a crucial component of the hero's journey is defined when he 'leaves the civilized order of home to venture into the wilderness in pursuit of his goal.'⁴⁵ London may not exactly be a wilderness, but the separation from home is a vital theme in the Collins biographical story. His mother is posited in many accounts as having a marked influence on his life. Forester claims that Collins inherited many of his mother's traits.⁴⁶ Coogan remarks that 'Marianne Collins left a powerful force of example behind her.'⁴⁷ She is imaged as a strong-willed woman with an eager sense of purpose to get things done. But, as in the heroic narrative, upon her death the boy must stand-alone. The emergent image is of a youthful Collins in transition from boyhood to manhood. Faced with this parental void the young Collins now falls under the moral guardianship of his sister. The mother-like figure remains in the shape of his eldest sister, Hannie, thus maintaining a guiding female influence on his moral development. For the biographical narrative, this serves to counter any tendency that he could have to run wild or go unsupervised. In this sense women are portrayed as the upholders of the hero's social and moral conduct. It is through these guiding influences that youthful masculine exuberance is kept in check. If his mother and/or sister influenced him politically, the biographies provide no acknowledgment of this. Therefore, under the guidance of his sister, Collins is imaged

⁴⁴ Tim Pat Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 15.

⁴⁵ Margery Hourihan, *Deconstructing the hero: literary theory and children's literature* (London, 1997), p. 9.

⁴⁶ Forester, *Michael Collins*, p. 18. The author doesn't cite the sources for this interpretation. However, she does state in her acknowledgment that many people who supplied material wished to remain anonymous. Forester also acknowledges the help of the Collins family in her research. pp xiii-xiv. Furthermore, all the previous biographies are listed in her bibliography.

⁴⁷ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 7. Coogan cites his source as the privately held, Mary Collins-Powell memoir. 'Mary Collins-Powell was a sister of Collins who helped him in both the Anglo-Irish war and the civil war. Her memoir was compiled for her grandchildren and distributed by her grand-daughter, Deirdre Collins-Powell.' Coogan, endnote 3, chapter one.

as a young man who was steered clear of a life to which so many immigrant Irishmen succumbed:

In Hannie, now his counsellor and confidant, another influence was shaping Michael. For many Irish lads the leaving of Ireland meant also the leaving of a way of life in which family ties were strong and restrictive. Casually drifting about the widely-flung areas of Irish London they suffered an Irish Sea-change; reacting, if usually only in adolescence, into a hard-drinking, anti-clerical antithesis of what life at home had been. Hannie ensured that Michael was not flung headlong into the potent influences of this section of the London-Irish colony.⁴⁸

The importance of this particular female influence is stressed in order to establish the stable character of the hero. First official biographer Beaslai, credited Hannie's influence on Collins during this period, writing that 'his sister...took a keen interest in his development, and used often sit up till after midnight with him, discussing books and writers.'⁴⁹ Living with his sister, Ó Broin claims, 'was a fortunate arrangement for a boy of sixteen, for Hannie had a flat in the vicinity of the office and was able to take Michael to live with her, which he did for the whole nine years he was destined to spend in London.'⁵⁰ Building on this image Mackay comments, 'if Michael had been tempted by the bright lights and the thousands of blandishments to stray and turn his back on his nationality, there was big sister Hannie at his elbow.'⁵¹ In the biographies, Hannie's effect on him is presented as directing the influences that shaped the moral values of Collins's masculinity.

A true Irishman

During this period in London, Michael Collins's 'Irishness' is very much emphasised in the biographical accounts. For Beaslai, there is no tainting of him with English influences:

⁴⁸ Forester, *Michael Collins*, pp 18-9.

⁴⁹ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, p. 19.

⁵⁰ Ó'Broin, *Michael Collins*, p. 2.

⁵¹ Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 29. For more comments on Hannie's influence see, p. 30.

During all these years in London Michael lived exclusively in Irish circles, and all his tastes and interests were primarily Irish.⁵²

Hence, from the first official biography the hero is seen never to lose sight of his roots. The importance of showing that he maintained a strong Irish identity is a critical element in the story. London represents a crucial stage in the development of Collins's adolescent masculinity – a transition. Therefore, establishing the essence of his character is essential. Frank O'Connor remarks:

Now that Collins has become history it is easy for us to see what was most real in him in those London days: the necessity to lead and the love of traditional life.⁵³

In later interpretations, Collins is said to have retained his characteristic regional distinctiveness. This identity association signifies a loyalty, a sense of pride, a feeling of belonging. Above all else it places the subject firmly at the core of his own identity through an acknowledgement of the influences that have shaped him, Irish, domestic and regional. The localism is crucial in establishing pride of place as an important attribute in the conceptualisation of heroic masculine identity:

Given the ideological baggage which he took with him to London, it is not surprising that Collins threw himself into the Irish rather than the English world of that city. Though Collins was taken out of West Cork, West Cork was never taken out of him.⁵⁴

The rural quintessence of Collins is reinforced through this observation. The nostalgic narrative presents the idealised image of his development. The landscape of West Cork is established as being important in imaging Collins's identity. For Forester, 'the young Irishmen who met him in these [London] days were struck by one outstanding trait: his Cork clannishness.'⁵⁵

⁵² Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, p. 24.

⁵³ O'Connor, *The big fellow*, p. 7.

⁵⁴ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Forester, *Michael Collins*, p. 19.

For this investigation is not a question of the accuracy of these statements, it is the image of Collins that is crafted from emphasising these traits in him. The link to Cork, Collins's home, establishes the image of rural masculinity as quintessential to Collins's personality. Despite being physically separated he still retained a love of his native place, serving to characterize him as grounded in his cultural heritages thus adding a heightened significance to the public events to which he is associated. Notwithstanding his physical removal from the homestead of his youth, the image presented is of a man who didn't forget his roots. Talbot recorded Collins's recollection of this period;

I had Irish friends in London before I arrived, and in the intervening years I had made many more friends among Irishmen resident in London. For the most part we lived lives apart. We chose to consider ourselves outposts of our nation. We were a distinct community – a tiny eddy, if you like, in the great metropolis. But we were proud of our isolation, and we maintained it to the end.⁵⁶

This association to place, that grounds Collins's masculinity firmly in his social and cultural background, is an important theme in the biographies and one that Collins seemed keen to portray.⁵⁷ For the heroic political image, it is crucial that he retains the elements that allow him to be identified as being 'one of us', truly Irish. Establishing empathy with the subject through this process forms the basis for the social recognition of his masculinities – the reinforcing of a social value that is deemed central to male character evaluation. His subsequent involvement in the high politics of Irish nationalist statehood is made all the more significant through this connection. Association to place is a social and cultural value identifiable to most people. Emphasis on this commendable quality is key to Collins's recognition as the heroic figure, where commendable quality is understood as the emotional attachment to the culture and landscape of his native place.

⁵⁶ Michael Collins, quoted in Talbot, *Michael Collins*, p. 25.

⁵⁷ As shall be seen in Chapter four, during the Treaty debates he refers to himself as being of plain Irish stock.

The significance of the 'sporting' hero

When emphasising Collins's Irishness the biographies highlight his involvement in the GAA as being an important factor in his cultural development. Crucially, 'the Gaelic Athletic Association was an Irish response to contemporary developments in British culture which espoused militant Christianity and a culture of heroic virtue.'⁵⁸ This organisation provided a platform for Irishmen to develop sporting attributes in a distinctly Irish manner. Within the boundaries of its rules, the masculinities emerging were distinctly Irish and overtly nationalist. The organisation offered the opportunity for young men, through their participation in the games, to represent their local community, thus developing a sense of pride in locale and consequently their national identity. The biographies place Collins, in his transition from adolescence to adulthood, at the hub of this nationalist association, defining his masculinity in term of his physical prowess. This sporting institution provided the framework for promoting the philosophy of social and cultural belonging, rooted and established through physical exertion of the male body and a community of men.

Sport performs this crucial role in establishing the criteria, where physicality of the body is a defining feature for perceptions of masculinity. Sport is a significant theme in stressing the importance of the physical prowess and intellectual advancement of Collins. Physical activity develops both mind and body and to excel in sport places emphasis on physical and mental strength. Above all, sport is an exercise in discipline, where muscular activity is seen as a positive aspect in defining masculinity.⁵⁹ Its importance in the biographies serves a dual purpose, firstly it draws awareness to the physical dimensions of Collins stature and secondly it binds his loyalties to the cultural nationalism of the GAA. Beaslai writes, during this period in London Collins 'was a fine all-round athlete, and always competed at the athletic events in sports held under G. A. A. auspices.'⁶⁰ Similarly, Rex Taylor focuses on sport as a distinguishing feature of Collins personality and identity. The author comments that 'Collins had not been long in London when he joined the Geraldine football and hurling club...As a sportsman he

⁵⁸ Patrick O'Mahony and Gerard Delanty, *Rethinking Irish history: nationalism, identity and ideology* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 76.

⁵⁹ Mosse, *The image of man*, pp 44-6.

⁶⁰ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. 1, p. 15.

played games with the same intensity of purpose as that which he devoted to his learning.⁶¹ Forester notes that during his time in London 'running and jumping in sports held under the G. A. A. auspices where the activities at which he excelled.'⁶² Building on this sporting image, Coogan records that Collins 'joined the Gaelic Athletic Association, playing football and hurling and, as he grew physically, he developed into a fine athlete, particularly in hurling and the long jump.'⁶³ All the interpretations follow a similar pattern to Beaslai in their acknowledgment of the significance of sport.

The implication of sport for individual development has both a cultural and social significance and is an important arena for enhancing an understanding of masculinities. For example, 'in playing sports, judgement under pressure, stoic courage, endurance of pain, and controlling emotion are all considered signs of manhood.'⁶⁴ Collins's physical prowess is highlighted through his participation in the games on the field and significantly as a member of the administrative structure off it. He served as secretary of the Geraldine's GAA club for a number of years.⁶⁵ Through his participation there is a merging of the mind and body – attributes that form a significant part of the Collins legacy are being developed within a particular setting. The masculine qualities that emerge from within these parameters are crucial. 'The construction of masculinity in sport...illustrates the importance of the institutional setting.'⁶⁶ These environs constitute the defining of the body through association with other bodies, operating within certain guidelines. On the playing field rules must be adhered to and the body's physical capabilities and endurance are tested. On the executive side, the ability to organise, delegate and administer, help to develop attributes necessary to work with others to achieve one's aims. When on the committee of the Geraldine's club Collins 'exhibited qualities of organisation and administration, as well as eloquence in persuasiveness in

⁶¹ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 29.

⁶² Forester, *Michael Collins*, p. 23.

⁶³ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 15.

⁶⁴ Frank J. Barrett 'The organisational construction of hegemonic masculinity' in Whitehead and Barrett, p. 87.

⁶⁵ National Library of Ireland, Ms, 13,339. Contained in this collection are reports, penned by Collins, when he held the position of secretary of the Geraldines G.A.A. club.

⁶⁶ Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 35.

argument that others found hard to resist.⁶⁷ Above all sport it is an exercise in discipline – both mind and body.

The GAA was and still is both a social and cultural establishment. Apart from its political significance ‘sport, as a social institution, emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in response to a shifting constellation of class and gender dynamics.’⁶⁸ It defined both sense of self and the collective ideas of laudable male attributes within a particular setting. The GAA established this distinctively Irish form of representation and pride – honour in the self, locality and the nation. ‘Sport has an existence ontologically prior to nationality; as it is put on a modern basis, its organisational structures become coterminous with the state and it becomes in that sense national; once visibly national it is available to be invested with meaning and significance by nation inventors.’⁶⁹ Subsequently, the masculinities of those who participate in the games are defined with the investment of these meanings and significances. In the case of Collins, the biographies portray this very distinctive comparison in imaging the personality that emerges from their accounts. He is athletic, part of a wider community that is a distinctly Irish manhood.

1916 Rising

With his distinctly Irish masculine cultural and social identity established, Collins is portrayed as someone with the necessary credentials to manoeuvre his way into the political arena. His involvement in the 1916 rising is posited as a learning curve in the development of the military and intelligence strategies he later employed during the war of independence:

The Rising shaped and moulded his character, and from it he learned to accept the humiliation and bitterness of defeat. He had come to Dublin as a young and immature idealist. He left the city, for internment in

⁶⁷ Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 32. Mackay utilises Taylor, Forester and Ms. 13, 339 to reach this conclusion.

⁶⁸ Richard Majors ‘Cool pose: black masculinity and sports’ in Whitehead and Barrett, p. 209.

⁶⁹ R. V. Comerford, *Inventing the nation: Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 213.

England and Wales, as a seasoned warrior and a man of more mature judgment.⁷⁰

Apart from the ambush that resulted in his death, it is the one documented time in his life where he is noted as having a gun in hand firing at an enemy target. Talbot recorded Collins retrospective thoughts about the events of Easter week 1916:

Important as the rising finally proved – and history will certainly give it place as being the determining factor in Ireland's fight for freedom – its importance was not immediately recognised even by those of us to whom it meant most. In many ways the experiences of that week, as well as of the preceding years of preparation, were invaluable. As a testing measure of men, it could not have been more conclusive.⁷¹

Subsequently, descriptions of his participation in the events that unfolded in the General Post Office present images of a realist and a courageous and able Lieutenant. O'Connor writes of Collins bravery: 'A desperate charge was necessary to cross the street under fire... Revolver drawn, Collins emerged and, shouting encouragement to others, plunged into it head down.'⁷²

Similarly, Collins's lack of fear and the support shown towards his men presents the image of a man who is concerned enough to think about others even when his own life is in danger. He is portrayed as displaying strength of character that marks him out as a leader. Readers are treated to the efficient soldierly personality of Collins; turning up in uniform and later during the raging conflict making sure his men are fed properly.⁷³ The force of character under pressure and gunfire are reinforced in these images:

He experienced the flames, the heat and the seemingly unending shelling. Yet though confessing that, like others, he did the most witless things, he was never actually afraid; and he praised the gallantry of the men under him command, declaring that it reached unimaginable heights.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 49. Taylor's interpretation is based on a combination of eyewitness accounts and previous biographical analysis.

⁷¹ Michael Collins, quoted in Talbot, *Michael Collins*, p. 46.

⁷² O'Connor, *The big fellow*, p. 16.

⁷³ O'Broin, *Michael Collins* (Dublin, 1980), p. 18.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 17-8.

Despite his minor military rank during the events of Easter week, Collins's participation is talked about in terms that establish the character of the action hero under fire. He is in effect serving his revolutionary apprenticeship. Although engaging in activity that puts his life in danger, the hero showed no fear and was chivalrous in thinking of those under his command. This facet of his masculinity is decisively acknowledged portraying a man who has proven himself in the frontline of battle as both a man-of-action and a leader of others. 'Showing no fear, he struggled through flames, and constantly praised the men under his command for their gallantry.'⁷⁵

In biographical accounts, the Rising represents a learning curve for the hero. The futility of the conflict is the crucial lesson learned from this militaristically disastrous event. It is presented as symbolizing a growth in Collins. He is now someone who has learned the lesson from past failures and has both the wisdom and ability to influence change. Rex Taylor's summation of Collins's role in the G.P.O. accredits his actions as 'the military man personified.'⁷⁶ The Rising experiences are posited as test of his manhood and an experience where his credentials for leadership were established. Collins's military masculinity was put to the test under possibility of death and he came through enhanced by the experience. Moreover, the ideological and mental capacities developed in his London days are seen as crucial in how Collins handled the events of Easter week:

The key to Collins's attitude in 1916 was his pragmatism. He did not hold a high opinion of Pearse, much preferring Connolly, and he thought well of Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott.⁷⁷

Stewart's analogy places Collins at odds with the idea of Pearse's poetically romantic blood sacrifice. The ideals of the poet and ideologue do not reflect a practicality of thought that focuses on real tangible methods of achievement rather than symbolic personification of selfhood. Collins is presented as a practical thinker and someone who

⁷⁵ Ryan, *The day Michael Collins was shot*, p. 5.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 49.

⁷⁷ A. T. Q. Stewart, *Michael Collins*, p. 10.

prefers definitive action rather than ideological romanticism. The Rising is the moment of strategic departure for Collins; defeat is viewed as a lesson learned. However, like many students, Collins's 'university' days were to define the pathway of his life course.

Frongoch

Referred to by some biographers as the 'university of revolution', Michael Collins's time in Frongoch internment camp is considered an important stage in the development of his leadership qualities. Collins's ability to organise the smuggling of items in and out of the camp is posited as a forerunner to the development of the intelligence-gathering network he later developed during the War of Independence. His contemporary, Beaslai, presents the image of a man who enhanced his intellect and emerged as a spokesperson, organiser and leaders of others.⁷⁸ Describing some of the people in Frongoch he writes, 'among the body of men who had returned to Ireland early in 1916, and had taken part in the fighting in Dublin, Collins, with his sociability, energy and daring, rapidly became a leading spirit.'⁷⁹ Building on Beasai's observations, Frank O'Connor's interpretation of Frongoch places Collins in a leading role among his peers:

The most important thing that occurred in Frongoch was the reorganization of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which had been mainly responsible of the Rising. In this reorganization Collins played a leading part, and to the backing of this secret society can be traced the startling suddenness with which an unknown lad from Cork later established the ascendancy over the whole revolutionary movement.⁸⁰

Rex Taylor claimed that it was 'in this time of trouble, the personality of Collins began to assert itself. He became one the leaders in a system of smuggling the forbidden things to the men in the North Camp.'⁸¹ For Forester, Collins 'had early realized that the enforced sojourn in Frongoch must not be wasted if the work started in Easter Week

⁷⁸ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. 1, pp 108-20.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

⁸⁰ O'Connor, *The big fellow*, p. 21.

⁸¹ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 58. Taylor cites a letter Collins wrote to Sean Deasey, dated 22 October 1916, as his source for this interpretation. (Letter in Deasey's possession)

was to be continued.’⁸² These authors have similar interpretation in their appraisal of Collins’s leadership qualities, for how they developed in these surroundings.

Biographer Meda Ryan claims that Collins emerged from this all male environment a stronger and more developed character:

Here [in Frongoch] two important factors structured his future. First, he formed friendships with men of similar ideas and ideals. Secondly, he advanced his learning by studying the Irish language and English literature. His friendships, his knowledge, his determination, and his ability to think clearly – all these contributed to his leadership qualities and earned him the nickname ‘The Big Fellow’.⁸³

For the authors, Collins’s time in Frongoch signified a period of reflection that enhanced his intellectual development. The hero’s stature is elevated in the gender hierarchy; his leadership skills are being developed. Collins’s willpower and clarity of thought are laudable traits that mark him out from the ordinary, and ‘the big fellow’ is a label that illustrates the extent of this social conceptualisation – recognition of acceptable gender specific qualities in male leadership. Frongoch embodied a growth in the hero, marking him out as a future leader and the harbinger of a system of political values. Viewed retrospectively in the texts, Collins is representative of the struggle for a system of political ideals that will define the destiny of a nation, perceived through the symbolism of his masculinities.

Biographical descriptions of him during this period also draw attention to his physical prowess as a means of imaging him as a determined person:

Collins was remarkable for his high spirits and cheerfulness. He went in for athletic exercises with youthful zest. One who remembers him at this time describes him as “always up to horseplay, chasing round the grounds like a schoolboy”.⁸⁴

⁸² Forester, *Michael Collins*, p. 53

⁸³ Ryan, *The day Michael Collins was shot*, p. 6.

⁸⁴ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. 1, p. 110.

O'Connor claimed that Collins possessed the 'necessity to prove himself better, cleverer, stronger than the rest; it is in his studiousness, in his skill at athletics.'⁸⁵ Taylor writes that Collins 'is remembered by Sean Deasey, a former class-mate, as being "powerful in figure for his age, and a veritable terror at the sport of wrestling.'⁸⁶

Sport is yet again drawn into the equation as a means of defining the physical aspect of Collins's masculinity. As an image of masculinity, the body actively channels the frustrations of the mind into physical activity, where this physical embodiment enhances and defines strength of character and one that is overtly masculine:

The prisoner had a rough game, a version of leapfrog called 'weak horse' whose ostensible aim was for two teams to compete in leaping over each other's backs until someone broke and became the 'weak sister'...the most fun was derived from riling Collins. The teams were picked that the heaviest men...would deliberately set out to break him so would fly into one of his rages.⁸⁷

In gender terms, Coogan's analogy is striking as weak has a feminine connotation. Clearly, Collins didn't like to lose let alone be termed a 'weak sister.' The implications of the game suggest that strength and victory are masculine qualities.

For the biographies, it is the leadership qualities of Collins that are seen to emerge from this period of his life. In the confined company of other men his capacity to advance himself and develop the qualities of organisation are important issue to emerge. Therefore, Frongoch is presented as an important transitory phase in Collins's development. It is here that he cultivates the qualities to organise networks and get people on his side, qualities that will later stand him in good stead for the growth of his spy network. Collins's stature among his fellow prisoners is highlighted as 'it was during this period that his qualities of leadership truly developed.'⁸⁸ The biographical texts highlight Collins's abilities to organise others in this all-male environment, presenting the image of a 'man's man', one of the lads. His intellect and intelligence-gathering abilities, in conjunction with the physical attributes, mark him out as someone

⁸⁵ O'Connor, *The big fellow*, p. 21.

⁸⁶ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 28. Taylor quotation of Deasey is from a letter he claims to have received from him, dated 16 November 1955.

⁸⁷ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 48.

⁸⁸ Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 63.

possessing qualities of leadership. His mental strength also emerges through his physical endeavour. Collins is seen as someone who doesn't like to lose and possesses an avid determination for success. The biographies highlight recognisable male characteristics that mark him out as leadership material. Now that the ideological romantic display of the Rising has on the face of it been quelled, Collins's mind and body are presented as the focus for the representations of that change. His male qualities are highlighted – strength of mind and body are the pillars of a new political ideology, personified in the young emerging leader.

War of Independence

Collins' role in the War of Independence has taken precedence over his much better documented Civil War career...Instead biographers have elected to tell what is not alone a seductive story but one which conforms to readily identifiable established literary genres and resonates deep within the Irish psyche.⁸⁹

Considering the above statement, historical writing on this period of Michael Collins's life has played a prominent role in establishing his heroic legacy. Viewed in terms of an adventure story, his character presents as the image of the untouchable hero and fulcrum of Ireland's struggle for self-determination.

An ordinary man

A prevailing biographical image that emerges from this period in the Collins legacy is that of the elusive terrorist. The image of a pin-striped suited revolutionary who walked or cycled around Dublin every day in plain daylight, in public view, yet always managing to avoid arrest or capture. Beaslai noted:

In the English papers Collins had already been held up to odium as the head of a secret army of assassins – a dark mysterious man, dominated by a fanatical hatred of England. Anything more unlike this picture than the fine-looking, stalwart, gay young man, with the breezy manner and

⁸⁹ John Regan, 'Michael Collins: the legacy and the intestacy' in Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh, (eds), *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish state* (Cork, 1998), p. 118.

broad grin, who was on familiar terms with all kinds and conditions of men, could hardly be imagined.⁹⁰

From the Irish nationalist perspective, there is something reassuring in this image, something cheeky, something clever, something heroic in its function. In essence, it portrays Collins's fearlessness in the face of the enemy. The imagery presents an impressive show of daring masculinity that brings to the fore an element of Collins's personality to which, in light of subsequent developments, a national consciousness can identify, admire and be proud of. Later writers follow this pattern, presenting the Collins image in similar fashion. T. Ryle Dwyer provides a flavour of this impression:

While it was believed that Collins moved about in disguise, highly armed and well protected, he usually went alone, unarmed, on a bicycle, without any disguise. Some of the detectives knew him, but he had so terrorised the G Division that they were afraid to apprehend him lest the faceless people supposedly protecting him would come to his rescue, or take revenge on the detective or his family at some later date.⁹¹

These written images of Collins augment the aura of his legacy. They present a man of unique and abrasive courage, possessing the nerve to travel freely around the city, conscious that if captured his life was in danger. The image relayed in this paragraph suggests that even those detectives who recognised him had a personal fear for their own safety. Fear, represented in the G-division detectives, is contrasted with the courage of Collins in order to highlight this admirable quality of his historical image. Collins's ability to operate successfully is the focus of admiration. By blending into the gendered stereotype image of the businessman, Collins is said to have defied the socially perceived ideas of how a terrorist on the run was expected to behave. This establishes a feature of Collins's legacy that sustains a historical focus through a veneration of his courage and nerve:

Amid the mounting terror in autumn of 1920, Michael Collins continued to go about his multifarious duties in Dublin, made all the

⁹⁰ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. II, p. 76.

⁹¹ Dwyer, *The man who won the war*, p. 72.

more arduous because others around him were losing heart and giving up the struggle.⁹²

Quintessentially, despite the presence of the dangers and the odds stacked against him Collins managed to outsmart the enemy.⁹³ Thus, 'stories of Collins's own ability to avoid arrest or worse during the War of Independence are the stuff of legend.'⁹⁴

Influenced by Batt O'Connor's and Piaras Beaslai's recollection of Collins's methods of avoiding detection, many interpretations claim he simply acted as if he was not a wanted man, going around Dublin on his bicycle in full public view, blending into the general population going about their daily business.⁹⁵ Beaslai wrote:

Collins was held up and searched by soldier on many occasions. He smiled cheerily at them, and somehow they could not but smile back at him. There was no malice in his heart towards men who simply did their duty.⁹⁶

The daring nature of such an action draws a sense of admiration for the level of calm required to behave in this fashion; clandestine operations, silence and secrecy, are important topics that emerge in defining Collins's character and heroism, during this period in particular:

It was of great advantage to Michael Collins that his appearance lacked any very striking distinguishing mark. Naturally a stranger would expect something out of the common in the appearance, bearing, and very dress of so extraordinary a man – something savouring of that mysterious master of disguises, which he was popularly supposed to be – and Mick's appearance, bearing, and dress were so absolutely *normal*, as to disarm suspicion...He never at any time resorted to a disguise.⁹⁷

⁹² Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 166.

⁹³ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. II, pp 20-38.

⁹⁴ Costello, *Michael Collins*, p. 51.

⁹⁵ Batt O'Connor, *With Michael Collins in the struggle for Irish freedom* (London, 1929), chapter 25. X. Frank O'Connor ... 'It was this power of committing things to separate compartments of the mind that enabled him to forge himself so thoroughly and play the particular game he described to O'Connor of not allowing himself to think he was hunted. It was an essential part of his disguise. It was as though he were concealing things from himself in order to conceal them from others.' p. 94; O Broin, *Michael Collins*, p. 56.

⁹⁶ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. II, p. 76.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

Rex Taylor's biography builds on these descriptions, exalting the status of Collins as fearless leader and fulcrum of the underground war:

The year 1920 was for Collins the most dangerous of all his career. That he survived the attentions of spies, informers, and investigator proves in some measure the state of his supersensitiveness; it proves also how faithful to him were those of his immediate circle.⁹⁸

Coogan asserts, 'Michael Collins, refused to let himself be cowed. When couriers' nerves failed he got on his bicycle and went himself to pick up despatches or to get the latest news from the friendly sources in the Castle and the DMP.'⁹⁹ The biographical pages tingle with nervous excitement and not too little admiration for what Collins managed to achieve. Frank O'Connor wrote of Collins that 'people still describe the way in which one became aware of his presence, even when he was not visible, through that uncomfortable magnetism of the very air, a tingling of the nerves.'¹⁰⁰ Ó'Broin comments that Collins 'was by this time well on the way to becoming a Scarlet Pimpernel.'¹⁰¹ Contributing to this accumulative image of the clandestine revolutionary, Mackay claims the Collins 'exuded an aura of confidence that inspired others to tackle assignments more readily; they felt safer and stronger and more fearless when he was around.'¹⁰²

Through association with the ideology of revolution, the political intensity of this period defines Collins's masculinities. His 'personal' sacrifices are presented as having been endured for a cause higher than any individual gain that he could have accrued. Readers are treated to the multiplicity of Collins's personality, with romantic insights provided into his character. Within this context, the important issue is the way his various behaviours are discussed when his actions are undertaken to further the revolutionary ideology of Irish Nationalism. His actions, as a man, are symbolic of that ideology. In other words, his masculinity becomes representative of the political perspective, with Collins being the human and tangible embodiment of its definition. Under these

⁹⁸ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 98.

⁹⁹ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁰ O'Connor, *The big fellow*, p. 35.

¹⁰¹ Ó'Broin, *Michael Collins*, p. 56.

¹⁰² Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 97.

conditions, empathy with the hero is crucial in order to appreciate the significance of his actions, as 'Michael Collins's unique contribution as Director of Intelligence in establishing and controlling the republican intelligence effort during the War of Independence quickly became part of popular memory.'¹⁰³

Furthermore, the biographical accounts provide insight, through the attachment of political meaning, to the multiplicity of Collins's masculinities, culminating in the ultimate sacrifice of death. During this period Collins runs the gauntlet of death; the dangers to his life are omnipresent. These images of Collins's masculinity become symbolic of the nationalist perspective and are synonymous with the political ideology that sustains the concept of Irish nation and state. The biographical interpretations have significance for perceptions of events, through the male attributes associated with them. Written images of Collins provides a means of attaching meaning for the deed or act with which he is associated; the political significance of the events and Collins's role in them are mutually inclusive – political action presented through the masculinities of the male protagonist.

It is therefore perhaps not surprising, as Regan suggested in the opening quote, that seductive images of Collins emerge from this period. This is very much an exercise in historical self/national-definition, where Collins's political actions represent an ideological stance against the acknowledged enemy. From the Irish perspective, the actions of the hero must be seen as politically justifiable, therefore, the representatives of the foreign administration are the yardsticks against which Collins's qualities are compared and contrasted. Put another way, the War of Independence represents the struggle for Irish political freedom. Viewed through the lens of Irish nationalism as the political victors, Collins's motives and actions during this period are much more conducive to widespread acceptance as admirable actions and therefore admirable enactments of masculinity. After all Collins is, in the words of Arthur Griffith, 'the man who won the war'.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Euan O' Halpin 'Collins and intelligence, 1919-1923; from brotherhood to bureaucracy' in Doherty and Keogh, p. 68.

¹⁰⁴ Arthur Griffith, Dail Eireann, *Official report: debate on the Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland* (Dublin, 1922), p. 20. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/D7/D.T.192201070002.html> (27 February 2006).

In the following sections an exploration of two prominent images and themes will be examined to discern the masculine attributes – and the subtleties of their use – in portraying the actions and character of Collins during this highly significant period in the history of the Irish state and the life of Michael Collins.

Spy as countertype and *illegitimate* 'other'

In order for Collins's actions to achieve nationalist legitimacy, they need to be set in context. One such method that emerges from a gendered reading of the historical texts is the way the biographers compare his masculinities with the masculinities of his military enemy. Collins's method of dealing with British spies is an issue that emerged in many of the accounts. Talbot quotes Collins's reasons and objective for the elimination of the British secret service network:

The time had come to turn our attention to the most important part of our job – the smashing of the English Secret Service. My final goal was not to be reached merely by beating it out of existence – I wanted to replace it with a better, and an Irish Secret Service. The way to do this was obvious, and it fell naturally into two main parts – making it unhealthy for Irishmen to betray their fellow's and making it deadly for Englishmen to exploit them. It took several months to accomplish that first job – actually the most important part – and hardly more than a month to disrupt the morale of the English Secret Service, to a point at which its efficiency ceased to be the proud thing that it always had been.¹⁰⁵

For the biographical story of Collins, the enemy spy is the military antithesis of the political objective that he is striving to achieve. When defining the war from the Irish perspective, the British spy is subjectively portrayed as someone who operates on the margins of honourable manly values, it is a fine line to tread and the consequences of being caught are fatal. In defining the image of Collins, the British spy offers a source of contrast with which to evaluate Collins's nationalist ideals. Described by Frank O'Connor, the British undercover agent known as Quinlisk is an example of how this figure is contrasted with Collins:

¹⁰⁵ Michael Collins, quoted in Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 81.

On the eighteenth of February 1920 he [Quinlisk] met the usual fate of spies on a lonely road outside the city. He is a rather pathetic figure with his grievance, his treachery, his funk, his loquacity and his conceit, one of those figures which move in a sort of perpetual twilight of mind, like shadows of real men.¹⁰⁶

The adjectives used by O'Connor to describe the character of this British spy are countertype (opposite) to the qualities possessed by Collins. Despite being a 'soldier' who operated in a similar manner to Collins, Quinlisk is but a shadow of a 'real man', virtues contradictory to Collins's loyalty, good temper and modesty. The twilight of the mind suggests an underdeveloped sense of integrity, lacking the honour that defines Collins's principled political manhood. Physically, Quinlisk is but a dark reflection of an authentic man. Such descriptive contrasts are necessary to define the actions and character of Collins in a positive light. The act of assassinating such an enemy needs its justification set in context. He must be seen as someone possessing qualities that are not worthy of acceptance and integrity. Quinlisk is the countertype figure, the opposite of Collins, judged through political ideology. The objectives of Collins are justified through contrast with the representative symbolism of Quinlisk. Although part of Collins's intelligence gathering network functioned in a similar manner, one set of actions is seen as creditable while the others are despicable. This reflects masculinity viewed by way of a political ideological standpoint, perceived through the beliefs in Irish nationalist self-determination. Similarly, Beaslai, set the analogy in the first 'official' biography, where he described touts and informers as 'belonging to an ignorant and degraded type, they had no hope of being taken into anybody's confidence, or getting to know anybody of importance.'¹⁰⁷

Another means of highlighting Collins's qualities is seen in the way the biographies provide a contrast between his military tactics and those of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries. O'Connor wrote that latter two were 'calculated to inspire terror in a population less timid and law abiding than the Irish. With their indeterminate uniform...and revolvers carried in cowboy holsters, they looked like something which walked off the stage during a performance of *The*

¹⁰⁶ O'Connor, *The big Fellow*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁷ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. II, p. 34.

Beggar's Opera.¹⁰⁸ The violence of the methods employed by Collins attains legitimacy through comparison with these countertypes. His military tactics, being outside the normal strategies of warfare, must be viewed as an acceptable form of engagement with defeat of the contemptible enemy as its motivation and crucially its justification. Therefore, in the historical conceptualisation of the violent events for which Collins is associated and remembered, there must be an justification of the personality who was responsible for their initiation, in order for these actions to be viewed as politically legitimate. Collins's masculinities are the lens through which he is viewed and his exploits contextualised. To achieve this, the enemy's characteristics are portrayed in a lesser light than those of the heroic figure. By calling into question the authenticity of the Black and Tans as a branch of legitimate authority, James Mackay's interpretation follows such a means of comparison:

As a fighting force they were useless; as a police force they were a joke. These mercenaries were terrorists of the very worst sort, hated by the ordinary people of Ireland and despised by the constabulary they were supposed to be augmenting.¹⁰⁹

Similarly, Ó Broin describes their impact in the following negative terms:

Endlessly through the whole of the year 1920 raids, shootings, ambushes and reprisals occurred in every shape and form, and scores of towns and villages were sacked or 'shot up'.¹¹⁰

Their collective body is clearly defined as the converse of what a society should expect of its police force. As mercenaries, the legitimacy of their operations is unequivocally categorised as the antithesis of any social, cultural and political understanding of what loyalty to the Irish nationalist ideology involves. Crucially, loyalty is a quality Collins had in abundance; therefore these oppressor's negative characteristics are highlighted in order to distinguish the unworthiness of their political attachments. For Collins, 'personal loyalty and trust...remained paramount in his existence.'¹¹¹ Loyalty sustains

¹⁰⁸ O'Connor, *The big fellow*, pp 80-1.

¹⁰⁹ Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 160.

¹¹⁰ Ó Broin, *Michael Collins*, p. 59.

¹¹¹ Costello, *Michael Collins*, p. 32

the secrecy of clandestine activities and is an important characteristic of the manhood required to operate within the parameters of the ideologically focused environment in which Collins operated.

The Treaty

By the time the Anglo-Irish truce took effect in July 1921, Collins, perhaps more than any other rebel leader in Ireland, had lived an underground existence.¹¹²

For the biographies, the Truce signified the emergence of Collins from the shadows of this clandestine world, casting him into the public arena to dramatic effect as part of the political team sent to negotiate a Treaty between Ireland and Great Britain. Beaslai wrote:

Michael Collins, hunted from post to pillar, cycling daily through hold-ups and searches in the streets, with his papers hidden in his socks, sleeping nightly in different houses, often next door to a house that was being raided, found himself, as Acting President of Dáil Eireann, engaged in discussing offers from Mr. Lloyd George for a Truce and a Peace Conference.¹¹³

O'Connor builds on this image of Collins as the selfless revolutionary:

Collins went to London "as a soldier obeying his commanding officer", to use his own words, because he felt, de Valera wishes him to make concessions which de Valera himself, as President of the Irish Republic, could not in all decency make, but which Collins, with his secret society and his immense pull with the Volunteers, could not only make but persuade others to make.¹¹⁴

Collins's controversial inclusion in the delegation has brought to the fore the nature of his relationship with de Valera and the role both men played in subsequent political events. His apparent reluctance/or not to be included in the deputation is a prominent

¹¹² Costello, *Michael Collins*, p. 67.

¹¹³ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. II, p. 107.

¹¹⁴ O'Connor, *Michael Collins*, p. 132.

theme in Irish history.¹¹⁵ In a letter to Harry Boland, Taylor claims to quote Collins's feelings on the developing political situation:

I find myself looking at friends as if they were enemies – looking at them twice to make sure they really are friends after all. I mention no names. After all it may be a wrong impression that's got into me. Frankly, though, I don't care for things as they are now.¹¹⁶

Taylor went on to write that 'Collins himself vigorously protested against the inclusion of this name... He was a soldier not a politician.'¹¹⁷

Collins is portrayed as choosing the greater good of the nation above his personal opinions. In her analysis of him at this juncture Forester claimed that 'one point was clear to Collins, the status they were being sent to London to negotiate for was not the status for which they had been fighting.'¹¹⁸ The textual opinion/knowledge that he went to London despite severe personal reservations is crucial for the public perception of his historical identity as a heroic figure. Adhering to previous interpretation of Collins during this period, Eoin Neeson presents the images of an altruistic nationalist:

Collins, perhaps more than any of the other leaders, received the Truce with mixed feelings. It signified to him several things of importance; but it meant also the loss of several things that were to him important. For example it meant the transference of action from the military to the political front; it meant public rather than secret activity and public identification with that activity; it meant the exercise of statesmanship in the art of negotiation, rather than of craftsmanship in the art of warfare; it meant bringing out into the open all that Collins believed should be secret, including himself and his lieutenants.¹¹⁹

Similarly for Ó Broin, Collins 'felt in his bones that membership of the delegation involved becoming a scapegoat. The task was therefore a loathsome one but he accepted

¹¹⁵ I provide insight and analysis on this issue when dealing with the Treaty debates in Chapter four.

¹¹⁶ Michael Collins to Harry Boland, quoted in Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 113. Taylor references this letter as a privately held source. It is among one of the many sources he utilised that subsequently 'disappeared'.

¹¹⁷ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 116.

¹¹⁸ Forester, *Michael Collins*, p. 215

¹¹⁹ Neeson, *Michael Collins*, p. 48.

it in the spirit of a soldier who acts against his judgement at the orders of a superior officer.’¹²⁰

The ability to compromise on his own instinctive beliefs for the greater good of the nation is a quality for which he receives praise and admiration. In his role as a member of the delegation, Collins enters the public limelight via the pressurised container of the Treaty negotiations. This represents another period of transition; gone is the aura that accompanied his underground activities and now the hero must develop or enhance his skills to deal with the new challenges. The Treaty brought Collins face to face with arguably the most powerful politicians in the world. ‘Michael Collins was thirty years of age when, at eleven o’clock on the morning of 11 October 1921, he sat down to negotiate with one of the most formidable political teams that England ever assembled.’¹²¹

The overall textual biographical image is of a man who seemed either reluctant or uncertain about coming to a decision on the most appropriate action to follow. He must choose between friendship and political necessity, yet Collins is seen as someone weaving between the lines of legitimate action – the dualism of his action in the gun supply issue¹²² – but once that action is viewed as being designed to achieve the only realistic solution available, its perception merits recognition of approval. Discussed later in chapter four, Collins’s defence of the Treaty terms in the debates and the biographical praise bestowed upon him for doing so, signify the man-of-action in the face of both personal and political adversity. Essentially, he is seen as a man who puts his character on the line to defend something with which he has personal reservations. Establishing a legitimate foundation for political advancement is the reason posited for his decisions. Yet the clandestine Collins is still apparent, for while engaging in the politics of statehood he is also involved in covert manoeuvres by supplying armaments to republicans operating within the six counties:

As chairman of the Provisional Government he struggled, along with his former comrades to re-unite the army in the twilight months that led to a

¹²⁰ Ó’Broin, *Michael Collins*, p. 88.

¹²¹ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 236.

¹²² Collins is alleged to have supplied guns and ammunition to nationalist in Northern Ireland whilst he was head of the provisional government.

Civil War. During this period, difficulties arose for him as he tried to reconcile the divergences between the military and the political elements within the cabinet. The situation often led to a dualistic approach by Collins when on the one hand he tried to remain loyal to the Treaty, and on the other he co-operated with the anti-Treaty men, especially in matters regarding the north of Ireland.¹²³

His ostensible hesitancy is explained by the resumption of surreptitious activities, the source of his greatest legacy. The normally assured and definitive Collins is again in a phase of transition. The decisiveness that has defined his actions in the past appears to have temporarily deserted him but this 'gun running' venture counterbalances any suggestion that this assuredness has deserted him. The hesitancy is explained through reference to the source of his legend. The depth of his confusion is highlighted, in order to set in context the enormous importance of the decision to follow:

Collins seems to have taken on a new lease of life in the period following the Four Courts' shelling. Though in one part of his mind he was clearly heartbroken at the loss of personal friendships as his letter to Boland shows, in another he seemed to have clicked back into gear. The period of uncertainty and hesitancy was over. He was back doing what he could do best, soldiering.¹²⁴

His reluctance – by going against his individual feelings and taking decisive action toward the suppression of the irregular forces – firmly juxtaposes his actions with the creation of the Irish state and in doing so enshrines them as both a personal and national legacy. It represents a masculinity that calls for a hardening of attitudes defined through tough decisive action in the face of internal sentimental misgivings. In this sense Collins's masculinity becomes the symbolism through which political ideological legitimisation is personified.

¹²³ Ryan, *The day Michael Collins was shot*, p. 33. Ryan cites The Mulcahy papers as her source for this information. Richard Mulcahy was a contemporary of Collins. He was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the army following Collins's death.

¹²⁴ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 388. The author utilises Rex Taylor, and Collins's correspondence to Kiernan in coming to this conclusion.

The Civil War

Among the ancient sagas of Ireland are the 'Three Sorrows of Storytelling'. They are tales of jealousy and treachery, of strife among former comrades, of battle and grief and death. The chronicler of the events that followed the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 might well name them the Fourth Sorrow of Storytelling. They have, however, one important difference from the tales of pre-history: in that unhappy period we find no treachery. Tragedy was to lie, not in men's failure to respond to the call of patriotism, but in their differences as to where its interests lay.¹²⁵

The fraternal conflict that defined the Irish Civil War has bestowed an indelible memory on the historical landscape of twentieth century Ireland. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities the biographies and prominent historical articles claim Collins extended himself in many different political directions in an effort to bring about some sort of solution to the disorder that seethed within the country following the ratification of the Treaty. The images of Collins that emerge from the various pages are those of a man performing a political juggling act and an inspirational military leader. Beaslai wrote of Collins:

In putting his views before the people...he had to contend, not only with misrepresentation, but organise armed violence on the part of his opponents. Leaflets containing scurrilous reflection on his personal character were circulated. Despite all this, Michael Collins remained the most admired and respected man in Ireland. The plain people, in this period of confusion, looked to him as the one strong man who could create order out of chaos.¹²⁶

Frank O'Connor claimed that 'Collins was a very ordinary man; one might even say a conventional man. His ideals were genuine but they were simple. He was not particularly ruthless, as revolutionaries go, and he was not lawless; he had far too much of the country boy's respect for what people thought.'¹²⁷ Capturing the public sentiment

¹²⁵ Forester, *Michael Collins*, p. 258.

¹²⁶ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, pp 357-8.

¹²⁷ O'Connor, *The big fellow*, p. 174.

towards him, as witnessed during Griffith's funeral, he goes on to say that 'Collins walked, with his staff behind, as head of the Irish government and the Irish army. He never looked finer. A murmur of delight rose from the crowds as he passed.'¹²⁸

Ó Broin noted that during this period 'Collins was very highly strung and overwrought and sometimes left meetings in a rage.'¹²⁹ However, when the decision is taken to act, it is decisive. Mackay claimed that 'Michael's forceful personality left its stamp all over the Cabinet discussions and it was his decision, and his alone, that he should take over as Commander-in-Chief.'¹³⁰ The Collins of the War of Independence, the man of resolute action, is said to have stamped his character on the events. Moreover, Collins's physique become a focus of this imaging:

Putting him in uniform, at the head of an army defending the existence of the new state, and with a press that was largely pro-Treaty, raised his stature to heroic proportion. His death a few weeks later only served to consolidate this new sense of identity.¹³¹

The symbolism of the uniform is representative of the ideological concept that underpins the state and nation. Therefore the actions and stature of the person who wears the uniform become the medium through which that concept is imaged or tangibly perceived. The body, in uniform, becomes the focus for the imagining of the collective ideal. Craik argues that 'uniforms have been an essential element of human society especially where group identity has been crucial, as a mark of distinctiveness, as a mark of social status and as a marker of group membership.'¹³² In his role as Commander-in-Chief, Collins presents a powerful image of military masculinity, a focal point for hope and assurance. Collins's name had become synonymous with the struggle, and in particular the significance of the Treaty for Irish nationalism. Ryan wrote that, 'in his new role, as Commander-in-Chief, he threw himself fully into the task.'¹³³ Forester said that at Griffith's funeral many people saw him for the first time.

¹²⁸ O'Connor, *The big fellow*, p. 180.

¹²⁹ Ó Broin, *Michael Collins*, p. 129.

¹³⁰ Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 277.

¹³¹ Peter Young, 'Michael Collins: a military leader' in Doherty and Keogh, p. 90.

¹³² Jennifer Craik, *Uniforms exposed: from conformity to transgression* (Oxford, 2005), p. 22.

¹³³ Ryan, *The day Michael Collins was shot*, p. 35.

For the author the event is imaged as having a profound resonance for the large attendance:

Now they were rewarded by the sight of him, resplendent in the uniform of Commander-in-Chief... The crowd saw only a hero in the prime of his life, whose vitality was a reassurance that Ireland still had a leader to protect and guide her future.¹³⁴

Through the allegory of the uniform, the texts claim that Collins received the admiration of the onlookers and consequently symbolised the hopes of a nation. His masculinity is represented through the garb of Commander-in-chief. The actions and deeds he undertook whilst wearing the uniform thus become both a personal and national legacy. 'Collins... began to move out to the country, intent on clearing up the military situation as speedily as possible. He had no intention of merely trying to direct operations from a Dublin office.'¹³⁵ In these examples, masculinity and the state are defined as politically contingent, through social and cultural perceptions of this representational relationship. Collins is the physically tangible recognisable human personification of the state's ideological underpinning. 'His picture, as he walked in the funeral cortege to historic Glasnevin Cemetery, in Dublin, shows a man of robust health for whom a military uniform was *made*.'¹³⁶

Masculine images of Collins in death.

The circumstance surrounding the death of Michael Collins is unsurprisingly a prominent theme in the biographies. In fact some publications are primarily concerned with the events and circumstances of that fateful day.¹³⁷ How he died or is perceived to have died have powerful ramifications for heroic imaging and are heavily influenced by the social and cultural politics of masculine identity perception. For instance, the most striking element that emerges from the historical material is how meaning is attached to the sense of unfulfilled potential that emanates from the Collins story. Paradoxically,

¹³⁴ Forester, *Michael Collins*, p. 331.

¹³⁵ Ó Broin, *Michael Collins*, p. 138.

¹³⁶ Twohig, *Dark secret*, p. 101.

¹³⁷ Ryan, *The day Michael Collins was shot*, Feehan, *The shooting of Michael Collins*, Twohig, *The dark secret of Bealnablath*.

Collins's death provides the focal point through which his life and legacy are remembered. Although not, *per se*, a biography of Collins, Carlton Younger's *Ireland's Civil War* depicts the spirit of this sentiment:

Perhaps the greatest achievement of Michael Collins was to die young. What Ireland lost by his death can never be reckoned; it may be that he had already lived his finest days. What she gained was an immortal hero. For the hero who lives sheds his aura; his moment has passed and he is seen to be as ordinary men. But he who dies young is ever young in memory and ever a hero. It is upon the loom of Collins's memory and the memory of all those other hero-patriots who died in the dynamic youth, that Irishmen are weaving the pattern of enduring national unity.¹³⁸

This summation encapsulates the significance of his death for the Collins story. Death, in this instance, becomes the medium through which the political and military actions of the historical subject provide the focus for the evaluation of his legacy. But what does this reveal regarding the social and cultural politics of masculine identity configuration? As with history itself, death evokes the engagement of memory in recollecting the past, of both the events and the personalities involved in them. For Younger, by dying when he did, Collins's achievements are fused with the impression of a 31 year old man, thus fixing this image of him in eternal memory. Adding further intrigue to his death, the participants in the Béalnabláth ambush furnished various accounts of what unfolded during the engagement, yet no two versions provided exactly the same information. There are many reasons posited for this discrepancy, not least the issues around the ability to recollect events while under the duress of enemy gunfire.¹³⁹ Ultimately however, the resultant suspicions and speculations have projected a tragic historical episode to the forefront of the national consciousness.

Talbot choose to end his account with the following tribute to Collins:

Until the Irishmen I know... prove themselves fit to have been followers of their greatest leader – until they avenge his murder in the only way possible to avenge it – until they adequately punish a crime as unnatural

¹³⁸ Carlton Younger, *Ireland's Civil War* (London, 1968), p. 2-3.

¹³⁹ See, Twohig, *The dark secret*, Ryan, *The day Michael Collins was shot*, Neeson, *Michael Collins*.

and as hideous as incest – the Ireland that Michael Collins typified, the Ireland that Michael Collins would have recreated, that Ireland that Michael Collins gave his life for, will never be.¹⁴⁰

Collins's friend, contemporary and first 'official' biographer Piaras Beaslai draws an analogy between Collins's lifeless body and that of a dead workman lying next to an unfinished building:

The edifice which he and other great Irishmen worked to build – the free united Gaelic Ireland of our dreams – remains uncompleted, and yet another mighty workman lies dead beside the unfinished building; but the work done remains strong and solid, and will weather many storms yet.
When the edifice is completed, the value of Michael Collins to Ireland will be fully understood.¹⁴¹

Such a comparison firmly fixes Collins's legacy in the role of state-builder. In death, this young male body serves as a source of focus for ideological re-affirmation. The legacy is enshrined in the construction process – the struggle for a nation's political self-determination. It is not without significance that construction work is an arena dominated by men, thus drawing comparison to the dominant role of men in State-building. Frank O'Connor wrote:

It is not our tragedy nor that of the heads of government or the soldiers. It is the tragedy of men who must go through life marked indelibly by their contact with magnificence. Collins had spoiled them for lesser men. They would be quick, too quick perhaps, to feel the cold touch of normality, and Collins's death left normality enthroned.¹⁴²

Commenting on the reaction to Collins's death Taylor wrote:

When the rumour was finally confirmed, it was like a tidal wave of grief sweeping the land. Men and women in all walks of life felt the impact of the blow almost as a personal one, some weeping openly, some grieving in silence, all affected by a loss which they felt irreparable.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Talbot, *Michael Collins*, p. 256.

¹⁴¹ Beaslai, *Michael Collins*, vol. II, pp 442.

¹⁴² O'Connor, *The big fellow*, p. 184.

¹⁴³ Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 207.

The crucial factor here is the perception of the image, or how political meaning is infused through the image. It is the significance of representation, or in other words, what Collins is perceived to represent for Ireland's struggle that defines his historical status. The masculine characteristics or actions associated with these deeds form the basis for the politics that define Collins's gender identity. It is a selective process contingent upon the significance attached to the deeds to which Collins is associated. It requires a social acceptance and understanding, consequently the legacy itself becomes a cultural artefact, signified in Neeson's assessment of him:

He was a great man – one of the greatest, perhaps, that Ireland has seen; certainly one of the greatest that Ireland has seen in the twentieth century, but a man for all that and no demigod. He was a hero in the classic mould of Irish history: His efforts and achievements were enormous, yet he did not live to see them brought to fruition. He died, indeed, even before he reached the zenith of his capabilities – great though what he did achieve was, and great though the image we now have of him is.¹⁴⁴

For Meda Ryan's interpretation, the immortalisation of Collins was due to this 'freezing' of his masculine image in time:

Michael Collins became a legend in his own lifetime; because he was killed in the prime of his life, that legend grew.¹⁴⁵

Ó Broin commented that 'the grief of the nation was unmistakable,'¹⁴⁶ thus projecting a sense of national mourning. For James Mackay, 'no nation ever mourned its fallen so volubly, no people grieved with such total abandon...No Irishman, before or since, evoked such genuine grief and devastating sense of loss...The senseless death of Michael Collins stopped the nation in its tracks.'¹⁴⁷

Furthermore, it was not only the Free State side who are said to have mourned his loss, contemporary enemies, many who had been former comrades, are also said to have been

¹⁴⁴ Neeson, *Life and death*, p. 142.

¹⁴⁵ Ryan, *The day Michael Collins was shot*, p. xi.

¹⁴⁶ Ó Broin, *Michael Collins* (Dublin, 1980), p. 144.

¹⁴⁷ Mackay, p. 294.

affected by the enormity of Collins's passing. The essential character of Collins is defined in the almost universal respect and sadness on hearing about his death. Forester wrote that 'there can have been few times of war in which the death in battle of the opposing Commander-in-Chief has aroused such personal sorrow as Republicans felt at the passing of Michael Collins.'¹⁴⁸ Coogan claimed that 'it was his fate to die, almost accidentally, in his home county, at the hands of men who admire him, in one of the most avoidable, badly organised ambushes of the period. Any one of his assailants could have fired the fatal shot. None of them would have been proud to do so.'¹⁴⁹

In death, Collins's political legacy is enshrined – the legacy of the man and the concept of the state become one, through the symbolism of the young dead Commander-in-Chief. In recounting his death, the biographies reinforce this union and project a sense of pride and national identity emanating from a fledgling nation. It is the act of remembering the deeds for which Collins is associated that is the crucial factors in the recognitions, that these had a significant place in the national consciousness. 'Thus as people's sense of themselves as a nation is sustained, in part, through eulogizing the masculine performances of certain men... Nations large and small draw on the masculine mythologies and legends surrounding "great" men to give meaning and purpose to what are no more than political boundaries increasingly in crisis.'¹⁵⁰ In the case of Collins, the establishment of the nation-state is bolstered by the image of his heroic masculinity and their contingent mythological conditioning. In meeting with tragic death at such a young age, whilst occupying such a primary position in the administration of the new state, Collins commanded and continues to command a fascination that re-images and projects his name as a symbol for heroic imagining and icon of Irish national identity.

Conclusion

The historical material considered in this chapter reveals images of Michael Collins's masculinities constructed along the lines of a political heroic adventure narrative. In his

¹⁴⁸ Forester, *Michael Collins*, p. 342.

¹⁴⁹ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 421.

¹⁵⁰ Whitehead, *Men and masculinities*, p. 122.

childhood, the young hero's potential is revealed; effectively, he was born for greatness. Despite only brief memories of his father, this parental influence is given a particular priority in the story, for the effect it had on developing the political mindset of a little boy. Women's influences are spoken about in terms of the domestic sphere; shaping the morals of the young prodigy. Outside the home, the local blacksmith and Collins's male schoolteacher influence the young boy's political mindset. Here, the public/private or political/domestic image dichotomy is evident, where women connote the latter influence in both instances. London is discussed as a transition in the young man's life; he leaves home, suffers the death of his mother but is morally guided by his older sister. Collins retains interests in things Irish, thus defining the essence of his character as overtly nationalistic. His sporting prowess comes to the fore, thus defining his physical capabilities in a male environment. Collins's participation in the 1916 Rising shows that he had the leadership credentials to rise to prominence. He put his body on the line and the experiences served to shape and mould the budding potential that burned within him. In Frongoch, this promise is further enhanced, as he displayed qualities of organisation that define his transition from freedom fighter to revolutionary leader. The story reaches the zenith of its legendary personification during the War of Independence years. Images of the untouchable hero emerge; clandestine operations to eliminate the enemy with Collins as the leading protagonist in the events. Crucially he hides in plain view, cycling around Dublin dressed in a suit and tie, blending into the crowd. The Dublin Metropolitan Police, the spies, the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries are all countertype figures that exalt the status of the hero. Collins's tactics of engagement and his ability to avoid detection mark out his distinctiveness. With the announcement of the Truce, Collins now becomes a public figure. Emerging from the shadows of his underground activities, he shows himself to be a man of compromise. He must eventually choose between personal friendships and the political expediency of Irish nationalism. For the Civil War period, the dominant image is of the soldierly figure, the military leader. He is seen to act in the name of the State, even at the expense of personal feelings and friendships. Through the uniform Collins becomes the symbol of political legitimacy. In dying at such a young age he becomes the focus of a nation's

grief and an iconic masculine symbol of the struggle for the establishment of the new Irish state.

Chapter three

Imaging the masculine medium in Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins*¹

This chapter examines masculinities as a medium for the portrayal of Neil Jordan's populist version of Michael Collins's historical and political legacy. Released in 1996 *Michael Collins* is the second most successful box office movie ever released in Ireland, netting more than four million Irish pounds in receipts.² The sheer numbers that attended the multiple screenings of this historical and political film suggests that it appealed to a wide movie going audience that transcended age, class and gender boundaries.³ For a movie to attract such popular appeal is a testament to both the legacy and legend of Collins. The images of him portrayed in the movie have contributed in no small way to the proliferation of his name as an icon of Irish history.

The motion picture as a source of entertainment is both a prevalent and powerful medium through which to deliver a message, recollect significant events or simply tell a story.⁴ Numerous directors have used the big screen to re-create, interpret and depict historical events and personalities. Movies such as *Gandhi*, *Braveheart*, *Rob Roy* and *Lawrence of Arabia* are examples of film that portray historical events through the image of a male protagonist. For these movies the director interprets historical events and personalities, moulds and shapes their composition, presenting their 'edited' version of the particular story. Similarly, Jordan's *Collins* is a reflection of the director's own political views. Acknowledging this point from the outset, the analysis that follow examines a selection of the various representations of masculinities, and highlights the ways in which these influence the portrayal of Collins in the particular context of the chosen scenes. Writing about a movie poses many difficulties, not least

¹ Neil Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins* (DVD, Geffen pictures, Warner home video, UK, 1998). (Hereafter referred to as, Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*). For the purpose of this chapter the actors in the movie are referred to by their character names, e.g. Michael Collins not Liam Neeson, Harry Boland not Aidan Quinn, etc, unless specifically mentioned in the text.

² Pól Ó Conghaile, 'A cut above the rest: by golly, Ireland's film censor is human after all' in *Irish American Post*, i, no. 10 (March 2001), available at:

<http://www.gaelicweb.com/irishampost/year2001/03march/featured/featured13.html> (24 November 2005). *Michael Collins* was surpassed at the Box office by the movie *Titanic*. See, 'Now Titanic is Ireland's top movie smash: Iceberg epic sinks Michael Collins', *Daily Mail*, 27 February 1998.

³ Crucially, the movie, because of its subject matter, attracted many viewers who would not be considered regular moviegoers.

⁴ The medium through which the individual director chooses to portray the subject of the film is a key element in the delivery of the story.

the impossibility of conveying the viewing experience in words. A further challenge is provided in attempting to transmit the experience to a reader who may not have seen the film in question. Notwithstanding these difficulties, this chapter examines ways in which images of Michael Collins are presented in the movie, focusing on masculinities as the vehicle of delivery. As a visual medium the issue of the film's genre and associated characteristics are considered for its impact in this area. Within this framework, Collins' masculinities are examined through topics of military masculinity, man-of-courage, man-of-action, political leadership, personal friendships and the sanctioning of violence.

Centred on and around the concept of the heroic male figure, Michael Collins, the movie's plot contains classic ingredients of an adventure drama.⁵ As an exemplar of a masculine stereotype the adventure hero is an idealized figure whose actions render him superior to other characters and to the environment in which he moves. 'Prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him. He is hindered by neither fears, scruples and doubts, nor by ambivalent needs and loyalties. These qualities enable his overcoming of all obstacles to the successful completion of his quest.'⁶ In this sense Jordan's movie has a David versus Goliath analogical content, where the actions and deeds of one man lead to the defeat of a powerful empire. The underdog rises to the top, driven by a passionate belief in a political ideology. He develops friendships, has romantic involvement, outwits the enemy militarily, is faced with political and military decisions that sacrifice his private relationships, meets a tragic fate yet somehow emerges with his reputation untarnished.

Throughout the movie Collins's masculinities are a vital means for both the recognition and projection of these qualities. Viewed through this medium, the audience are invited to engage in discovering both the public and significantly the private facets of his life.⁷ This helps in establishing empathy with Collins, a crucial factor for the projection of his image as the heroic figure. His movements and actions are the engaging feature of the movies plot. In the analytical sense, the other characters represent the paraphernalia

⁵ For perspectives on the concept of male adventure see, William Atkinson (ed.), *Lagoon and other stories* (Oxford, 1997); Dawson, *Soldier heroes*; Tobey C. Herzog, *Vietnam War stories: innocence lost* (New York, 1992); Mawuena Kossi Logan, *Narrating Africa: George Henty and the fiction of empire* (New York, 1999).

⁶ Dawson, *Soldier heroes*, p. 55.

⁷ By his masculinities as medium, I mean that the movie is a story of Michael Collins, therefore his actions and deeds are the central focus and medium for the delivery of the story. The choices he makes, and the public versus the private dimension of his life, helps to build the image that his brutal military actions are understood to be justified under the circumstances. See, Whitehead, *Men and masculinities*, pp 113-180, for a fuller discussion.

of complement in his adventure, serving the purpose of comparison and contrast as a means towards establishing the credentials of his character. Tragic fate established from the outset, there is an increased sense of focus on the central character.⁸ In terms of the storyline all else revolves around him, he is the critical figure. Consequently, everything he does takes on a heightened significance.

Setting the scene

Jordan's movie represents a merging of the real and the imagined as movie making is both an act of interpretation and direction.⁹ The historical character, Michael Collins the revolutionary and political activist, is conceptualised on celluloid and projected into the entertainment arena of the cinema theatre.¹⁰ The interpretation of the period with which the movie deals is an imaged adaptation of how the real events unfolded. By this I mean the directors subjective interpretation of history (the storyline), merged with the knowledge of what he considers to be the paramount constituents for delivering the plot. Jordan decided to tell the story 'from the point of view of the characters themselves. Sharing their aims, their perspectives and ultimately their confusions.'¹¹ In a sense the movie suspends 'reality', or presents a version of it for 127 minutes that is shaped, structured and designed for public consumption. Crucially, the movies title is a seductive attraction, for the name *Michael Collins* is one that resonates across the Irish social and cultural landscape. At a cursory level, is it possible to posit a more compelling proposition to explain the phenomenon of the large attendance figures? What is it about Collins that so fascinated the public to flock in such large numbers? The movie treats the audience to the good, the bad and the ugly of Collins and yet the hero emerges with an enhanced reputation – a testament to Jordan's knowledge and ability as moviemaker. The combined effect of these factors played no small part in Michael Collins being voted Irish person of the twentieth century in an *Irish Times* on-line opinion poll.¹²

⁸ Delivered by the character, Joe O'Reilly (Ian Hart), the movie opens with a monologue lamenting the death of Collins. I provide an analysis of this later in the chapter.

⁹ For further, see Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood, the dream factory: an anthropologist looks at the movie-makers* (Boston, 1950); James B. Twitchell, *Preposterous violence: fables of aggression in modern culture* (Oxford, 1989).

¹⁰ Richard Dyer, *Only entertainment* (London, 2002); Peter Vorderer and Dolf Zillmann (eds), *Media entertainment: the psychology of its appeal* (New Jersey, 2000).

¹¹ Neil Jordan, *Michael Collins: film diary and screenplay* (London, 1996), p. 10. (Hereafter referred to as, Jordan, *Film diary*).

¹² *Irish Times*, 30 January 2000.

The movie attracted no little degree of controversy and discussion. Arguments raged over the historical truth of many of the characters and the depiction of certain events. These various contentions portrayed a deep emotive sense of the need for historical accuracy and the proper and not so accurate depiction of the character of Collins and those of the personalities around him.¹³ As shall be seen later, some commentators drew comparisons with the contemporaneous activities and operations of the IRA, claiming Jordan was providing legitimacy to the movement's violent Republican agenda. Some even suggested that Jordan was engaged in the glorification and justification of the tactics employed by Collins, thus bestowing legitimacy on the modern-day IRA tactics and their claims of engagement in a war for Irish freedom.¹⁴ The numerous reactions are a testament to the effect of the Collins's legacy, for its ability to evoke passionate discussion and debate. These arguments are indicative of contemporary perspectives being brought to bear on past events. Luke Gibbons argues that in this type of discussion people were losing sight of the real issue, namely, the fact that the movie was just that, a movie and not an academically accredited historical account:

The main task in evaluating a historical film is not the pedestrian one of identifying inaccuracies, but the more difficult one of determining the point of these inaccuracies, the extent to which they are required by the logic of the film. This involves addressing the film as a *film*, examining the specific stylistic and generic conventions which are brought to bear on the story.¹⁵

Therefore, firstly I believe the portrayal of the events and characters should be treated for what they are, not *per se* a historically correct story, but the plot of a movie based along historical lines.¹⁶ 'Ciaran Carty of the Sunday Tribune put it well when he said that it was neither history nor a distortion of history: it was film. This may sound obvious, but it needed to be said.'¹⁷ However, the movie has a hugely significant historical dimension and because of the medium of film its populist appeal meant it had

¹³ See for example, *Sunday Times*, 14 January 1996; *The Mirror*, 7 and 11 November 1996; *The People*, 3 November 1996.

¹⁴ From the nationalist perspective, freedom of the six Ulster counties from British rule.

¹⁵ Luke Gibbons, 'Framing history: Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins*' in *History Ireland* (Spring 1997), p. 50. (Hereafter referred to as, Gibbons, 'Framing history')

¹⁶ Jordan himself has attested to this fact. In construction the storyline he decided to merge characters and took artistic licence in places. Jordan, *Film diary*, p. 9.

¹⁷ Aubrey Dillon-Malone, *Michael Collins: a Neil Jordan film* (Dublin, 1996), pp 57-8. (Hereafter referred to as, Dillon-Malone, *Michael Collins*).

far more influence and reached a wider audience than any academic historical account of the period. The film plays up to populist politics by ignoring some negative aspects of Collins's life and highlighting others. In acknowledging this perspective, with a view towards understanding its gendered content and the implications of these images for social and historical considerations, it is possible to engage in a more constructive analysis of the movie's masculine implications. Put succinctly, the attaching of historical significance to the portrayal of the characters and events provides evidence of the impact the movie had on people's imaginative process in constructing an impression of Collins' roles in Irish history. In this context the imagery of the movie is crucial to the portrayal of the characters and events. Keig and Sprau contended that:

Historical fiction and movies dealing with specific historical events and/or characters (critics would argue no difference exists between these two types of film) often fare very well at the box office and leave their viewers with the sense not only that they learned something about history, but that the images and situations they watched were the historical "truth".¹⁸

Whatever the controversies the popularity of the movie speaks volumes for it.¹⁹ To achieve an insightful appreciation for how the medium of delivery functions in the cinematic experience it is necessary to consider the movie in terms of its genre.

Genre

'Genre simply means "type". Genre analysis is popular not least because it relates directly to the way that the industry works and how films are consumed.'²⁰ In other words, the film fits into a culturally specific form that both evokes and delivers on audiences horizons of expectations. For example, the way the scenes are shot fits a recognisable pattern of movie production, the type of lighting employed in the scenes, the clothes worn by the actors, all conform to a recognisable portrayal of character typology.²¹ In other words, for the audience, aspects of the imagery are familiar to them, through having viewed movies shot in similarly fashion. Film-noir and gangster

¹⁸ Larry Keig and Ryan Sprau, 'I saw it in the movies: suggestions for incorporating film and experiential learning in the college history survey course' in *College Student Journal*, xxxv, no. 1 (March 2001), p. 101.

¹⁹ Emer Rockett and Kevin Rockett, *Neil Jordan: exploring boundaries* (Dublin, 2003), p. 175. (Hereafter referred to as, Rockett and Rockett, *Exploring boundaries*).

²⁰ Graham Roberts and Heather Wallis, *Introducing film* (London, 2001), p. 103.

²¹ For further reading see, Wes D. Gehring (ed.), *Handbook of American film genres* (New York, 1988); Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London, 2000).

genre preside over the action. Jordan acknowledges the influence of *The Godfather* movies on the filming process.²² For *Michael Collins* this content must attain a high degree of verisimilitude, it must have the appearance of truth. Steve Neale explains that 'the concept of verisimilitude is central to an understanding of genre, as is the question of the social and cultural functions that genres perform.'²³ For Collins, the portrayal of his actions and deeds take on a heightened significance in how they are presented for public consumption. His masculinities are presented in a way that shows the darker side of his character. The capacity for death and destruction are practical and reasoned necessities meted out on countertype figures whose activities not alone threaten the hero's very existence but also the collective principles which he is striving to achieve. To accomplish the necessary balance the content must be believable in a culturally specific way, a point that Jordan acknowledges in his film diary:

The thing is to make the whole thing real, to take it out of hagiography and mythology, to make the period come alive as if it was today.²⁴

Therefore, the film is first and foremost a reflection of the genre in which it was fashioned. The movie's producer Stephen Woolley said, that in filming they 'adopted the style of a forties Warner Brothers gangster movie.'²⁵ The historical legacy of Collins, as a figure conducting an underground war is reflected in the use of lighting to portray the character's images. Collins moves between the murky underworld of guerrilla warfare and legitimate politics. Many of the scenes are shot in dark rooms, with streams of light coming through windows to highlight (and semi-highlight) the characters' faces.

The movie should be treated like a cultural artefact as much as a historical portrayal. Indeed, both are mutually inclusive. Howell explains that 'every movie is a cultural artefact. In this way, just like pottery shards and stone utensils, a movie reflects the values, fears, myths, and assumptions of the culture that produces it.'²⁶ Examining the gendered images within these considerations allows for scrutiny of factors that

²² Gibbons, 'Framing history', p. 50.

²³ Steve Neale, 'Questions of genre' in *Screen*, xxxi, no. 1 (Spring 1990), p. 45. See also Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London, 2000); Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular bodies: gender, genre and the action cinema* (New York, 1993), for further reading on this topic.

²⁴ Jordan, *Film diary*, p. 27

²⁵ Stephen Woolley, 'When is a film not a film? When British journalists don't see it, says the producer of Michael Collins' in *New Statesman*, cxxv, no. 4309 (11 August 1996), p. 39.

²⁶ Richard P. Howell, 'PC History and film', available at: www.h-net.org/~film/archives/threads/polcor/pc3.html (12 June 2006).

influence and affect perceptions of masculine identity. It is after all one scriptwriter's interpretative version of a period of Irish history, told through the eyes of the protagonists – or more correctly, the director's imaginative interpretative reconstruction of them. The crucial factor is that the movie's images, portrayed through culturally recognisable depictions of masculinities, become part of public discourse. Twitchell argues that in 'popular culture spectacles, not only is the display generated by popular demand, but interpretation is passed around by the unconscious codes of the consumers. The audience creates, transforms, and interprets the scenarios of preposterous violence according to deep-seated, nonsequential, possibly even biological patterns. When the pattern fits, the audience stays to watch and listen.'²⁷ Aspects of the generic historical knowledge surrounding the Collins legacy that people 'take' to the movie is conceptualised on the screen and imaged in the presentation of the storyline in the film. This audience interpretation forms components of a public dialogue, in the process attaining a version of cultural knowledge pertaining to Collins in the discourse of Irish history. The portrayal of his character, the historical debates the movie stimulates and the overall moral images it conveys to the audience point to the film as an influential 'knowledge' medium.. Here, 'genre is used as a means of negotiating contradiction and difference.'²⁸ At its most simplistic, as a cultural product, the name Michael Collins sells.²⁹

However, as cultural product the movie must have an appeal and/or characteristics that relate to a social median. *Michael Collins* is a political adventure story with men as the protagonists in the events; there is romance and sexual complications; the underdog aspect is present; the good guy, bad guy and betrayal feature; violence is justified in a 'manly' fashion and crucially, male friendships, anguish and jealousy are a prominent component of the overall structure. Simultaneously, the movie has to convey some element of reality or what the audience considers to be reality, namely suggestion of historical truth – verisimilitude. Image of Collins becomes a focus of attention as people search for meaning and understanding, based on their own knowledge or perceptions of what the character's actions signify. With this blurring of the lines between the 'historical truth' and the commonly perceived facts, the movie becomes both a historical and cultural representation of the past, a type of cultural artefact that

²⁷ Twitchell, *Preposterous violence*, p. 16.

²⁸ Elayne Rapping, *The movie of the week: private stories/public events* (London, 1992), p. xli.

²⁹ At the public launch of the Collins 22 society in the Mansion house, Dublin on 22 October 2005, Tim Pat Coogan spoke about the American launch of a whiskey brand bearing the name *Michael Collins*. (My personal notes of the speech.)

informs generic public knowledge of the period. 'It is not simply in films or in genres that the boundaries between the cultural and the generic are blurred: the two regimes merge also in public discourse, generic knowledge becoming a form of cultural knowledge, a component of "public opinion".'³⁰

At the time of its filming and subsequent release,³¹ the movie's inherent images had a resonance within the cultural and social politics³² of Irish society. However, aspects of the content may not necessarily have similar reverberations within another culture. (In order to suit an American audience Jordan agreed to add the scene and the end where Kitty hears about Collins' death.)³³ The movie's content is subject to these considerations and judgments, pertaining both to the contemporary understanding and knowledge brought to bear in judging the actions in question. In other words, are the actions of Collins seen or understood as being necessary for the movie's portrayal of their context? Consequently, are they given a mark of approval or a stamp of disdain? The positive or negative judgment affects the perception of the masculinities in question. When asked about the issue of Collins sanctioning the use of violence Jordan said, 'I had to clarify my attitude towards his capacity for violence, because it is quite appalling.'³⁴ Equally, discussions on the movie reveal the varying opinions and judgments brought to bear on the portrayal of Collins and his actions. These are crucially important considerations when viewing representations of the past through the gendered spectrum, the issue of perception being vital.

The director's 'take'

Perhaps the most crucial factor in the production of the movie is Jordan, as screenplay writer and movie director, for it is his interpretations that shape the images of Collins that constitute the final product. Debating the accuracies or imprecision of Jordan's storyline reflects the contributors/critics own understanding and perspective of men's actions judged in historical retrospect. Important considerations here are understanding Collins's actions in the framework of their times, whilst taking into account the values

³⁰ Neale, 'Questions of genre', p. 46.

³¹ The movie was shot during July and September 1995 with additional scenes shot in February 1996. Released later that year. See, Jordan, *Film diary*, pp 36-65.

³² Social and cultural politics refers to the everyday perceptions that function in any give society in time and space – each with their own unique set of nuanced influences and circumstances, sociologically termed as societal values and norms.

³³ Jordan, *Film diary*, p. 62.

³⁴ Neil Jordan, *South Bank Show: Michael Collins* (London Weekend Television, 1996), 'Documentary' in Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, 9 mins, 02 secs.

and beliefs of the society in space and time from which the judgments are drawn. Consequently, Jordan faced the historical dilemma of accurate representation and chose to circumvent this predicament by 'treat[ing] them as fictional characters. Treat history as fiction in the making: a fiction that will create the future.'³⁵ In a sense he interprets history for his audience in the form of a story based on a central character.

When analysing the masculinities on view in the movie, I will deal with the characters in the same manner as Jordan suggested, focusing on how he presents the image of Collins and the masculine characteristic he offers as the harbingers of the man's innate personality, the fictional character! Crucially, however Michael Collins was a real person. In this sense the movie represents the merging of reality, fiction and imagination, telling the heroic story in a particular manner. Acknowledging the presence of this fictional element is crucial to understanding how the movie emphasizes the heroic presentation of the Collins legacy. Importantly, the images must have a receptive audience. This is not to suggest that the movies content is devoid of historical accuracy. The importance for this study is to have an awareness of the blurring of the lines between historical accuracy, if such a thing exists, and fictional representations as history. Critics of the historical film are of the opinion that movies like *Michael Collins* do not present serious investigations of the past and that treating them as historical accounts is an affront to the true ideals of scholarship. 'Others praise these filmmakers for communicating higher truths in the course of designing stimulating portrayals that mix fact with fiction. The makers of these movies succeed in getting the public to ponder important questions, the artistic flourishes make audiences think about history.'³⁶ Commenting on his students knowledge of American history, Neil Longley York notes that 'more than a few had their understanding of the...past shaped in movie theatres or in front of the television'.³⁷ His observation is an indication that in the modern world of mass media moving images are incredibly influential, not alone in the portrayal of history but also in the dissemination of knowledge.

The portrayal of the consistent nature of Collins's political activism in these arenas are important for the idea of the character of a man (through the masculinities on view) required to steer a nation through the minefield of unconventional warfare and political wrangling that led to the inception of the Irish Free State. Crucially, the characteristics

³⁵ Jordan, 'Film diary', p. 32.

³⁶ Robert Brent Toplin, *History by Hollywood: the use and abuse of the American past* (Chicago, 1996), p. 17.

³⁷ Neil Longley York, *Fiction as fact: the horse soldiers and popular memory* (Kent, Ohio, 2001), p. xi.

displayed by Collins are recognisable social identities associated with men. It is this recognition that is critical in establishing his personality. People must be able to identify with him and recognise the characteristics as being worthy of acclaim (Or not, for those who disapprove).³⁸ In a sense it presents a fixed typology of male character. I am not suggesting that this is a negative element but it does align itself to the patriotic ethos of heroic nationalism, the exemplary characteristics of masculine endeavour that will guide a nation's destiny.

Throughout the movie the moral fibre of Collins, through the ideals he propagates and represents, evokes affection and trust signified in associates who are willing to risk their own lives to assist him and what he represents – the Irish nationalist cause. One of many examples of this loyalty in the movie is the character Ned Broy.³⁹ As a detective in Dublin Castle he is ideally placed to pass information on to Collins. However, this involves a great deal of personal risk on his behalf. His willingness to voluntarily undertake this role evokes concepts of loyalty and trust that have a deep psychological resonance in establishing the ethical integrity of Collins and the cause which he represents. The important aspect here is that the events have the appearance of truth, not that they are historically accurate in their portrayal. The character of Broy is one example of how verisimilitude portrays the ethical morality of the cause, in both the visual imagery of the action and through Broy's loyalty in forsaking his own life to protect the anonymity of Collins.⁴⁰ Equally, he is the personification and embodiment of the loyal servant who forfeits his own life for the sake of his master and his political philosophy, Collins and Ireland. The movie's producer, Stephen Woolley, admits that merging the Broy character was a dramatic device. 'There were dozens of spies in the castle... We could not make a seven-hour movie featuring all of them so we showed the most prominent one.'⁴¹ Therefore Broy focuses the audience's attention on both Collins's daring and charisma, in his willingness to risk personal safety to assist the hero's quest.

³⁸ By this I mean to identify with him and his action as being necessary, projected and illuminated through a feel-good factor of Irish heroism. Being proud of him for what he achieved.

³⁹ Jordan merged all the Dublin castle detectives who collaborated with Collins into a single character in the film. In doing so he acknowledged that he was taking great historical licence in the screenplay. See Jordan, *Film diary*, pp 9-10.

⁴⁰ In the movie, Broy is followed to a hotel room by a member of the Cairo gang (the new secret service sent from England to track Collins) and is uncovered as a spy. He is taken to Dublin castle, tortured, killed and his body is dumped on the street of Dublin. For Broy's capture, torture and death see, Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapters 24 and 25.

⁴¹ Woolley, p. 38.

Passion and Destiny

One examines human affairs as if they were at the mercy of an uncaring, corrosive destiny. A unique opportunity to tell a story born out of politics that allows for no political illusions. And the final definition of the actions of the hero as a tragic one. The contradictions of the politics drive him towards a tragic destiny.⁴²

An important consideration in examining the portrayal of Collins's masculinities in the movie is Jordan's decision to immediately inform the audience of his death.⁴³ This is critical in setting the tone for the story that follows. Collins's destiny is fated from the outset. Immediately and dramatically sorrowful emotions are evoked. The film's subconscious medium is now set. The actions of the characters and the events from this moment onwards are established against the backdrop of this knowledge. Prepared for his tragic fate the focus on his activities now assumes a heightened significance. The subheading for the movie, which describes it as 'an epic tale of passion and destiny', sets this knowledge within the contextual framework of the overall story and firmly places this 'tragedy' as a backdrop of the movie's plot. Quite simply we know Collins is going to die. Tragedy is posited with compelling cogency as a venerable attribute, an essential characteristic of destiny's fated outcome. Within this emotional constituent, factors inherent throughout the movie are issues of friendships, political goals; use of violence, Collins the leader and his military persona, which serve in contributing to the theme of the heroic male project. These enhance what is termed the 'narrative image' of the movie, the idea of the film that is widely circulated and promoted⁴⁴ - an epic tale of passion and destiny. Throughout the movie, Collins is the central icon for public imaginings, one man's passion and masculinities as a symbol of the state defined in the ultimate achievement of a nation's right to have its own government. Concurrently, what is known as the inter-textual relay serves to cultivate the narrative image:

This [inter-textual] relay performs an additional, generic function: not only does it define and circulate narrative images for individual films, beginning the immediate narrative process of expectation and

⁴² Jordan, *Film diary*, p. 31.

⁴³ Jordan chose to do this on advice he had received some years earlier from Stanley Kubrick, who suggested that an American audience would expect Collins to end up being president and the shock of his death would leave them disappointed. See Jordan, *Film diary*, p. 62.

⁴⁴ John Ellis, in Neale, 'Questions of genre', p. 48.

anticipation, it also helps to define and circulate, in combination with the films themselves, what one might call 'generic images', providing sets of labels, terms and expectations which will come to characterize the genre as a whole.⁴⁵

The movie poster falls into this category as it sets the tone of expectation for the plot. The poster's image depicts Collins towering above the caps and hats-in-hand waving crowd, clenched fist forward, mouth open, delivering of a passionate speech. It too was tailored to suit political and social expediencies.⁴⁶ 'The original publicity poster...show[ing] Liam Neeson...leaping over a barricade with a rifle in his hand'⁴⁷ was considered too provocative for the then fledgling peace process and was therefore tailored to project a democratic rather than a revolutionary image. Simultaneously, the trailer alludes to key themes and issues in whetting the appetite for what is to follow.⁴⁸ In essence these relays function as a means of providing labels to characterise the film as a whole, in the process serving to engrain the significance of Collins in the storyline. The knowledge of his death is the preface for the unfolding drama of passion and destiny. In other words, it is a means of attaching labels to characterise the sentiment of the film, its narrative image.

With Collins as the principal medium for Jordan's portrayal of this period of Irish history, it is crucial to establish the credibility and necessity of his activities and actions within their context. Therefore, the viewer must form some understanding of his actions within their social and political circumstances. Collins's activities are understood as being necessary for the times in which he lived.⁴⁹ Moreover, establishing this awareness for and appreciation of the need for the course of actions he subsequently follows is vital. Concurrently, within the realm of these considerations the

⁴⁵ Neale, 'Questions of genre', p. 49.

⁴⁶ See front cover of Jordan (dir.) *Michael Collins*. Also the poster is can be viewed at: <http://michaelcollins.warnerbros.com> (19 April 2004).

⁴⁷ Fintan O'Toole, 'The Organiser' in *New Republic*, ccxxxiv, no. 9 (13 March 2006), p. 34.

⁴⁸ The trailer lasts 1 min and 40 seconds and includes brief clips from the movie, played over a backing soundtrack. See, Jordan, *Michael Collins*, DVD, side a, 'Theatrical trailer'. The following captions appear on the screen at 4-6 second intervals, beginning after 18 seconds with: 'Ireland 1919...in a time of conflict...in a land divided...one man's fight for freedom...inspired hopes...ignited passions...and drove a nation's destiny.'

⁴⁹ A criticism levelled at the movie was that it failed to provide a proper context for Collins's use of violence. (Not a view with which I personally concur) See, Jeannette Catsoulis, 'Slouching toward Belfast', available at: <http://www.reverseshot.com/legacy/winter06/jordan/michaelcollins1.html> (17 September 2006).

presentation of Collins's physical stature exemplifies his status and enhances the viewing focus as the quintessence of the bodily medium of the story:

At six foot four inches, Neeson is even taller than the real 'Big Fella'⁵⁰ (who was five foot eleven) and his stature visually emphasizes Collins's physically and emotionally prepossessing qualities, including a long-legged stride and a boisterous physicality (such as a boyish preference for wrestling his adversaries into submission), an engaging sense of humour, and a reckless sense of daring.⁵¹

For example, in the case of the latter quality, the scene showing the arrival in Dublin castle of the new secret service men (or 'Cairo Gang') deployed to seek out and eliminate Collins is an example of his audacity. As the newly arrived group gather to discuss their tactical approach to hunting down Collins, their leader Soames poses the following questions, 'Doesn't he have a face this Collins? Doesn't he have corporeal form?'⁵² By questioning his existence in this manner, such observations augment the stature of Collins's physical form with British agents acting as countertype figures in the plot. This dialogue acts as the lead into the next scene which shows Soames exiting a hotel through a revolving door. Whilst in the process of lighting a cigarette he is approached by a tall stranger who asks him for a light. The stranger is none other than Collins. Soames duly obliges the request and Collins walks casually away unrecognised by the secret service man, despite the fact that he looked directly into the face of the man who in the previous clip had questioned his physical existence.⁵³ Here, the image of Collins as the daring, 'in your face', fearless personality is reinforced in a way that draws an appreciation and respect for his audacity. In other words, it is presented as an admirable quality, a daring masculinity. Crucially, in the shot both men are silhouetted. Soames' face, made visible by the cigarette lighter puts him in Collins' spotlight. He is perceptible whilst Collins is still the elusive revolutionary. Both men operate in the shadows of the intelligence underworld. The scene merges the reality of Collins's physical existence with the illusive romanticism of heroic cunning, his corporeality enhanced in the eyes of the audience as he slips back into the darkness of the night unrecognised by his enemy. Later, in the scene that depicts 'Bloody Sunday' Soames

⁵⁰ Information differs on Collins actual height, but he measured in somewhere between 5ft 11ins and 6 ft.

⁵¹ Gary Crowds, 'The screenwriting of Irish history: Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins*' in *Cineaste*, xxii, no. 4 (September 1997), p. 14.

⁵² Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 23.

⁵³ Ibid.

meets his death at the hand of Collins's 'apostles' dying without ever knowingly seeing Collins' face.⁵⁴

Concurrently, establishing empathy for Collins's predicament of conscience in determining the necessity to undertake violent actions is an integral element of the plot. Thus, 'like the gangster movies and the appeal of their lawless heroes reflect or embody public antipathy for Prohibition,'⁵⁵ the explicit violence instigated by Michael Collins reflects both the savagery of the Irish War of Independence and its necessity for the cause of Irish nationalism. Collins's masculinities therefore become a crucial medium for both the delivery and understanding of these issues.⁵⁶ In other words, to comprehend the essential message being delivered the audience must understand and appreciate the male characteristics of Collins within their political and social context. As the main protagonist of the story many other factors play a role in establishing the central figure's credentials, highlighting characteristics that establish his various masculinities and the means through which the story is portrayed through their representation.

Setting the tone

Jordan chose to open and close the movie by informing the audience of Collins's death, the sense of loss is the focal point from which he starts and finishes his story. The importance of this scene and the bridging scene at the end of the film – a continuation of the opening one – are integral to the movie's emotive medium. For the purpose of the analytical framework being employed here I will now provide an analysis of the opening scene and will return to the bridging scene at the end of the chapter.

The movie begins with the camera fixed on the face of Joe O'Reilly⁵⁷, Collins's faithful right hand man. He is standing in a room with daylight filtering through the drawn curtains. The right side of his face is illuminated and the angle of refraction is casting a slight shadow over the left side. A grim expression consumes his features and his eyes are fixed on someone not visible to the audience. When he speaks, attention is

⁵⁴ Jordan (Dir), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 24.

⁵⁵ Stephen Prince, *Classic film violence: designing and regulating brutality in Hollywood cinema, 1930-1968* (London, 2003), p. 3.

⁵⁶ On the viewing movie a third time Jordan realised that in Collins, or Neeson's portrayal of him, there is something that is impossible to dislike. Jordan, *Film diary*, p. 61.

⁵⁷ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 1. Joe O'Reilly is played by Ian Hart.

immediately focused to the words he utters and in this moment the audience are drawn into the scene. O'Reilly begins by saying:

You've got to think of him the way he was. How he youst to cycle round Dublin in his pin striped suit with £10,000 on his head. Why hide Joe he'd say when that's what they expect. But he never did what anyone expected. He got the British out of here and no one expected that.⁵⁸

At this stage the camera angle changes to give us the view from where O'Reilly is standing. We see Kitty Kiernan,⁵⁹ Collins's distraught fiancé, lying curled up on a four-poster bed covered with a blanket. The light falls on her in a similar fashion to that of O'Reilly. He continues to speak:

Some people are what the times demand and life without them seems impossible. But he is dead and life *is* possible. He made it possible.⁶⁰

The scene ends and the name *Michael Collins* appears on the screen in white capital letters on a dark screen, to announce the commencement of the nostalgic reflection. The story begins, qualified by the knowledge that the main protagonist meets a pre-destined fate, his destiny. Collins is now firmly established as the most important focus of reflective attention.

Although O'Reilly is speaking to Kitty, he is also addressing the audience. By choosing the words 'you've got to remember him the way he was' to open the movie's dialogue Jordan succeeds in creating a sense of seductive anticipation. The audience are 'invited' to also think of him in these terms. Although physically absent from the screen, the room is filled with the aura of Collins. A sense of loss is immediately addressed, his masculinity punctuates the space, evoking images of remembrance and his absence accentuates the focus. The figure of Kitty Kiernan lying distraught on the bed intensifies the tragedy, woman grieves for man and a nation grieves a leader.⁶¹ The subliminal focus for the imagining is Collins. A dichotomy between life and death is established. Announcing his death in this manner serves to strengthen his character and achievements. Remembering him the way he was becomes the way to channel that

⁵⁸ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 1.

⁵⁹ Julia Roberts plays the part of Kitty Kiernan.

⁶⁰ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 1.

⁶¹ For a discussion on this concept see, Luke Gibbons, 'Engendering the state: narrative, allegory and Michael Collins' in *Éire-Ireland*, xxxi, nos. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1996), pp 261-9.

understanding. The courage of the man with £10,000 on his head is an admirable quality. His death serves as an example of how life is made possible, the life of a nation. This man made it so. The screen goes blank and then the name *Michael Collins* fills the view, thus establishing his centrality in the viewer's imagination. The focus is well and truly fixed on the man and his actions from this point onwards. The character of Collins and his subsequent activities are now the medium through which events will be portrayed. 'Collins' character is deliberately being presented to us in a way that will engage our sympathies.'⁶²

Vivian Sobchack argues that the way death is treated through the camera lens in modern movies provides short reprieve from our doubts. Death can be prolonged 'cinematically {through editing, slow motion, extreme close-ups, etc} so that we are made to see form and order where none seems to exist in real life. The movement of the human body toward nonbeing is underlined, emphasized, dramatized...we can also see ourselves on the fringes of the frame, falling by the wayside, but falling *in the movies*.'⁶³ By introducing 'Michael Collins' in this manner the movie taps into the emotive respect and cultural awareness that death ensues, engaging a nostalgic sentiment in scrutinising his actions from this moment onwards. Collins's activities now attract a focus that is enhanced by the knowledge of his death. This intensity centres his character as the main focal point through which everything else is viewed and understood. Collins is now the symbolic representation of the story's message. His actions are bound to his circumstances, judged and understood in the knowledge of his impending death. His death becomes the subliminal emotive medium through which all else is viewed and understood.

Masculinity's physical presence

By opening the film in this fashion, Jordan also attempts to establish a historical context for the telling the Michael Collins's story. The historical background, told briefly by means of the opening credits, informs the viewer of the British Empire's world dominance of political power., Ireland as its most troubled colony and Collins as the mastermind of the guerrilla war that forced the British to agree a truce. Crucially,

⁶² Ruth Barton, *Irish national cinema* (New York, 2004), p. 143. (Hereafter known as, Barton, *Irish cinema*).

⁶³ Vivian C. Sobchack, 'The violent dance: a personal memoir of death in the movies' in Stephen Prince (ed.), *Screening violence* (New Jersey, 2003), p. 112.

'his life and death defined the period, in its triumph, terror and tragedy.'⁶⁴ We are then presented with the already discussed figure of O'Reilly speaking towards the camera. In establishing the historical background in this manner, British political rule in Ireland is firmly fixed as anathema to the life and death of Collins,⁶⁵ the enemy and emotional loss established from the beginning. Although physically absent the presence of Collins is established; he is the medium, the focus of attention. Without actually appearing on screen his power and strength are established and fixed in the viewer's imagination. The sense of anticipation is whetted for his physical appearance. Politically, Collins's actions will be judged against both his loss to the nation and the removal of the British enemy.

Collins's physical stature forms a crucial function in projecting his image from the screen. Liam Neesons' physique portrays Collins as standing head and shoulders above the rest of the men. Eileen Morgan argues that, 'Neeson's Irish background and his size make him one of the few established actors suited for the role of "the Big Fella", as Collins was called.'⁶⁶ His synonym is subliminally established without direct reference to it. This physicality is reiterated throughout the movie. It is a crucial element in the portrayal of his masculinities providing a pivotal focus for the conceptualisation of his words, deeds and actions. Through Neeson's formidable physical presence Collins's expressions and exploits assume a greater focus. His language and conduct somehow carry more credence as his stature attracts visual attention. Yet, 'the Big Fella' retains the capacity to slip out of view of his enemies. This element has such a crucial subliminal function in the cultural and social politics of gender identity. The body's physical presence and performance has such strong connotation for how the viewer perceives the projected actions in which it engages. 'In our [western] culture at least, the physical sense of maleness and femaleness is central to the cultural interpretation of gender.'⁶⁷

The first physical view of Collins sees him dressed in military uniform engaged in the heat of battle, his face illuminated by a bright light streaming through the artillery bombarded structural shell of Dublin's General Post Office (G.P.O.).⁶⁸ Immediately established are the credentials of the man putting his body on the line in a stance

⁶⁴ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, opening caption and narrative of the movie, side a, chapter 1.

⁶⁵ In terms of the opposing political ideologies and what each represents.

⁶⁶ Morgan, 'Ireland's lost action hero,' p. 35.

⁶⁷ Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 52.

⁶⁸ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 2.

against the enemy. The scene lasts about 20 seconds and then we see the unconditional surrender of the rebels. 'So the moment Collins steps into the limelight in his full uniform, he is identified as the romantic hero of Irish history. The Easter Rising sequence in the film reinforces the image of Collins as a man of action.'⁶⁹ At this juncture in the story, surrendering to the British signifies a temporary defeat. Collins says, 'the game's over Harry, we've lost again,'⁷⁰ as they are shepherded away from the building under military escort – a reference to the many failed attempts to overthrow British rule in Ireland. As a British prisoner Collins is in a subordinate political position,⁷¹ the power and authority rest with the Dublin Metropolitan Police and the British army as they go through and pick out the 'ringleaders of this little farce.'⁷² We see Collins' seething anger and instinct to intervene, as he witnesses James Connolly being kicked while lying prostrate on a stretcher. 'Wait Michael wait' de Valera urges, to which Collins replies 'til when', to which de Valera retorts, 'til the next time.'⁷³ The scene shows Collins's restraint and crucially his willingness to listen to de Valera's words, thus introducing an important element in their political relationship, namely, Collins's willingness to listen to him. 'Collins is thus introduced as a soldier of "undeniable romantic quality", as a passionate and compassionate man of action who is ready to get things going, while de Valera appears to be a more cold-hearted and calculating strategist.'⁷⁴ Harry Boland⁷⁵ then ask Collins, 'what happens next time?' to which he responds, 'we won't play it by their rules Harry, we'll invent our own.'⁷⁶ Within the first five minutes of the movie the political background of the main protagonists are presented to the audience. Subsequent events are now subject to the forces of passion and destiny.

Military masculinity

The subject of Collins's military masculinity is a prominent theme in the presentation of his image. Firstly, there is the visual representation of the military figure as defined

⁶⁹ Raita Merivirta, 'Like Cain and Abel', *Wider Screen*, 1, 2005, available at: www.widerscreen.fi/2005/1/like_cain_and_abel.htm (16 June 2006). (Hereafter known as Merivirta, 'Like Cain and Abel').

⁷⁰ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 2.

⁷¹ By this I refer to R. W. Connell's concept of subordination, where the British authority represents the Hegemonic political order. As well as being physically repressed, the political ideals Collins represents are being repressed. See, Connell, *Masculinities*, pp 77-81.

⁷² Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 2.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Merivirta, 'Like Cain and Abel',

⁷⁵ Harry Boland is played by Aidan Quinn,

⁷⁶ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 2.

through wearing the uniform. Secondly, the issue of the tactics he employs in the practice of 'warfare' have an enormous relevance for the imaging of his character. As discussed in the written images chapter, the military uniform is an instantly recognisable emblem of masculinity and has symbolic representational significance for claims of political authenticity and legitimacy. There are three significant periods in the movie where Collins appears clad in military uniform. Each contains symbolic representation for both their political significance and the central role of Collins's participation in the unfolding events.⁷⁷ The previously discussed opening scene, showing Collins with gun in hand, pitches him in the heat of battle, bullets and bomb flying and landing in the chaos around him. In this instance the volunteer uniform signifies the rebel's claim as a legitimate army of the Irish Republic. Consequently, the image of Collins as military figure is established from the outset. John Regan claims that the image of Collins in military uniform makes him 'an instantly recognisable figure with an undeniable romantic quality.'⁷⁸ Simultaneously, the persona of military uniform and political legitimacy is a very powerful symbol throughout history. In this sense Collins's political motives and intentions of claims to that legitimacy are signified in its symbolism. It demonstrates a sense of physical participation through the aspirations that underpin the concept of the nation-state, representing an ideological conception proactively defended and upheld by the men who wear it. I will return to this theme later in the chapter.

The 'invisible leader' and his tactics of engagement.

In terms of Collins's military capabilities, the scene in McEoin's forge is an important one for establishing the principles of the men involved in the subsequent acts of violence.⁷⁹ Collins is seen to possess a natural quality of leadership infused with no little degree of ingenuity. It also courts understanding from the audience as to the motivations that inspire his actions. In this setting Collins's credentials as a tactical leader are established. The forge is an interesting choice of location for the portrayal of his qualities. This very masculine workspace that served as a social gathering place for men and boys during the period depicted in the movie, projects a strong masculine cast in a masculine setting. Collins's ability to transform a sod of turf into a weapon is

⁷⁷ The two other significant periods, the British surrender of Dublin Castle and the bombing of the Four Courts are dealt with later in this chapter.

⁷⁸ John Regan, 'Looking at Mick again: demilitarising Michael Collins' in *History Ireland*, iii, no. 3 (Autumn 1995), p. 17.

⁷⁹ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 7.

simplistic yet ingenious and draws a sense of awe from the gathering. His innovative ability – ‘invent[ing] our own rules’⁸⁰ – displays the sense of possibility that he offers against seemingly insurmountable odds. His ability to think in this tactically astute manner portrays the qualities of a man who possesses attributes of military leadership. Dressed in civilian clothes, physically, Collins dominates the scene standing head and shoulders above all the other men thus accentuating the essence of his suggestions - the man of action instigating ‘innovative’ military tactics. The group then proceed to attack the local RIC barracks in order to ‘relieve’ them of their rifle cache. His ‘underground’ army has sprung into action

The schoolroom scene that follows the weapons raid,⁸¹ projects a compelling image of Collins as the leader of the new ‘army’. The arsenal of rifles seized during the sortie is unloaded from the holdall. As he paces up and down the room handing out guns to the volunteers, Collins, the ‘teacher’, sets out the terms for the new army, with ‘living on the run’ being a crucial and tactical necessity. The enemy will be engaged only on ‘our’ terms. It sends out a signal that, we set the rule we are in control. Collins then walks to the top of the room turns around and faces the group. His physical frame towers above everyone, illuminated in blue greyish light streaming through the window. He shouts, ‘stand up’. All in the assembled group rise to their feet. The camera moves toward Collins, viewing him from a slightly upward trajectory thus portraying the image of a powerful and forceful figure. The camera movement halts, fixing on the intensity of his face as he states the following: ‘I’ll make a fuckin’ army out of ye if it’s the last thing I do.’⁸² His ruthless presence fills the room, visually enhanced by the light streaming through the window, a feature of the genre that is the movie’s signature.

Collins as leader is compellingly personified in these scenes, through physical presence and tactical ingenuity. In its purest sense the power of his authority draws attention to an admirable quality of masculinity in leadership, the ability to organise for a purpose unperturbed by the odds, whilst simultaneously providing an exemplar for young men to follow and emulate. In essence, he is in charge, the beacon and guiding light for others to follow. The dramatic movement of the camera presents an uncommon angle that reawakens the viewer’s awareness of their own presence in the movie. Barbara De Concini notes that ‘an eye-level shot suggest parity between viewer and subject, while

⁸⁰ Remember, Collins also said this to Boland following their surrender during the previously discussed 1916 rising scene.

⁸¹ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 7.

⁸² Ibid.

high angles reduce the subject's significance, suggesting vulnerability, and low angles do the opposite, creating a sense of dominance over the viewer.'⁸³ From this lower trajectory, the intensity of focus is on the words Collins utters, particularly the manner in which he does so. His presence is exemplified by the light that illuminates him thus accentuating his presence in the room and crucially, on the screen. The determined assuredness of his voice is stamped on the image. His character dominates the parameters of the message. There is a sensation fashioned through the camera movement that the viewer is actually physically present in the room with Collins. Consequently his words and demeanour assume a heightened significance. In these few seconds Collins delivers an exemplary image of masculinity, a focus for admiration and judgment and a measurement against which the actions and deeds of others can be compared and contrasted. He exudes the charisma of confidence, loyalty and trust. Remembering him the way he was for what he achieved.

Man of courage and the instigation of 'legitimate' warfare

The portrayal of Collins's sheer audacity and courage in the face of the enemy is an important feature of the movie. His fearlessness is noteworthy throughout the film. This is exemplified in two particular instances; when he spends the night in the file room at Dublin castle⁸⁴ and the previously discussed scene when he stops on the steps of a hotel and asks Soames for a light.

Collins's courage in taking personal risk by going into the citadel of British rule in Ireland cements the image of a man with nerves of steel in the face of personal risk to life. The sheer audacity of being one of the most wanted men in Ireland and putting his body on the line by walking into the heart of the administration that wants him captured alive or dead, draws a sense of awe and admiration from the viewer. Having the nerve to carry out this feat pits Collins against heart of the intelligence system that is designed to eliminate him and his allies. Moreover, it sets the tone and justification of the actions that will follow, namely, the need for the assassinations of the men who compile the files. After spending the night in the file room 'Collins...is keenly aware that the facts do not speak for themselves, and are only as reliable as the slant put on them, the particular point of view which endows them with meaning.'⁸⁵ Despite asking others to

⁸³ Barbara De Concini, 'Seduction by visual image' in *Spotlight on Teaching*, vi, no. 1 (May 1998), available at: <http://aarweb.org/Publications/spotlight/previous/6-1/06-01-04sedu.asp> (17 June, 2006).

⁸⁴ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 11.

⁸⁵ Gibbons, 'Framing history', p. 48.

do most of work for him Collins shows he is willing to put his own neck on the line. He is not just a man who gives orders to others but someone who is prepared to carry out dangerous tasks himself. This is crucial in establishing his credentials for it allows him to give instructions of the most difficult nature with the viewer secure in the knowledge that Collins himself has the physical and moral courage to risk personal well-being for the same cause and principles. Equally, insight is provided into why the extreme level of violence is necessary.

Recourse to the unconventional methods of warfare was a decision that was not taken lightly. The morning following his night spent in the files room of Dublin castle,⁸⁶ Collins reaches a decision on the methods they need to employ in order to defeat the enemy – time to ‘invent’ new rules. The scene begins with Collins lying on a writing desk exhausted from his nocturnal exertions. ‘Others come in successively, asking where the hell has he been.’⁸⁷ Boland, O’Reilly and Tom Cullen are in the room with him. Collins identifies ‘informers’ as one of the biggest problem facing their campaign, historically the bane of all Irish revolutionary organisations. He asks O’Reilly to write a general letter. With cigarette in mouth, Collins put his arm around Boland’s shoulder and says:

To whom it may concern, this is to inform you that any further collaboration with the forces of occupation will be punishable by death. You have been warned. Signed, the Irish Republican Army.⁸⁸

Faced with the stunned expressions of his companions, Boland asks, ‘are you serious?’ Collins explains his reasoning in the following manner:

Now imagine Dublin castle like an enclave where anyone and I mean anyone who collaborated knew he’d be shot, they wouldn’t be able to move outside those fuckin’ walls. That’s how serious I am.⁸⁹

Boland responds with a rhetorical suggestion: ‘there’s only one problem! We’d have to do it!’ To which Collins replies, ‘Yes [pause and exhalation of breath]. So, could you bear it?’ He gets no verbal response. The camera pauses for a brief moment on the faces of his three companions, absorbing their expressions of stunned silence as the

⁸⁶ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 12.

⁸⁷ Jordan, *Film diary*, p. 38. In the movie, O’Reilly bellows this at Collins.

⁸⁸ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 12.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

chilling reality of what he has just said sinks in. 'The performances go from banter and mutual abuse to utter seriousness.'⁹⁰ The new rules for the unleashing of the unconventional warfare have been set in motion, their necessity understood in light of the information Collins gleaned while in the castle's file room.

The portrayal of Collins's 'military tactics' forms an integral part of the movies' plot, understandable in the light of their significance for his historical legacy – his ability to 'invent' and 'execute' an alternative method of military engagement with such devastating effect. Although, 'while Michael Collins did not invent guerrilla warfare (he essentially adapted to an urban setting the use of hit and run tactics against a numerically superior and better armed force that had been used successfully during the Anglo-Boer War [1899 - 1902] and on the Mid-eastern front during WWI), he demonstrated his military brilliance in organizing the vast counterintelligence network to undermine British police and military control of Ireland.'⁹¹

Later, during a conversation with Harry Boland, the movie offers insight into Jordan's interpretation of Collins's motives (and justification) for engaging in such unorthodox and violent methods and crucially his personal disdain for having to do so. Violence is justified as a necessary evil:

I hate them not for their race, not for their brutality. I hate them because they have left us no way out. I hate whoever put a gun in young Vinny Byrne's hand. I know it's me and I hate myself for it. I hate them for making hate necessary and I'll do what I have too to end it.⁹²

This dialogue illustrates that for Jordan, Collins was 'a man with as many graduations within him as there are between black and white, someone who is at times appalled by his own capacity for violent action. And has the advantage of immutable likeability.'⁹³ Therefore, the issue of violence is a theme that permeates the movie. Violence is seen as a means to an end. It is a necessary evil 'forced' upon Collins by British stubbornness. Its justification lies in the British unwillingness to listen to the Irish perspective. Collins's friendship with Boland is the means through which we learn about this viewpoint.⁹⁴ Whilst on a ferry trip to England,⁹⁵ Collins states that he wants peace and quite so much he'd die for it. Boland responds by saying. 'You mean you'd

⁹⁰ Jordan, *Film diary*, pp 38-9.

⁹¹ Crowds. 'Neil Jordan's Michael Collins', p. 15.

⁹² Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 16.

⁹³ Jordan, *Film diary*, pp 16-7.

⁹⁴ The Collins/Boland friendship is a theme dealt with a greater length later in the chapter.

⁹⁵ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 16.

kill for it first.' To which Collins replies, 'no not first last.' He warns Boland that things will get worse. In acknowledging that he hates himself for engaging in violence he qualifies this by saying it is the British that make hate necessary. Here, there is a presentation of the split between the public and private aspects of masculinity. Personally, Collins doesn't endorse the 'tactic' but sees them as a political necessity, a requirement of his public duties as an Irish nationalist revolutionary. Despite his personal reservations he claims that 'I will do what I have to end it.'⁹⁶ Through his relationship with Boland, Collins's determination to finish a task, even against his own personal preference is firmly established. The violence is put in perspective. The young men with guns in their hands, a very prevalent theme of masculinity in the movie, is presented as a necessity for the political context in which they find themselves. There is no other way to get the British to listen.

Relaying his thoughts to Boland in this manner allows the audience to appreciate the mindset behind the adaptation of such brutal methods. The audience are invited to understand his perspective. In short, the means are justified under the circumstances. 'Boland not only routinely serves as Collins's sounding board, enabling us to hear the latter's view...he also humanizes Collins.'⁹⁷ The subsequent split in the Collins/Boland personal relationship becomes all the more poignant as a consequence and is symbolic of the political split that resulted in Civil War. Their differences over the complexities of nationalist political ideology and to a lesser extent the love of the same woman, shape the image of two men unable to reach a point of compromise that doesn't involve a recourse to violence.

Like the hero of an adventure story, there is a real sense that Collins is struggling with a moral dilemma. He doesn't want to engage in such brutal tactics but he also doesn't have a choice. However, 'the adventure hero as a mode of lived subjectivity exists in continual hope and anticipation of victory.'⁹⁸ Jordan acknowledges this element in the storyline, commenting that 'there is no way of knowing how far the audience's sympathies will go with our characters, given the nature of what they do.'⁹⁹ The militaristic element of what Collins does best is an appalling recourse to violence of the most brutal nature. He has a divided heart, but yet a magnificent one. There is a sense of virtue and horror that runs through the movie. 'And they all, gradually, from a

⁹⁶ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 16.

⁹⁷ Morgan, 'lost action hero', p. 32.

⁹⁸ Dawson, *Soldier heroes*, p. 55.

⁹⁹ Jordan, *Film diary*, p. 36.

starting point of innocence, become involved in a game of blood and betrayal that can only have one outcome. Historical necessity as a malignant god.’¹⁰⁰ As signed by the movie inter-textual relay, it is driven by their passion and fated in their destiny.

Wearing a new hat!

The juxtapositioning of Collins as symbolic representation and personification of the political objectives that were Ireland’s right to political self-determination is core to the movie’s portrayal of him. Jordan chose to film the scene involving the handing over of Dublin castle to the new Free State administration with Collins dressed in military uniform.¹⁰¹ When Collins arrives, the British commanding officer chastises him for being seven minutes late, to which Collins replies, ‘you kept us waiting seven hundred years, you can have your seven minutes. Right, lets get this over with.’¹⁰²

The significance of the event and in particular the sight of the Commander-in-Chief of the newly established Irish Free State army relieving the British commanding officer of his position from the citadel of British rule in Ireland, symbolically seals Collins’s transition from revolutionary to legitimate leader. For the audience, it serves to underpin the image of him as a military figure and influential leader in establishing the legitimate authority of the new state.¹⁰³ The ceremonial lowering of the Union Jack reinforces the concept – where the flag of the defeated enemy represents the slaying of the foreign oppressor. In this instance Collins’s masculinity is imaged as upholder of the nation’s right to self-determination, power and authority vested in its symbolism. As the British flag is lowered Collins utters in a sarcastic tone, ‘so that’s what caused all the bother, huh.’¹⁰⁴ As well as the acknowledged significance of the flag as a symbol of nationalism it is representative of the masculinities of the opposing side, not least in the suffering and pain endured and the needlessness for the excessive violence. Collins exhales an exasperated breath and says ‘now what?’ he turns towards the officer and

¹⁰⁰ Jordan, *Film diary*, p. 33. Also, the personification of the brutality of the tactic and their repercussions are exemplified in the scenes that deal with Bloody Sunday – the assassination of the British spies and the revenge attack on Croke Park. I have chosen not to analyse these scenes for this chapter as I feel they have been sufficiently covered by others and would therefore distract from a more in-depth understanding of the issues under investigation here. For a range of perspectives here see, Gibbons, ‘Framing history’, p. 48.

¹⁰¹ In actuality the handover took place in January 1922, Collins didn’t become Commander-in-Chief of the army until June of that year. Also, Collins wore civilian clothes to the ceremony.

¹⁰² Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 35.

¹⁰³ For some insight into this concept see, Kay Phillips and Mostafa Rejai (eds), *World military leaders: a collective and comparative analysis* (Westport, CT., 1996).

¹⁰⁴ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 35.

says in a joking manner, 'do I get to wear that hat?'¹⁰⁵ Collins smiles, as do other members of his entourage. The combination of symbolism and humour serve to display the nature of Collins's personality. The audience is reminded that beneath all the imagery of pomp and ceremony he still maintains his essential character. This is the man who was forced into the adaptation of brutal methods of warfare because he had no other choice. Viewed in military terms, the overall representational masculinity is one that signifies an Irish victory over the British foe. Superior tactics win the day – Irish tactics.

Resolving masculinity's public and private contradictions

Collins's personal trauma is witnessed in many instances but accentuates rapidly following the split over the terms of the Treaty. The statement, uttered twice in the movie, 'how would you like a new boss?'¹⁰⁶ is symbolic of the conflict in his personal and public personae. It represents the split between the public and private realms of masculinity. The right thing to do for the nation seems in some way to conflict with his personal feelings. The looming fear of the outbreak of Civil War is ever-present and seems to compound his sense of internal turmoil.

During a meeting of the newly formed post-Treaty provisional government tensions and passion are running high. In keeping with the signature genre of the movie, the room is illuminated with outside light streaming through the windows. The delegates are sitting around a long rectangular table. Collins is the only one on his feet. He is pacing back and forth around the table. When he speaks his voice carries a tone of frustration and anger. The following extract of dialogue provides an example of the mounting political pressure that was building around Collins:

Collins in an angry and determined tone: I will not fight against men I trained with, I fought with.

Cosgrave, in a firm voice: The people have spoken Mr. Collins. Overwhelmingly, for the Treaty you brought home.

Griffith (in firm tone): They've occupied the Four Courts, half of O'Connell Street, Limerick, Cork. It's anarchy out there.

Collins (angrily): better anarchy than civil war!

Griffith (again in a firm tone): Churchill has offered us artillery.

Collins (angrily): Let Churchill do his own dirty work.

¹⁰⁵ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 35.

¹⁰⁶ He also says this in the scene before he travels to West Cork when Joe comes in and wakes him from his sleep on a desk. Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side b, chapter 4.

Griffith (with resolute sternness): Maybe he will, Michael. Maybe he will?!¹⁰⁷

Collins's facial expression takes on a grave demeanour as Griffith's words sink home and the stark realisation of what is about to unfold dawns on him. The means of reaching a compromise are becoming fewer and fewer. Circumstances are steering him in a destiny-like fashion. Collins' life is beset with a series of crisis after crisis. The pressure on his personal wellbeing seems incessant. Events are building towards a moment of departure. Ruth Barton argues that 'throughout the film, Collins is distinguished by his singularity; physically dominant he is also presented as slightly apart'¹⁰⁸ from all the other male characters. In this instance we see the enormity of the choice he faces and the strain it is having on his peace of mind. His character is being put to the test for he must choose between personal loyalties and loyalty to the political concept to the state. The dichotomy between the personal pain and public duty are brought to the fore here in order for the audience to appreciate the political character of Collins and his adherence to his public duties.

The Civil War

With Collins having already been established as the Commander-in-Chief of the army the scene that deals with the shelling of the Four Courts draws to the fore the weight-of-conscience that military duty can bring to bear on the individual. The Commander-in-Chief reluctantly gives the order to open fire on the building with the word, 'do it.'¹⁰⁹ Collins walks away whilst glancing back at the smoking structure. His crisis of conscience is demonstrated when he sardonically ask O'Reilly, 'how would you like a new boss Joe?'¹¹⁰

In this instance, the image of Collins in uniform is clearly established as an icon of the military authority of the new state. Personal feelings aside, Collins chose to act in the name of the Irish state. With the Treaty accepted by the Irish people, Collins is charged with the task of restoring and establishing law and order to an ideologically divided landscape. But it is personally painful choice. The display of masculinity involves the suppression of personal feelings. Hence, his resolve emerges as a noteworthy quality when serving the greater good. The image of Collins in uniform reinforces the intent of

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., side a, chapter 37.

¹⁰⁸ Barton, *Irish cinema*, p. 143.

¹⁰⁹ Jordan, (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side B, chapter 1.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

purpose towards this end. Collins is prepared to follow the soldier's dictum in defence of the national good – the recently acquired status of self-government. His personal trepidation is an allegory for the senselessness of the conflict. 'Collins...acts like a true democrat and a man of peace who starts the Civil War by launching an attack on the occupied Four Courts only because he has no choice: it is either him or the British that will attack.'¹¹¹ In this capacity the uniform reiterates the intent of its wearer, sending out a clear signal of the character of his masculinity in the highly charged political atmosphere. It is a symbol of the state's legitimate authority. The masculinity on display is understood as indicator of purpose to duty and of conviction to objective. Its connection to the concept of legitimacy and the nation state is unmistakable.

Brothers in 'arms'

As discussed earlier, Harry Boland plays a significant role in allowing the audience to view the personal side of Collins. This is nowhere more personified than during the early days of the Civil War. The traumatic effect it is having on Collins is illustrated when he is seen dashing recklessly through the dark unsafe rubble strewn streets of war-torn Dublin, in search of Boland.¹¹² His reaction on finding his former comrade dead symbolises the darkness of the conflict. His emotional sentimental reaction over his friend's death reiterates the complex nature of masculine posturing over political ideological perspective.

In the scene Collins and his entourage arrive as Boland's body is being hoisted from the water by a crane. Shot at nighttime, the quayside is backlit by streetlights. The car containing Collins speeds along the street, screeches to a halt and Collins gets out, walks over to the spot where Boland hangs suspended from the crane, takes Harry's head in his hands, looks up at his former friend and says, 'What happened? Huh. Who closed your eyes?' Both characters are silhouetted by the backlighting, their faces dimly visible to the audience. It is the only time in the movie that Boland 'towers' over Collins, symbolising the latter's personal turmoil and emotional pain at the loss of his friend. Collins' personal tumult explodes when he scolds the young Free State soldier for shooting Boland, telling him 'you should have protected him....he was one of us.'¹¹³ The turmoil of personal loss in violent conflict is forcefully projected in this scene. 'To emphasize the fratricidal nature of the conflict, Jordan dramatizes the pursuit

¹¹¹ Merivirta, 'Like Cain and Abel'.

¹¹² Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side b, chapter 2.

¹¹³ Ibid.

and shooting of Harry Boland so as to reunite Collins with his former ally, if only in death, in...[this]...powerfully moving scene.’¹¹⁴ Crucially, Collins is in military uniform – the public symbol of masculinity, the most powerful man in the Free State army deeply affected by personal feelings. Here, the personal reality behind the romantic ideal of nationalism is illustrated through the trauma of loss and emotional resonance. It is the classic brother v brother scenario; the tragedy of the relationship is symbolic of the tragedy of the Civil War: how utter pointless and unnecessary. Equally, it is representative of men’s inability to reach a compromise in a political crisis where their recourse is to resort to violence as the means of solving the contentious political problem.¹¹⁵ For Collins, the weight of public responsibility seems almost unbearable. The effect on his personal well-being compounds any sense of achievement in removing the British regime from Ireland.

The follow-up scene sees Collins sitting slumped in an armchair, in a room with the curtain drawn. Kitty walks in calls out ‘Mick’ and moves towards him. Collins say ‘the papers said his last words were, have they got Mick Collins yet?’ Kitty replies, ‘its not true Mick, you know its not.’ Collins replies ‘I don’t know anything anymore.’¹¹⁶ His uniform and shirt are unbuttoned and he looks overwhelmed with grief and confusion. Collins is inconsolable and personally isolated despite Kitty’s presence. Like the messiah he must internalise and bear his pain for the greater good of nationalism.

Political director

The portrayal of Collins as a political leader is also an important theme in the movie, highlighting his transition for terrorist to legitimate leader. Leadership is a quality much exalted in both the arena of militarism and politics. In effect it is a human condition that permeates many aspects of society, past and present, in terms of its organisation and structure. Having good qualities of leadership, or being referred to as possessing leadership material, is a common terminology both historically and in contemporary society.¹¹⁷ A leader is someone marked out from the ordinary, which, for various reasons becomes the leading personality within any particular group. ‘Leadership images not only appeal to our cultural fascination with the power of leadership, but also

¹¹⁴ Crowds, ‘Neil Jordan’s Michael Collins’, p. 15.

¹¹⁵ For perspectives on the issue of masculinity and violence in the military and political sense see, Bourke, *Dismembering the male*; eadem, *An intimate history of killing*; Braudy, *From chivalry to terrorism*.

¹¹⁶ Jordan, *Michael Collins* DVD, side b, chapter 3.

¹¹⁷ For references see, John Adair, *Inspiring leadership: learning from great leaders* (London, 2002).

serve to fixate us on the personas and characteristics of leaders themselves.’¹¹⁸ In presenting his version of the Collins story, Jordan highlights these aspects to give the audience a sense of esteem and respect for his character. These images are permeated with a strong sense of emotion, complemented with a directness of purpose and expound virtues that mark his masculine performances in terms of his leadership. The way Collins performs in these capacities are important for how the audience will relate to and recognise him as being worthy of such acclaim – or not. What is important are the masculine characteristic that emerges from the particular scenes in question and stamp or signal the traits in Collins that are worthy of acclaim.

Collins appears on the public speaking platform on a number of occasions throughout the movie. (The movie poster depicts him, elevated above the crowd in the throes of a passionate speech,). His initial appearance in this capacity is at a political rally in Granard, Co. Longford. He delivers a passionate address that contains pejorative commentary on role of the Royal Irish Constabulary as upholders of the British justice system in Ireland. The oration reaches its crescendo when he incites the crowd to take his place in the event of him being sent to prison. His speech exudes a sense of nationalistic pride, the words of a man who is prepared to act on his convictions:

We have a weapon more powerful than any weapon of their British empire. And that weapon is our refusal. Our refusal to bow to any orders but our own, any institution but our own.¹¹⁹

Collins proceeds to verbally target the Royal Irish Constabulary, depicting them as the upholders of British rule in Ireland, suggesting to the crowd that they are waiting to arrest him on a whim. So if this happens, he shouts to the large gathering, ‘who’ll take my place?’, to which the assembly responds, ‘we will’, following which the RIC intervene and a riot ensues.¹²⁰

It is the sense of conviction in his words infused with the ability to arouse support for what he is saying that mark him out in this scene. Standing on the platform his presence transcends the assembly. The movement of his body and the sense of conviction etched across his face as he delivers the speech, present an admirable air of confidence that

¹¹⁸ Michelle C. Bligh and James R. Meindl, ‘The cultural ecology of leadership: an analysis of popular leadership books’ in Roderick M. Kramer and David M. Messick (eds), *The Psychology of leadership: new perspectives and research* (New Jersey, 2005), p. 13.

¹¹⁹ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 5.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

adds consummate credence to his words. 'It is this ability to inspire energy, to enthuse others, that history records so clearly in the lives of great leaders.'¹²¹ The scene portrays his ability to stir people to act through his words, combined with the movement of his body in delivering the message. The incident has the effect of transferring the sensation of his oratorical abilities to the audience. Passion is such a crucial driving force of that presentation, stirring of the senses in a way that eludes to nationalistic pride. Collins is a man of conviction and purpose. 'The values, attitudes and goals that leaders inspire others to adopt and to follow are ones that define and serve the group—and thus leaders are able to transform individual action into group action.'¹²² In this scene we get a sense of the manner of Collins's abilities in this regard and the ideals he inspires are aligned to the ethos of a nationalist ideology and Irish identity.

Later in the movie, during a meeting of the clandestine Irish cabinet, Collins speaks with a sense of pragmatism and impartiality, contrasted again by the reactionary nature of Cathal Brugha and the calculated cloaked self-intensity of de Valera. The direct, logical, straight talking of Collins emerges from the confusion as someone who has his finger on the pulse of practical necessity. Collins's common sense approach appears as the admirable quality of masculinity. He has being informed that all the members of the cabinet are to be arrested that night and he, with Boland's conformation, informs the delegates of this. Collins and de Valera are at opposite ends of the table. The qualities of each man are presented in direct opposition to each other:

Brugha: I'm getting very tired of the spectacle of an upstart dominating the proceedings of these entire cabinet proceedings. I've said it before and I'll say it again, the minister is a usual exceeding his brief.

Collins: And just what is my brief Cathal?

Brugha: Intelligence

Collins: Bullshit! I'm minister for gunrunning, daylight robbery and general mayhem. Until we get the boys armed, nothing will happen. But as minister for intelligence I'd like to inform you that every man-jack of us is to be arrested tonight.

Brugha: How does the minister know this?

Collins: Ah, ah, now Cathal, don't exceed you brief! [Collins reaches into his pocket and produces a slip of paper] They know more about us than our own mothers do.

¹²¹ Adair, *Inspiring leadership*, p. 111.

¹²² Michael A. Hogg, 'Social identity and leadership' in Kramer and Messick (eds), *The psychology of leadership*, p. 53.

De Valera: how do we know it's genuine?
Boland: well we don't chief, but it could well be.
Collins: so nobody sleeps at home tonight.
De Valera [looking down, considering the list he has just been handed]:
 I disagree do sleep at home tonight. If Mr. Collins has been gulled, we'll
 sleep soundly. If not, they will arrest the cabinet. The public outcry will
 be deafening. Maybe then the world will listen.
Collins[standing up, aghast]: Dev, you can't be serious. We've been
 rotting in English jails for long enough man...
De Valera: I am serious Michael.'
 (Collins sits down in his chair looking somewhat bemused) ¹²³

By presenting de Valera in this manner Jordan seeks to highlight Collins's qualities to the audience, whilst simultaneously depicting the opposing personalities and political methods of each man.¹²⁴ Such a method is crucial for understanding the imaged nature of gender identity and configuration. It allows the audience to draw judgment, based on contrast and comparison on the respective masculine characteristic on display, notwithstanding the political issue under discussion. Collins is established as the man of action, whereas de Valera is the 'bookish statesman and idealist.'¹²⁵

Political leadership is a salient feature of Collins's image as a stand-alone aspect of his character. It is an important element, functioning to establish his heroic credentials. He is portrayed as being above the petty squabbling of personal opinion and personal egoism. The viewer is in no doubt as to the reasoning Collins employs in his political actions. Such a transparency is crucial for an emphatic attachment to his character. His sense of frustration is a signal of future internal conflict. A sense of the practicality of Collins emerges when his warning turns out to be true.¹²⁶

Debating the Treaty

Politically, Collins is a man of his word – an important characteristic in any person but one that assumes a heightened significance when referring to leadership qualities. In the political arena this is exemplified in the scenes that deal with Dáil debates on the Treaty. Despite the deeper fear of division in the ranks Collins is still prepared to defend the signing of the Treaty as the best solution under the circumstances. This basic tenet is the key element in this aspect of his character. There is a pragmatic realism that emerges, establishing a fair but no-nonsense approach to a political situation. Jordan

¹²³ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 8.

¹²⁴ Contrasting both men in this manner allows the audience to view Collins in a favourable light.

¹²⁵ Merivirta, 'Like Cain and Abel'.

¹²⁶ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins* DVD, side a, chapter 9.

constructs this scene to highlight the nature of the personal attacks on Collins, choosing to bypass the substantially emotive issues that had implications for the fledgling state.¹²⁷ Hence, Collins's political pragmatism is afforded a prominent focus. Jordan sets the scene in the following manner:

Collins enters through the upper level and descends into this bear-pit that the Dáil has become. Harry Boland, now on the opposite side of the chamber, unable to look at him.¹²⁸

What is crucial in this scene is the way it portrays the image of a man who is prepared to stand over his word in the face of adversity and opposition, sensationally highlighted in the difference of opinion with Boland. Collins's own emotional turmoil over the split offers a yardstick for the audience to judge his actions. It portrays a strength and depth of character of exemplary leadership. He has the ability to put aside personal feelings and emotions to serve the greater good. This man is not seeking personal power and reward. His goal is to establish the right of the Irish people to the form of self-government offered in the Treaty agreement. His passion is a crucial element in his delivery as he appeals to all for their support. His warning that the alternative is war is not a threat to those who oppose the terms, but a pragmatic analysis of the likely outcome that rejection will produce. What is crucial in this instance is his ability to appreciate the logic of compromise. Collins's emotional yet rational appeal to this male dominated arena, is contrasted with Cathal Brugha's 'vituperative vindictiveness, the soul of the betrayed Republic now exacting its revenge.'¹²⁹ Brugha's onslaught is peppered with sniping attacks on the character of Collins culminating in the following dialogue:

Brugha: One person was selected by the press to put him in a position he never held. He was made a romantic figure, a mystical character, which he certainly is not. The person I refer to is Michael Collins.

Collins: I would plead with every person here. Make me a scapegoat if you will, call me a traitor if you will, but please lets save the country. The alternative to this treaty is a war, which nobody in this gathering can even contemplate. If the price of freedom, the price of peace, is the blackening of my name, I will gladly pay it.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Crowdus, 'Neil Jordan's Michael Collins', p. 16.

¹²⁸ Jordan, *Film diary*, p. 57.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 33.

Elliot Grove argues that 'nothing draws the audience into a story, and creates empathy for a character, than putting them in a predicament. The audience immediately connects with the character.'¹³¹ Collins's ability to rise above this unnecessary and unhelpful method of character assassination marks him in a higher status. Burgha's antics act as a countertype to those of Collins, whose emotional appeal is for the greater good of the nation. Whereas Burgha comes across as spiteful, personally insulting, offering no constructive political contribution to the debate and in effect only serving to accentuate the bitter split now developing in the ranks. Collins's practical even-tempered approach appeals to compromise and realism. The absence of personal malice and antipathy in his analysis defines his character. The knowledge of these admirable qualities serves to render his death all the more tragic – the loss of a man with exemplary leadership qualities. The crucial element here is getting the audience to empathise with Collins, feeling and sharing in his despair and frustration.

Personal Friendships

What I did like about the triangular thing was that it was almost like these two men were in love with each other in a way and were obsessed with each other.¹³²

As discussed earlier, the Collins/Boland friendship is a highly symbolic subject in the movie. It provides an example of how the bond of male friendship can be torn apart in a highly emotionally charged political atmosphere. It exemplifies the inability in particular social circumstances, of once close friends, to work out a means of resolving their differences that does not involve recourse to violence. The posturing is something recognisable in many social conflicts, however large or small. In this instance it is portrayed as a tragic separation experienced in the masculine political culture of the period. The fracture in their relationship is emblematic of the utter futility of the split – men's inability to reach a compromise over points of political principle. In these circumstances emotional considerations of personal friendships are less significant than the exercise of political power or more correctly the ideological attainment of it. In other words the ultimate goal is a political one. The fracture in their companionship raises fundamental issues at the core of social and/or political life; how to manage

¹³¹ Elliot Grove, *Riverdance writers' lab* (Oxford, 2004), p. 29.

¹³² Jordan, *South Bank Show*, 23:00 mins.

conditions and relationships; the judgement or measurements that act as evaluation in the decision-making.

The focus on the Collins/Boland relationship is essential for establishing the character of the hero. The personal heterosexual nature of the friendship allows the audience to experience the personality of Collins in private vulnerability, the 'private' man behind the political action. The camaraderie is representative of the complexities of male companionship in a highly charged political atmosphere. When the enemy was clearly identified as the force of occupation there were no apparent political obstacles to the closeness of their relationship. They fought side-by-side, slept in the same bed, organised the underground army and socialised in the same circles.

Kitty Kiernan's presence adds a dimension that alters the nature of the relationship in many facets. High among the considerations is the fact that her femininity offers the promise of the physical expression of emotional love and affection, a subject that has enormous resonance for heterosexual male friendships and perceptions of masculinity that pertain to it. She signifies the private aspect of masculinity for her presence in the movie adds nothing to the political aspect of the film. Through her the audience see the 'human' side of Collins. Concurrently, Boland and Collins' opposing political views, themselves a highly passionate issue, compound the sense of stoic silence that involves male revelations over deeply felt private emotional concerns. In terms of the Treaty split, the resort to violence can be viewed as the last available desperate option open to men for the expression of their highly charged emotional wishes and desires.

The question has been asked historically, was it due to their opposing political views or their mutual love interest in Kitty Kieran that caused the two men to drift apart? The movie leans towards the political aspect, whilst acknowledging the emotional hurt Boland felt when Kitty rejected him for Collins. The scene where Boland and Collins meet in Vaughan's hotel, following the Dail walkout over the Treaty vote, demonstrates this. Both men disclose that they miss the way it used to be between them. In an emotional voice Boland admits that he is 'tryin' to feel happy for Collins and Kitty, over the announcement of their engagement:

Boland: Is it true what I heard?

Collins: What?

Boland: You're engaged!

Collins: Should I apologise for that too?

Boland: No no no, I'm happy for you both.
Collins: me arse, [Collins laughs] you don't look it.
 Boland [in a firm tone of suppressed anger and hurt]: maybe I don't Mick, but I'm tryin'. [pause] do you understand, I'm tryin'.
[Both men sigh deeply, there is a few seconds of silence, Boland turns his back and says]: 'I miss the way it used to be.' to which Collins replies, 'me too.'¹³³

Boland's feelings and emotions are running deep and he urges Collins to 'tear up that Treaty.' The scene represents the definitive moment of departure between the two men, directed by the inability to resolve their difference in the political realm. De Valera is presented, by Collins, as the person responsible for the rift between them – having exerted his political influence on Harry while both men were in America together:

Collins: they tell me your Dev's right hand man now.
Boland: Ah well, I suppose that's how it goes.
Collins: We were too dangerous together. [pause of a few seconds] Do you know what Harry, for the first time in my life I'm scared.
Boland [in sarcastic tone]: The big fella scared! I hate to say it Mick you have a right to be.
Collins [shaking his head]: You don't understand me!
Boland: What?
Collins: You told me once that I was good at bloody mayhem, I left the Brits in the ha'penny place and that's what I'm scared of. Because once I start there'll be no stopping me.
Boland [in an angry tone]: 'Don't' you let it start then. Tear up that treaty.'
Collins: It's the only thing we've got.
Boland: So then it starts. We fight
Collins: They fight, we don't
Boland: You said what you had to say and you can go now Mick.
Collins [pushing Boland back against the wall whilst holding onto his shoulders and for a few seconds cups Boland's head in his hands]: Listen to me, now please listen to me.'¹³⁴

Collins and Boland physically struggle with each other. A young volunteer enters the room and points a gun at Collins's direction. Collins shouts, 'do it kid, do it' – a suggestion that Collins had a death wish. Boland screams at the youngster to 'put the gun down.' He then rushes over takes the gun of the scared volunteer and tells him to get out of the room. He then turn and shouts at Collins to do the same.¹³⁵ This is the last time they meet while both are alive. Their respective ideological principles coupled

¹³³ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 39.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ *Michael Collins* DVD, side a, chapter 39.

with the determination to follow them leads to the eventual death of both men. Two lives lost in a manner that is anathema to the realism expressed by the story's central protagonist. Their fates decided through the hands of masculinity's destiny.

The tragedy is further compounded by the memory of the first instance of them together in the movie, their surrender following the 1916 rising at the G. P. O. 'Lost again Harry'. Collins suggests the next time we will invent our own rules. The male protagonist suggests invention and creativity as a means towards defining a new and decisive way of defeating the enemy. From the beginning, Collins is portrayed as the more influential figure – a theme that continues right throughout the movie. Throughout the film Boland's presence complements many aspects of Collins masculinity. Up to a certain point of departure over the Treaty he is his faithful friend and fellow organiser. Both men played and worked together, sharing an intensity of purpose that acknowledges a deeper level of personal understanding, synonymous with close male friendships.

In terms of men's friendships, Wilson and Mankowski suggest that 'generally men are attracted to other men who share similar ideas, values, and attitudes, and who like to engage in certain similar activities.'¹³⁶ The boyish playful nature of the Collins/Boland relationship is highlighted on several occasions throughout the film as a means of stressing the bond between the two men. On release from jail for their participation in The Rising, the audience bear witness to them travelling on a train together, with Boland mocking Collins by pretending to snore in reply to what he has to say:

Collins: They let us out of jail so we can do our best to be put back inside again Harry [Collins throws back his head and laugh wryly], don't you see a certain paradox in that.

Boland[half asleep, with his head resting against the window]: What?'

Collins: Paradox, contradiction. Where an immovable force meets an immovable object, kind of thing.

Boland fakes a snore, Collins grins and throws a folded up newspaper in his direction.¹³⁷

The significance of such an interaction rests in its portrayal of a normalcy in male friendship that signifies a level of ease with each other's company. There is a sense of boyish playfulness present in their behaviour. It establishes their relationship on a

¹³⁶ Steve R. Wilson and Eric S. Mankowski, 'Beyond the drum: an exploratory study of group processes in a mythopoetic men's group' in Edward Read Barton (ed.), *Mythopoetic perspectives of men's healing work: an anthology for therapists and others* (Westport, CT., 2000), p. 25.

¹³⁷ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 4.

secure footing, one based on mutual trust and respect. Determining the bond between the two men is a crucial feature of the movie. The closeness of this male friendship serves to highlight the futility of the conflict that determines both their destinies. When they disembark from the train they notice the presence of detectives tracking their movements. As they depart in a car from outside the station *en route* to Granard, these same detectives pursue them. Both vehicles come to a halt on a narrow country road amid a flock of sheep. Immediately, Collins jumps out of the vehicle, goes back to pursuing detectives and asks them what they had for breakfast. The audacious way he approaches them wins an intent look of considered appreciation coupled with no little sense of novelty, from Boland. Eileen Morgan describes the role of Boland in the following manner:

Through Boland, Jordan reveals Collins's rapport with his men, the deep comradeship that motivates nationalism according to Benedict Anderson, and also his vulnerability to loss.¹³⁸

The lines in this particular triangle are complete with the introduction of Kitty into the equation. She is seen treating Collins's head wound, received from an RIC baton, following his Granard speech. It is the first instance of female interaction in the movie.¹³⁹ Collins's relationship with Kitty has been dealt with in various commentaries on the movie. The focus has been primarily on the analogy between Kitty and the nation as woman, in terms of Collins's affections towards both and how she is an allegory of that concept.¹⁴⁰ However, their relationship is also indicative of a much more basic human desire – a man's need for emotional love and the role of a woman in the formation of his masculinity. The importance here lies in the cultural perceptions of these issues.

Through his relationship with Kitty, Collins appears more human to the audience. He is a healthy heterosexual man pursuing a 'neutral' path in seeking out female affection. In other words there is no need to question his masculinity for it is firmly established as 'normal'.¹⁴¹ His sexuality is firmly established as a normative heterosexual one. Her

¹³⁸ Morgan, 'Lost action hero', pp 32-3.

¹³⁹ Apart from the opening scene where Kitty is lying on the bed.

¹⁴⁰ See, Gibbons, 'Narrative, allegory'.

¹⁴¹ On several occasions and in various social circumstances, when I have told people that I am doing a thesis on the masculinity of Collins, they invariably reply in one form or another with the question. Is there an issue about his masculinity? Most people seem to take this to mean sexual performance and/or preference.

presence provides insight into the private aspect of Collins's personality, important information when it comes to establishing and understanding the motivations behind Collins's actions. Through Kitty, the private and deeply emotional side of Collins are revealed. The nature of these revelations supplements a greater understanding of his public actions, those actions taken for political reasons.

In the movie romance and adventure are in a sense dualisms of each other. There is romance in adventure and adventure in romance. These elements are prevalent throughout the movie. Both are synonymous with imagined conceptions of lived experience, attempting to fulfil dreams and desire. Collins's character is the subject of Kitty's affections and desires – a wished for life, 'I will live to see you old and grey...they can shoot at us but they can't kill us...I'm going to live to see you old'¹⁴² Kitty's fear for Collins' safety reiterates the tragic loss yet also complements the adventure narrative of the story's plot. She is the character to whom O'Reilly is speaking at the beginning of the movie.

It is a tale played out in an arena of heightened emotions and personal tragedy. The emotional turmoil of it all sets it apart as compelling viewing. The characters' feelings are recognisable as 'normal' human sentiments. The audience can engage in the adventure without risk or personal physical danger. Probably the most salient aspect of the dichotomy is the sense of hope that emerges. A hope that conditions and sustains humanity, particularly in times of crisis.

Violence marks the man

Throughout the film violence is never far from the consciousness. Men engaged in violent acts for political objectives. For Collins, deliberately putting his body in the direct line of fire only occurs twice in the movie – in the GPO and when he is shot in the ambush. The danger or threat of violence is implied at other stages. The main focus in terms of any imminent threat to Collins's life is implied in ensuring that he evades capture, for his fate would be sealed if this happened. As the organiser and instigator of the campaign of assassinations against agents of the British authorities, violence emanates from Collins. He organises the squad to carry out the shootings. The sight of the young assassin (Vinny Byrne) kneeling down before the image of Jesus brings a

¹⁴² Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 37.

sense of justification to the act he is about to commit.¹⁴³ The exoneration of your soul in the face of a man-made ideological political objective – justification from a higher power to ease the conscience in the committing of an act that depending on individual perspective, is seen either as murder or an act of war. Perspective and conscience emerge as crucial factors, for one side this is murder for the other an act of war. Is the assassin a ruthless killer or a political activist? Are his actions despicable acts of depravity, or actions worthy of praise and acclaim? How are these young men to be judged?

The answer, if such a word is applicable, is in the conceptualisation of the events in their timeframe and context. The respective judgement suggests and highlights the changing and subjective nature of gendered behaviour. The acts are in the realm of masculine activity. How they are judged varies across a wide range of social and cultural perspectives. In the movie the actions are justified as political expediency, a necessary evil forced upon the leader of a resistance movement because the other side refuses to listen to their voice. Strikingly, it is the willingness of the young men to carry out the actions that is prominent in these sequences. 'Anyone with any qualms, there's the door.'¹⁴⁴ The choice to stay and participate in the assassinations is made by this young group of men, not forced upon them but willing undertaken. Jordan expressed his own reservations about this when he commented on his fear that the audience would loathe Collins for not carrying out the killings himself, instead sending out these young men to do the work.¹⁴⁵ Collins manages not to fall under this description, countered by the fact that the victims are the antithesis of the political objectives. Simultaneously, the audience is also aware that unless Collins gets to them first he himself will be eliminated without judge or jury. They represent the countertype of Collins, judged in terms of nationalist political identity. Collins's masculinities as a means of understanding the emotional and complex nature of what a man has to endure for political ideology. The story of the period is told through the masculinities of the men involved. Up until the truce Collins is seen fighting against the identifiable enemy – the other – in the shape of those in the employ of the British administration. Following this the focus shift to the deeply emotional. He has to choose to fight against his former comrades in arms in order to defend the political ideology, public duties before private considerations. That choice involves the payment of a high price. The hero is moving

¹⁴³ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side a, chapter 13.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Jordan, *South Bank Show*, 14:00 mins.

towards a tragic fate that culminates in Collins being shot dead in an ambush at the hands of a young anti-Treaty supporter, a youth barely old enough to hold a gun let alone fire that fatal shot.

The historical significance of Michael Collins

The bridging scene discussed earlier in this chapter brings a conclusion to the movie's action and seals Jordan's version of the Collins's story within the casket of Irish nationalism. Taking up from where the opening scene had ended, with Joe O'Reilly standing in the semi-darkened room talking to Kitty Kiernan, the epilogue is concluded. The scene unfolds in the following manner:

O'Reilly: That's why he died Kitty. He knew the risks he was taking when he went down there. But he thought them worth taking. (O'Reilly continues talking while drawing the curtains open to allow sunlight into the bedroom.): He took them for us. For every gobshite in this country no matter what side they were on. And if he saw you now, do you know what he's say? (O'Reilly now moves towards the bed, removes the blanket off Kitty takes hold of her hand and helps her out of bed while uttering the following): Get up of the parliamentary side of your arse and get a bit colour in your face.

Kitty responds: But he would have said it better Joe.

O' Reilly: No regrets Kit, that's what he'd say.¹⁴⁶

Kitty and Joe now embrace, silhouetted by the light coming through the netted curtain hanging in the window. The movie concludes with actual footage of Michael Collins's funeral with snippets of written commentary inserted over the clips.¹⁴⁷ Elliot Goldenthal's emotionally contemplative musical score for the film is playing in the background.

By choosing to open and close in this fashion Jordan guides the nostalgic reflection of Collins's life through the tragedy of his death. In between we are told the story of the dead hero; of a short life that was dedicated to the cause of Irish nationalism. In the scene the sense of loss personified by Kitty, is channelled into hope by O'Reilly. The

¹⁴⁶ Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side b, chapter 8.

¹⁴⁷ The funeral footage lasts for 1 min and 7 seconds. The following written commentary appears at selected intervals. 'Michael Collins was 31 when he died.'... 'Half a million people attended his funeral in Dublin. All parties to the conflict, both British and Irish, were temporarily united in grief.'... 'In his brief lifetime he had fought the British Empire to a stalemate, negotiated the first Treaty of Independence for Ireland and overseen its transition to democracy.'... 'He died, paradoxically, in an attempt to finally remove the gun from Irish politics.'... '“It is my considered opinion that in the fullness of time history will record the greatness of Michael Collins, and it will be recorded at my expense”.' Eamon de Valera, President of Ireland, 1966. Jordan (dir.), *Michael Collins*, side b, chapter 9.

hazards Collins endured he endured for us; the audience; the Irish nation. For the hero, the risks were worth taking. Through his death he has made life possible, the life of Irish nationalism and the lives of those who fall within its realm. The tragedy is tempered in this knowledge; a life appreciated in death; the story told; the hero and the principles of his creation is the freedom enjoyed by all citizens of Ireland.

Conclusion

In the course of this chapter, examining masculinities as medium of delivery in *Michael Collins* has highlighted many notable aspects regarding the images of Collins portrayed in the film. Neil Jordan's movie is a story that blends truth, fact and fiction into an optical and aural experience that is designed to both entertain and arguably, historically inform the viewers. As suggested in the analysis, historical movies of this kind present the audience with a sense of history that can invariably be considered factually 'correct'. In other words, films like *Michael Collins* contribute to generic historical knowledge.

The genre of the film is important for understanding how the storyline is delivered. The movie has to appear authentic, both visually and factually. The issue of verisimilitude, having the appearance of truth, is crucial. The dress codes, the scene lighting employed and 'accurate' period character depictions are crucial for the visual effect to function effectively. Certain facts and characters are blended together to give the appearance of truth and enhance the viewing experience, the character of Ned Broy being one such example. The movie projects images that are subject to audience interpretation. These impressions have a resonance in the context of the storyline when presented under the aforementioned conditions. In this sense the gender images of Collins's masculinities are a crucial medium for delivering both the action and particularly the plot.

The movie depicts men as the protagonists with Collins as the central figure; all else revolves around him; he is the focus of imaging. The audience is shown and invited to understand his perspective and in due course to form opinions for what he represents politically. His masculinities and thus his character represent the ideology of Irish nationalism; Collins's fortune is in the hands of his passion and destiny. Informed of his fate at the outset of the movie, nostalgic sentiment underpins the storyline. The focus is concentrated on a fervour that guides that providence.

The use of violence is rationalised as a necessary action 'forced' upon the main protagonist, therefore engaging audience empathy as a central component of the delivery medium. In this sense, Collins's masculinities are the symbolic personification

of the ideological perspective. The story is told and understood through images of him. In order for this to function effectively, Collins's physical presence on the screen is vital. Liam Neeson's physique is an important facet in projecting Collins's pseudonym, 'the big fella', from the screen. Critically, before asking others to do the same, the audience see a man-of-courage who puts his neck on the line in pursuit of his objectives. He invents a new style of warfare that forces the enemy to negotiate for peace. The practical political broker is a feature of the hero's character. Jordan's Collins is a man who is prepared to compromise for the sake of peace. The audience see his qualities as a public political speaker, personified in his ability to incite and inspire a crowd to follow his political cause. In cabinet meetings and the Dáil Debates, his practical and compromising personality is highlighted. Collins's military qualities emerge, firstly as the guerrilla leader and secondly as the Commander-in-Chief of the new Free State army. In the uniform he becomes the symbol of the State's legitimacy. The ceremony depicting the transfer of authority to Irish administration is one example. He has to make tough decisions against former friends and allies but not before attempting to compromise with them. Collins reluctantly bombs the Four Courts, having suppressed personal reservations to serve the great good.

Through his friendship with Harry Boland, the audience see many facets of Collins's private personality. His relationship with this once close friend turned political foe is an allegory for the brutality and tragedy of both the Civil War and the use of violence as means of achieving objectives. Equally, through this friendship the audience see Collins's logic for instigating the methods of engagement he employs. The death of Boland represents a moment of choice between personal and private concerns. Violence comes back to haunt the hero. Collins is now approaching his ultimate destiny – the harbinger of death meets his own tragic fate, paid back in his own coin. Through Kitty Kiernan's presence the private emotional and tender side of Collins are presented, his ability to love and care for another human being together with and his longing for personal and political normalcy. Viewed through the masculinities of the central character Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* is the story of a heroic revolutionary who paid the ultimate sacrifice for his political principles.

Chapter four.

Public man, emotional politics: Michael Collins, principled masculinities and the Treaty debates of 1921-2

A focus on emotional experience reminds us that the social scripts of gender circulating within a culture at any given time do not, by themselves, constitute subjectivity, but that they operate in relation to more primitive emotional investments. As a result of the process of sedimentation, earlier identities may become so deeply instilled as to render later ones rather more ephemeral.¹

This chapter is concerned with examining the ways in which emotion is expressed and reflected through male codes of practices within political debate. Close attention is given to the images of masculinities called upon by the deputies to buttress the core of their argument. Similarly, Michael Collins's contributions to the proceedings are examined in order to discern the images of manliness he refers to as a means of both replying to the opposition and strengthening his own arguments.

The influence of multi-disciplinary approaches to historical study has widened the scope for a more comprehensive examination of how people viewed themselves in the past and the factors that influenced their decisions. Within this advancing framework, gender offers the opportunity for a more comprehensive approach to historical investigation of emotion. Traditionally, in history, emotions tend to be alluded to rather than analysed for their deeper social and psychological implications. They are often noted as merely an aspect of human interaction; acknowledged as *influencing* people's actions, but not investigated for their effects on human behaviour and decisions within specific historical contexts. Barbara Rosenwein argues:

The grand narrative that has dominated emotions scholarship cannot stand. It is based on a debunked theory of the emotions and its concomitant, but flawed, notion of progressive self-restraint. Jettisoning this view does not mean that one new approach must take over: there are plenty of issues to consider and a variety of useful modes of attack, no one of which is going to encompass the whole field for all periods and every sort of evidence...New narrative[s] will recognize various

¹ Michael Roper, 'Slipping out of view: subjectivity and emotion in gender history' in *History Workshop Journal*, lix, no. 1 (Spring 2005), p. 66. (Hereafter referred to as Roper, 'Slipping out of view').

emotional styles, emotional communities, emotional outlets, and emotional restraints in *every* period, and it will consider how and why these have changed over time.²

As the political arena of parliamentary debate is a male dominated public space, examining emotion through masculine practices and images of masculinity offers a means of investigating emotion within a specific historical context.

The following section contains a discussion on male emotion within masculinities studies. Following that, issues concerning male codes of practices and images of masculinities that apply to the political arena are considered. Finally the question of emotion and principle is set in perspective for the subsequent analysis of how images of masculinities were evoked to both defend and condemn the opposing political points of view. Before examining the debates, emotions as understood in the context of this chapter are discussed. For the purpose of analytical clarity the following introduction is slightly longer than in previous chapters.

Male emotion

Emotion is a subject that is a recognised theoretical component of masculinities studies. Historically speaking, this is only a rather recent development. Advancing a more comprehensive analytical gender framework R.W. Connell posits that for men, 'Cathexis (emotional relations)' is a crucial component in developing a more comprehensive understanding of gender relations particularly the ways in which men deal with the issue. He argues that, 'emotion is...increasingly seen as an important topic for social theory...the practices that shape and realise desire are thus an aspect of the gender order.'³ Within the domain there is an acknowledged separation of the public and private displays of emotion, in both understanding their context and through considerations of judgments brought to bear through perception and opinions of the behaviours exhibited.⁴

Arguing for a more comprehensive approach to the issue of emotion in historical study, Michael Roper asserts that 'subjective experience is placed at the edge of historical analysis. The intense emotions that might be aroused by experiences such as war get

² Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Worrying about emotions in history' in *The American Historical Review*, cvii, no. 3., June 2002, p. 840.

³ R. W. Connell, *The men and the boys* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 25.

⁴ See Whitehead, *Men and masculinities*, pp 175-7, for some background on this topic.

treated as a matter of linguistic codes.’⁵ Furthermore he contented that more emphasis should be placed on understanding individual feelings and motivations, particularly how they resolve the conflict between emotional experience and the anticipation of rational and emotional responses to expectations of gender appropriate behaviour.⁶ Therefore, when coming to analyse the issue of masculine emotions, defining the analytical parameters and contextual setting is vitally important. As Joanna Bourke has pointed out, ‘the primary problem has been to define what emotions actually ‘are’ and decide how historians can most productively study them.’⁷

Ideas of manliness and emotion among the political classes have altered and shifted over the centuries. For instance, in Britain during the Renaissance period it was not uncommon to witness male emotional displays among aristocratic men on one level and extreme brutality and ruthlessness on another going hand in hand. Foppish beau and militaristic aggressor accompanied ideas of manliness in the Elizabethan age. Victorian and Edwardian men were ‘openly less emotional. Physically, virility, morality and civility were seen as important manly characteristics during this period. Terrell Craver examined how men have thought about men in political theory, concluding that it is therefore not surprising that the conflict of emotion is long established in western political traditions.’⁸ Consequently, ‘a familiar theme in patriarchal ideology is that men are rational while women are emotional. This is a deep-seated assumption in European philosophy.’⁹ Despite its falsehood and well out-dated premise, the mere existence of the assumption has connotations for how men view themselves in the public arena.

Masculinities, emotion and political debate

As gender discourse public spaces have implication for gender performance and/or the embodiment of gender. Crucially, human beings do not conduct all of their lives in the

⁵ Roper, ‘Slipping out of view’, p. 62.

⁶ Ibid., pp 62-3.

⁷ Joanna Bourke, ‘Fear and anxiety: writing about emotion in Modern History’, in *History Workshop Journal*, lx, no. 1, (Spring 2003), pp 112-13.

⁸ Terrell Carver, *Men in political theory* (Manchester, 2005), builds on feminist re-readings of the traditional canon of male writers in political philosophy by turning the ‘gender lens’ on to the representation of men in widely studied texts. It explains the distinction between ‘man’ as an apparently de-gendered ‘individual’ or ‘citizen’ and ‘man’ as an overtly gendered being in human society. The ten chapters on Plato, Aristotle, Jesus, Augustine, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx and Engels show the operation of the gender lens in different ways, depending on how each philosopher deploys concepts of men and masculinity to pose and solve classic problems.

⁹ Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 164.

public domains. For investigative purposes, grounding definitions for the various understandings and nuances of masculine practices is therefore problematic. The physical body, in conjunction with the verbalisation of the rationally conceptualised thought process, become the embodiment of the public self. At its simplistic level we present our public selves based on perceptions how we want to be viewed and influenced by how others see us. The various forms these assume are contingent on such a multiplicity of factors. Therefore, attempting a definitive all-encompassing classification is virtually impossible. Whitehead argues that 'to talk of public and private selves is to speak of what are considered socially and culturally appropriate performances – emotions, behaviours, actions – by women and men in public.'¹⁰ Moreover, emotions have an irrational constituent contingent on individual perspective. Therefore, it is important not to compress 'the deep, complex and varied individual emotional experiences that constitute the domain of subjectivity...into a version of collective consciousness.'¹¹ To do so is to disregard the significance for individual emotional investment in such images.

The arena of the Treaty debates is one historical example of such a public space where the members expressed their opinions on a contemporary political issue that had an enormous influence on the future of Irish politics. In the deliberations, adherence and reference to codes of political and by implication manly practices reflects a historical understanding of manliness within a context.¹² For Collins, what images of manliness he summons to support and buttress his political viewpoint. Simultaneously, it underlines how other contributors saw themselves or chose to present themselves in the knowledge of their significances for such definitions within the political arena. Therefore, for the purpose of the following analysis, Michael Collins's public display of emotions on this political stage shall be understood along the following criteria:

In respect of males' sense of identity, the public domain [of the Dáil debates] can be understood to be the historically gendered arena where

¹⁰ Whitehead, *Men and masculinities*, p. 114.

¹¹ Roper, 'Slipping out of view', p. 59.

¹² 'A number of characteristics defined manliness as a concept. Although its features were a matter of debate, and even in the late-Victorian period it was composed of, to some extent, competing influences, it was perceived as a unitary normative standard... Furthermore, manliness was judged largely in terms of external qualities: it was from a man's comportment, his physical appearance and performance, that inner qualities were judged'. From, Michael Roper, 'Between manliness and masculinity: the "war generation" and the psychology of fear in Britain, 1914–1950' in *Journal of British Studies*, xlv, no. 2, (April 2005), pp 347–48.

males engage with and replicate those behaviours and practices, which, in their particular context, define manhood and manliness.¹³

Furthermore, the term emotion encompasses such a broad spectrum of sentiment that defining its meaning in context is problematic. Consequently, there is a need to delineate the term for the purpose of its use in the framework being employed here. Emotion is to be understood as ‘a word used in ordinary language to refer principally to subjective experience,’¹⁴ where subjective experience implies the portrayal of Collins’s masculinities through his emotional contributions to the public forum of the Treaty debates. Furthermore, these emotional contributions are to be understood in terms of how they are both contingent upon and reflective of socially and culturally considered ideas of manliness within the context and political significance of the debates. In other words, within what parameters are displays of Collins’s emotions confined and or/and on what topics are such displays considered to be an acceptable aspect of the performance embodiment that establishes the democratic criteria of political debate, if at all? Moreover, it also encompasses the personal embodiment of identity, in respect of the images Collins evokes and the comparative examples of masculinities he summons to sustain his emotional appeals. Close attention will be given to the images and associated representations evoked that have connotations for the definition of self and others, in relation to exemplary images of masculinities. Doing so will reveal images of masculinities that were deemed socially and culturally appropriate definitions of male political and personal identity in 1920s Ireland.

‘Principled’ Masculinities

Within the dialogue of the Treaty debates the issue of principle was a major source of reference for the speakers – projections of individual principle reflected in political principle. The terms, as defined by the contributors, reflect a central tenet of their evaluation of the Treaty’s political implications and consequently how they chose to define themselves within the context of their expressed opinions. For Michael Collins, it comes down to a question of what he sees as the right things to do for Ireland – a question of principle based on political reason and manly virtue. Exasperated by

¹³ Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities*, p. 114. See here for definition of public domain.

¹⁴ Jeffrey A., Gray and Roy Porter, ‘Emotion’, in Alan Bullock and Stephen Trombley (eds), *The new fontana dictionary of modern thought* (London, 1991), p. 266.

interruptions in his attempt to deliver his point, Collins bellowed out the following personal appeal:

I have tried to do things for Ireland for the last couple of years: I am trying to do this thing for Ireland now to avoid division (loud applause). Are the Deputies going to listen to me or not? (Cries of "Yes!")¹⁵

Here, Collins presents himself as a servant of Ireland. He projects the image of a powerful political person who has something worthwhile to say. For him political motivations are not the actions of a self-serving individual but the honest endeavours of a man seeking to maintain solidarity within the ranks. This measurement of self is appealed through reason and political virtue/morals – a reassurance that his motivations are driven by a desire to serve his country. Equally, in pleading for people to pay attention, Collins was reflecting his personal frustration at not being listened to.

John Morrow argues that the 'identification of a direct relationship between politics and virtue is one of the central themes of the western tradition of political thought.'¹⁶ However, the meaning of virtue has been subject to various definitions by political thinkers over the centuries – from Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Luther, and Calvin, to Kant – shaped by the respective social, cultural and political experiences of this all male cast, who sought to bring reason, order and virtue to politics and society. Therefore, when coming to identify these shifting parameters the most salient feature is their contingency upon the historical milieu from which they are derived. However, a consistency in the definition of their respective ideological parameters is the form the relationship between the individual and the state should assume, with particular reference to how the politics of statehood is to be conducted.¹⁷ 'All political ideas are moulded by the social and historical circumstances in which they develop and by the political ambitions, which they serve. Quite simply, political theory and political

¹⁵ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002* (2 disc DVD, Irish Government publications, Dublin, 2002), disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 3 January 1922. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/D1/D.T.192201030002.html> (10 June 2006).

¹⁶ John Morrow, *History of political thought: a thematic introduction* (London, 1998), p. 51.

¹⁷ See, Morrow, pp 50-72, for explanation on the role of virtue in politics, as defined by Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Luther, Calvin and Kant. For further reading on the development of western political thought see Morrow; J. S. McClelland, *A history of western political thought* (London, 1996) and Andrew Heyward, *Political ideologies: an introduction* (London, 1992).

practice are inseparable.¹⁸ Consequently, the men (and women) who participated in the quagmire of political practice and within the respective ideological parameters were subject to these same social and historical considerations. Subsequently, gendered images and perceptions of masculinities are subject to these concerns. The particular political principle – or historical contingent virtue – influence how they behave, act or express their reasoned opinion. In short, there is individual investment in political issues that in turn are reflective of the political context where they occur. Simultaneously, these mirror the social and cultural values of the participants on one level and the principles of manliness (or femininity) that pertain at that juncture, on another. Here, manliness is understood within the parameters of reasoned and virtuous manly political practice. Collins felt the need to classify his status when he said ‘I am the exponent of my principles.’¹⁹ By defining himself in this manner Collins is reaffirming his identity as someone who stands over his word. He is stating publicly that he measures up to the standards of manliness required.

Utilising images of principled political masculinities, Collins contributions are contingent upon social, cultural and political factors that govern his behaviour as a statesman. The way he views and presents his own manliness, or his ideas of manliness in the political arena, is gender reflective of this public space where expressions of male emotion are defined in terms of the politics of statehood. Jeff Hearn argues that ‘men and gender are produced in the conflicts and struggles of history and politics... Men’s domination of the public domains has been ancient, contested, and culturally variable.’²⁰ This echoes a deeper level of identity, where deeply personal emotional issues are suppressed to accommodate the functioning of parliamentary procedure. In gendered terms, the political domain is a stage – public spaces where displays of male emotions reasoned political criterion and therefore have implications for contingent ideas of manliness.

Masculine emotions in context

The Treaty debates that took place in the Mansion House, Dublin between 14 December 1921 and 10 January 1922 are a testament to an emotional legacy based

¹⁸ Heyward, *Political ideologies*, p. 3.

¹⁹ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

²⁰ Jeff Hearn, *Men in the public eye: the construction and deconstruction of public men and public patriarchies* (London, 1992), p. 13.

around concepts of principled political ideology, the inheritance of which still permeates Ireland's political landscape at the beginning of the twenty-first century. 'The issue appeared simple enough – peace or a resumption of the war, a conceptual republic or positive dominion status – but it was anything but simple for deputies with little political experience who were easily swayed by emotional attachments or other considerations.'²¹ However, as seen, political ideologies do not exist in their own form. They are a product of human conceptualisation, a set of political principles that are subject to the influence of social and cultural values through which, in this instance, the imagined concept of nation is devised and the administrative structure of the state that governs it are defined. These parameters are subject to challenges based on both the individuals' rights to conceptualise their place within it and the processes that define the constitutionality of those guidelines.²² The Treaty debates and the events that followed its aftermath shaped the destiny of not alone the Irish state but the destiny of those who participated in them – some to a more dramatic degree than others. During the proceedings many of the contributors spoke in emotive terms and in many instances evoked images of masculinities, both past and contemporary, to buttress their arguments.²³

As shall be seen, the highly charged sentiment expressed in the proceedings are, indicative of personal investment in the collective political process. They show the diversity of viewpoints that constituted the events of the timeframe and in particular how the significance of ideological political principles impacted on the decisions people reached. Personal investments in principles lead delegates in making their choices. Their rationalization for voting in the particular manner was justified through personal emotional expression and appeals, supported by means of politically principled positions. These investments are reflective of the underlying human element of decision-making that constitutes individual and collective identity. Emotional investment comprises a crucial element of every individual's composition. For Strongman, 'emotional life for the adult can become extraordinarily complex with

²¹ O'Broin, *Michael Collins*, p. 114.

²² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London, 1991), provides an interesting examination of how the idea of nation is conceived and administered.

²³ This will be demonstrated later in the chapter.

multiple mixed-emotions all moving at different speeds in different directions.²⁴ In many instances these experiences defy a rational and reasoned basis and explanation.

As previously stated, in an arena dominated by men, this public display of sentiment, understood through the gendered significance of the rhetoric, provides an insightful view into the subtleties of masculine identity formation, through the judgments brought to bear on these issues. Roper makes an interesting point about this dichotomy:

Too often, what goes missing from [discourse] analyses is an adequate sense of the material: of the practices of everyday life: of human experience formed through emotional relationships with others: and of that experience as involving a perpetual process of managing emotional impulses, both conscious and unconscious, within the self and in relation to others.²⁵

Furthermore, a significant dimension to the Treaty debates was the contribution of a tiny minority of female representatives.²⁶ Their rhetoric is highly charged with principled and deeply affected, emotionally staunch and steadfastly unbending language that appealed to masculine political principles and threw down a challenge to men to respond. The following example is an abstract taken from the address of Miss Mary MacSwiney, TD:

One man or one army cannot stand up against mighty legions, but not all the armies of all the peoples in the world, or all the Empires in the world, can conquer the spirit of one true man. That one man will prevail, but with that one man many will stand. It is not one man, or a hundred men, or one thousand men that will reject that Treaty as selling away their nation's rights. The men with the stake in the country know well that it was not love of us, love of justice, or an acknowledgment of her iniquity that brought England to the pass of asking for negotiations. The men with the stake in the country know that England made the negotiations because she dare not any longer face the opinion of the world. The men with the stake in the country know perfectly well that as long as we Republicans stand out and say this is not peace, and it will not make peace, there will be no peace, and the men with the stake in the

²⁴ K. T. Strongman, *The psychology of emotion* (New York, 2000), p. 131.

²⁵ Roper, 'Slipping out of view', p. 32

²⁶ This is particularly so because of their small number. In this retrospective study it is also of particular interest because of their minority percentage representation. They were, Mary MacSwiney (sister of Terence), Countess Markievicz, Kathleen Clarke (widow of Tom Clarke), Mrs. Margaret Pearse (mother of Padraig and Willie Pearse).

country will know perfectly well that unity alone can defeat this awful breach now.²⁷

For the men listening to her message, the image of manhood she depicts throws down challenges to the essence of the manly ideal. Interestingly, there is no mention of the role of women. The tone and nature of the sentiment is an appeal to men with principled political investment in a Republican agenda. Much more significantly, it is a challenge to men to remain united and virtuous in their pursuit of the Republican ideal. In this instance 'reason is discursively constructed as the object of descriptive and normative analysis...in [a] discourse whose symbols and metaphors shape and are shaped by dominant ideals of masculinity.'²⁸ The emergent gendered theme signifies the aligning of personal identity to political principle or perceptions of it, through the concept of one true man – the man of spirit, the exemplary ideal.

The content of her speech reveals as much about the social and cultural nature of gender identity as it does about the political perspective of the participants. In fact both are mutually inclusive. For McSwiney, it is through this principled spirit that many others will gain their inspiration and stand beside that 'one true man'. The subliminal terminology that appeals to the concept of the principle of unbending human political spirit is designed to undermine and discredit the opposition – in this case those who support the Treaty – as traitors to the masculinities of the heroic dead. The rhetoric is an appeal to socially conceived positions, roles and behaviours, one of staunch ideological belief in the republican agenda, derived from experience of personal sacrifice and loss.²⁹ It is a call for men to define themselves in political ideological terms bolstered by the ideological essence of republicanism, emotively delivered as being representative of exemplary manhood.

The definition of principle, incorporating gendered rhetoric and political ideology, is further demonstrated in the following abstract of another female representative's contributions, Deputy O'Callaghan, on 20 December 1921:

²⁷ Mary MacSwiney, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Éireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 21 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112210002.html> (10 June 2006).

²⁸ Lorraine Code, *Rhetorical spaces: essays on gendered locations* (London, 1995), p. 215.

²⁹ Her brother Terence McSwiney the Lord Mayor of Cork died in Brixton prison London on 25 October 1920, while on hunger strike. He had demanded to be treated as a prisoner of war and not as a criminal. When this was refused he went on hunger strike. He died after seventy-four days.

When it was found that the women Deputies of An Dáil were not open to canvass, the matter was dismissed with the remark: "Oh, naturally, these women are very bitter." Well, now, I protest against that. No woman in this Dáil is going to give her vote merely because she is warped by a deep personal loss. The women of Ireland so far have not appeared much on the political stage. That does not mean that they have no deep convictions about Ireland's status and freedom. It was the mother of the Pearses who made them what they were. The sister of Terence MacSwiney influenced her brother, and is now carrying on his life's work. Deputy Mrs. Clarke, the widow of Tom Clarke, was bred in the Fenian household of her uncle, John Daly of Limerick. The women of An Dáil are women of character, and they will vote for principle, not for expediency.³⁰

The rhetoric conjures images of gender that indicts the masculinities of those who oppose its highly charged emotionally principled message – namely, the supporters of the Treaty. Crucially, her sentiment highlights the socially and culturally conceived nature of the subliminal realities of gender imagery that inform the more noticeable, or at least more focused on, high politics of statehood. Concurrently, the fact that these words were spoken from the mouth of a woman bestows an added dimension to their inherent challenge. The images she invokes are of women with staunch ideological principle, schooled in the cultural milieu of steadfast republicanism. Principle is the pillar of political conduct, an emphasised reassurance that these women are equal to ideal men, in term of their adherence to the ideological parameters of the republican political ideals. The high moral politically principled character of the mothers, sisters and wives of heroic republican martyrs is a reminder to the men who now choose a politically expedient path. According to McCool, 'the women involved in the struggle of Irish political independence 1916-1923 were part of the long tradition of Irish patriotism. No less than the men, they were willing to give their lives for their ideals and to endure the rigors of hunger strike and separation from friends and family for their beliefs.'³¹ Not alone were men being implored to follow the example of former principled exponents of 'manhood' in the political realm, but were also being challenged to match the character of their female counterparts. The underlying implications, in this case, are that the contribution of women to the Republican ideal outstrips that of the male Treaty supporters. This serves to reinforce the message and

³⁰ Mrs. O'Callaghan, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002, DVD* disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 20 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112200002.html> (10 June 2006).

³¹ Sinéad McCool, *Guns and chiffon: women revolutionaries and Kilmainham goal* (Dublin, 1997), p. 8.

remind the men who support the Treaty, of their own lack of commitment to the virtue of Republicanism and by association the moral manliness inherent within it. Furthermore 'the women who opted for the revolutionary role were in the minority. Through tenacity and independence of character they broke with the behavioural norms of the time. This ensured their commitment to the cause and an unswerving attitude to ideological issues. It is striking how many of the leading republican women remained opposed to the Treaty.'³² As much a statement of their own ardent commitment to these ideals, their arguments was presented as a challenge to the masculinities of the men who supported the Treaty to meet similar standards. As Seán Etchingham euphemistically said of them, 'the women in the Dáil will show they are the best men in it,'³³ an obvious attempts to undermine the masculinities of and by implication the credibility of the Treaty supporters.

Collins, emotion, and men of principle

Michael Collins's personal contribution to the debates and the direct and indirect responses and references to him in the discussions reveal a great deal about the historical imaging of his legacy. This part of his life marks a milestone in the conceptualisation of Collins as a heroic figure. Significantly, with an inward political focus, the parameters of that definition become subtler. The Treaty, by its nature, is indicative of compromise and compromise requires both parties to relinquish certain aspects of their initial expectations in order to reach a consensus. Furthermore, as the Treaty debates demonstrate, the Irish TDs were not a politically united bunch. Debra Anderson argues, that in highly charged situations, 'individually, people resist connecting with others because of natural feelings of envy, greed, jealousy, competition, and so on. Collectively, people can be expected to regress to one of the basic assumption groups, either becoming dependent, unrealistically hopeful, or trying to fight or flee some enemy'.³⁴ Faced with the possibility of the removal of the British administration from the mainstream Irish political equation, the focus on personalities and political principle turned inwards, thus creating the situation where new parameters were being defined in previously uncharted waters. Collins was now being openly judged as never before. Moreover, he was facing new challenges, politically, socially

³² McCoolle, p. 8.

³³ Seán Etchingham, cited in Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 300.

³⁴ Debra K. Anderson, 'A psychodynamic analysis of discourse theory: understanding the influence of emotions, regression and change' in *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, xxiv, no.1 (Summer 2002), p. 20.

and personally. The changing nature of political life and his involvement in it, ensured that images of masculinities were a central component of these new definitions.

As the debates reveal, many deputies found compromise over the terms of the Treaty a very difficult hurdle to approach let alone cross. Even some members who supported it declared and expressed reservations. Gavan Duffy declared publicly, 'my heart is with those who are against the Treaty, but my reason is against them, because I can see no rational alternative.'³⁵ Opponent of the Treaty Brian O'Higgins stated, 'I am against the Treaty on principle, and on principle alone.'³⁶ Such steadfast adherence to a principled political outlook meant aligning oneself to an ideological identity. In this instance, for the anti-Treaty advocate, it is one of unwavering adherence to the principle of republican ideology, for the pro-Treaty supporter it is the principle of compromise as a necessity for consolidation of a political base.

The ideological standpoints of the men and women who took part in the debates are documented for the historical record. Their testimonies are evidence of individual emotional investment in the practices of political ideology. These sentiments have important implications for enhancing our understanding of emotions and gender identity in the political realm of statehood. For the way in which emotions are channelled and influenced by ideological necessity, Michael Collins's identity is shaped in the quagmire of principled turmoil that gripped the participants; his personal contribution defined in self-definition; his character defended in putting his name to and voting for an agreement he considered the most reasonable solution anyone could have achieved. His statement following the Dáil's ratification of the Treaty characterises his feelings in this respect:

I do not regard the passing of this thing as being any kind of triumph over the other side. I will do my best in the future, as I have done in the past, for the nation. What I have to say now is, whether there is something contentious about the Republic—about the Government in being—or not, that we should unite on this: that we will all do our best to preserve the public safety (hear, hear).³⁷

³⁵ Gavin Duffy, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 21 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112210002.html> (10 June 2006).

³⁶ Brian O'Higgins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 3 January 1922. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192201030002.html> (10 June 2006).

³⁷ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 7 January 1922. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192201070002.html> (10 June 2006).

Here, Collins projects an authoritative image of political masculinity. For him, the ideological concept of the nation is the yardstick of his judgment. In his words there is a plea to everyone to look beyond the contentious issues and consider the implications for the greater good of the citizenry. He stresses, 'the passing of this thing' is not something to gloat about, or equally, the source of opportunity to gain advantage over those who oppose it. Collins's appeal challenges people to temper any inflammatory reaction they may consider as a means of achieving their political preferences. In other words, he begs those opposed to the Treaty to put personal feelings aside and consider the greater good of the nation. However, private feelings on both sides were gathering a divisive consensus that eventually led to the emergence of two political entities, both equally determined to achieve their aspirations. Simultaneously for Collins, in calling for unity there is a subliminal expression of his own fear, namely, that the whole process could implode leading to a national political disaster.

As already mentioned, one of the most salient features of the debates was the delegates reference to principle – or more correctly their particular interpretations of it. This was a consistent feature on both sides and all were keen to align their particular choices and decisions along principled lines. For members opposed to the Treaty, republican principles held sway. For Austin Stack, 'the oath is nothing short of swearing allegiance to the head of that Constitution which will be the King.'³⁸ Those who had given their lives for these very same issues would not be forgotten. In the same political stratum, there was a sense of stringent and stoic loyalty to a conceptualised cause, demonstrated in the following extract from Deputy Sean Etchingham's speech on 20 December 1921:

I say the most contemptible, the meanest creature that ever trod a sod of Ireland is the man who votes for this, but says that he would not swear or that he would not sign it. There are men here who said that they could do that. I hope I will live, and that I will have the opportunity and the strength afterwards to tell them what I think of them...If you do vote for this thing...it will be a renunciation of your principles, of your allegiance to the Irish Republic. Nay, it is more, it is the burial service

³⁸ Austin Stack, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 19 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

over the grave of the Irish Nation, and there is to be no firing party (applause).³⁹

Through his emotional investment Etchingham is in no doubt as to what the renunciation of the republican principles mean, both for the nation and for what it says about the men who choose to vote for the Treaty's ratification. They are the antithesis of what he sees as the manly political ideal. Etchingham's sentiment motivates his ardent belief in the principle of republicanism, his condemnation of anyone who votes for the Treaty influences his judgment. His comments serve to highlight the subjective character of gender identity. In other words, the way men's actions are judged depends on the perspective of the person making the judgment. His ultimate condemnation is reserved for personal judgment of their actions. By 'tell[ing] them what [he] thinks of them,' he is holding his deepest emotional condemnation as the ultimate level of judgment. Varda Burstyn contends that 'since the establishment of democratic rhetoric as the dominant political discourse in the nineteenth century, many politicians and officials have sought to justify their actions and policies on the basis of appeals to ideas of equality, fairness, and collective well-being.'⁴⁰ For Etchingham, the moral fibre of Republicanism and collective welfare of the nation is the guiding emotional consideration.

This subjective dimension of personal interpretation, with its utilisation of gendered images, is reiterated by deputy P. Hogan's contributions to the debates. When it came to his turn to speak he felt sufficiently agitated to reply directly to Etchingham's assertions. It would appear that something in the tone of the former's allegation moved him to respond in the following manner:

I heard a lot of passionate talk about principles. I don't want to be cynical, but it is forced home on me, that all the passion is reserved for the principles that suit the argument for the moment...Now Deputy Etchingham stated that there is no meaner, no more despicable man than the man who was going to vote for this Treaty feeling that he ought to vote against. There is, and that is the man—and I know nobody will

³⁹ Sean Etchingham, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Éireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 20 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112200002.html> (10 June 2006).

⁴⁰ Varda Burstyn, *The rites of men: manhood, politics and the culture of sport* (London, 1999), p. 182.

misunderstand—who is going to vote against this Treaty, but hopes it will be ratified.⁴¹

Hogan's perspective portrays the other side of the issue, yet both men speak of principle as the yardstick of their judgment for a 'despicable man.' Crucially, Hogan's political and personal identity and thus his masculinity being put questioned through Ethchingham's statement. Based on reasoned principle, both men seek to justify the nature of their own perspectives. Hogan sees the contemptible character as someone who openly opposes the passing of the Treaty but secretly hopes it will pass the vote. He directs his criticism through a moral and virtuous analogy. His commentaries serve to highlight the subjective dimensions that inform the social and cultural politics of gender identity. For depending on perspective, one person's hero is another person's villain. This affecting undercurrent represents individual expression and rationalisation of emotions along reasoned lines. It is important not to lose sight of the significance of this for informing understandings for how subjective experience has such an important role in gender identity in a 'reasoned' context. Both men conjure images of masculinities that are anathema to their own ideological perspective as a means of both condemning the opposition and bolstering their own viewpoint.

In the debate of 14 December the call went out for the proceedings to be conducted in private session. The deputies are wrangling over whether the Treaty is a binding document signed as a Treaty, or subject to Dáil ratification with the possibility of alternatives or changes being inserted. The accusations and counter-accusations are being exchanged across the chamber over the necessity to hold any closed sitting. Collins makes his feelings clear by stating that, 'the thing has already taken an unfair aspect and I am against a private session,'⁴² an indication of his growing frustration. His remark presents the impression of someone who feels he has nothing to hide from the Irish people and is quite prepared to stand over the political settlement that he signed. Quite simply, he wants to have all the discussion out in the open. He reiterates this position a few minutes later when he declares his views in relation to the

⁴¹ P. Hogan, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002, DVD disc 1*, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 20 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112200002.html> (10 June 2006).

⁴² Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002, DVD disc 1*, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 14 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112140002.html> (10 June 2006).

squabbling over both the terms of reference and vested authority under which the plenipotentiaries believed to have been their mandate when they came to their decisions to sign the Treaty:

Publicly and privately we did not prejudge the issue: we even refrained from speaking to members of the Dáil. I have not said a hard word about anybody. I know I have been called a traitor (Cries of “no, no”)...If I am a traitor, let the Irish people decide it or not, and if there are men who act towards me as a traitor I am prepared to meet them anywhere, any time, now as in the past...For that reason I do not want the issue prejudged.⁴³

Collins takes particular exception to the use of the word traitor. The fact that he has been called one is indicative of the feelings that the Treaty evoked. His willingness to let the Irish people decide on his political allegiance is suggestive of the subjective meaning attached to the term. In this instance his fate is directly connected to the outcome of the Treaty vote. A positive outcome and his decision is politically justified, rejection and the cries of traitor assume a more ‘truthful’ tone, judged in terms of a political vote. Simultaneously, the outlining of his willingness to meet those that make such suggestions portrays a man who will not shirk his responsibilities or hide behind rhetoric for convenience, in order to save face.

Collins stresses that the issues should be decided through the democratic process of the Dáil:

I can only make plain again that the document is agreed to by the signatories and recommended to the Dáil for acceptance. If the Dáil do not accept it, I as one of the signatories will be relieved of all responsibility for myself, but I am bound to recommend it over my signature and of course we are bound to take action—whatever action was implied by our signing the document. The Dáil is perfectly free to accept or reject, we are only bound to recommend it to the Dáil for acceptance.⁴⁴

Collins is therefore prepared to stand by his signing of the document. Let the democratic process decide whether the Treaty is acceptable to the majority or not. He is

⁴³ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002, DVD* disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 14 December 1921.

Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112140002.html> (10 June 2006).

⁴⁴ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002, DVD* disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 14 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112140002.html> (10 June 2006).

duty bound to see the procedure through along the democratic path. His individual virtue and political principle dictate it, delivered through reasoned emotional argument in the public arena. It is a question of how he sees his identity, the man of moral fibre who is duty bound to deliver on the terms to which he signed his name.

In the following extract from his speech on the 19 December 1921, Collins discusses the signing of his name in moral terms, defining it as an indication of what he sees as honourable manliness:

If the members knew so much about “slippery slopes” before we went there why did they not speak then? The slopes were surely slippery, but it is easy to be wise afterwards. I submit that such observations are entirely beside the point. And if my signature has been given in error, I stand by it whether it has or not, and I am not going to take refuge behind any kind of subterfuge. I stand up over that signature and I give the same decision at this moment in this assembly... Should the Dáil reject it, I am, as I said, no longer responsible. But I am responsible for making the nation fully understand what it gains by accepting it, and what is involved in its rejection... I cannot imagine anything more mean, anything more despicable, anything more unmanly than this dishonouring of one's signature. Rightly or wrongly when you make a bargain you cannot alter it, you cannot go back and get sorry for it and say “I ought to have made a better bargain.” Business cannot be done on those bases... At a fateful moment I was called upon to make a decision, and if I were called upon at the present moment for a decision on the same question my decision would be the same. Let there be no mistake and no misunderstanding about that.⁴⁵

Clearly, Collins sees himself defined in terms of principled political business and protocol. He accepts the responsibility that ensued as a result of signing the Treaty. His signature stands for his word and his political word is sacrosanct to his identity. He identifies what he considers an important characteristic of manly behaviour; how ‘business’ should be done: honouring one's word defined in this instance through consigning his name to this political agreement. His signature is representative of the embodiment of his conceptualised political actions, actions for him, that defines his public manliness.

⁴⁵ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Éireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 19 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

Collins's emotional investment is characterized in terms of how he sees his personal responsibility, and consequently his political responsibility to the Irish people. He views his political responsibilities in very principled terms:

Should the Dáil reject it, I am...no longer responsible. But I am responsible for making the nation fully understand what it gains by accepting it, and what is involved in its rejection.⁴⁶

He perceives personal accountability and political morality in explaining both the positive and negative possibilities the terms proffers to the Irish nation. For him, it is a reasoned and straightforward presentation of the Treaty's potential – his means of doing so is through adherence to the principles of government for the people by the people. There is no personal agenda for Collins, only the one he states openly and publicly:

I am not standing for this thing to get advantage over anybody, and whatever else the President will say about me, I think he will admit that.⁴⁷

Collins emphasises that he has no secret schema, designed to gain either political or personal advantage over anyone. It is not a matter of individual profit, but adherence to political pragmatism conducted within the arena of its ideological parameters. His combination of political morality and masculine idioms are designed to strengthen his argument. By projecting himself as a man of his word Collins draws upon a socially recognisable ideal of honourable manliness, seeing it as a positive means of projecting his point – an exemplary masculinity.

Emotional choice: politics or war.

Collins analogises the acceptance and rejection of the treaty in terms of the respective choices between politics or war. In a 'reasoned' emotional manner he is

⁴⁶ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 19 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

⁴⁷ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 19 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

careful to distinguish between his own moral conscience, in terms of warfare, and the principle of policy consensus, when it comes to politically expedient decisions:

I say that rejection of the Treaty is a declaration of war until you have beaten the British Empire...Rejection of the Treaty means your national policy is war. If you do this, if you go on that as a national policy, I for one am satisfied. But I want you to go on it as a national policy and understand what it means. I, as an individual, do not now, no more than ever, shirk war. The Treaty was signed by me, not because they held up the alternative of immediate war. I signed it because I would not be one of those to commit the Irish people to war without the Irish people committing themselves to war. If my constituents send me to represent them in war, I will do my best to represent them in war.⁴⁸

In his comments, Collins is consistent in his deference to the Irish people and the democratic principles of consensual government. There is an ardent sense that he wants to concentrate on the present, on real tangible politics – let the political culture of the nation decide the merits of the Treaty. As a signatory of the document, there is no doubt that he is standing by his word. Collins asserts that he is willing to let his fate be decided on the will of the people.

This rhetoric may seem a little out of place in light of Collins's guerrilla warfare policy. However, this study is not an attempt to prove Collins true or false in his rhetoric. The aim is to highlight the shifting parameters of the masculine image and the social, cultural and political forces that influence perceptions of gender. Therefore, in this instance Collins appeals to the present. Undoubtedly, there is the issue of the Irish people being tired of the recent campaigns of reprisal and counter reprisal that defined the War of Independence. There is the question as to whether Collins would or would not have been able to continue the 'war' as before, but this is to distract from the image of the masculine in the rhetoric of his appeal. Collins provides a personal reiteration, that he is not afraid of the prospect of war – reaffirmation of his courage and character.⁴⁹ For him it was not a choice of either one or the other, but a principled political decision achieved through reasoned and rationalised consideration, emotion channelled in rational debate. 'Viewed in its context of dialogue – as a response to a personal attack, an accusation of disloyalty in the course of a political debate where

⁴⁸ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002, DVD* disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 19 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

⁴⁹ As already seen Collins had been called a traitor for signing the Treaty.

character and leadership are legitimate issues in the dialogue – the emotional appeal does not seem so out of place or irrelevant.⁵⁰

While continuing this undeviating premise, Collins reinforces his point with an appeal to historical precedent as an example of abject failure. Citing historical precedence as a warning for the dangers of not following due democratic process, he continues:

Well, now, what happened at the time of the Union? Grattan's Parliament was thrown away without reference to the people and against their wishes. Is the Parliament which this Treaty offers us to be similarly treated? Is it to be thrown away without reference to the people and against their wishes?⁵¹

For Collins, his emotive appeal is directed through the principle of the democratic process – reasoned politics and honest sentiment projected in the public domain. In order to deliver his message effectively and to strengthen his argument, Collins makes reference to his own social background. His obviously see this as an important medium through which his motivations will be understood. As Bradford Vivian argues, ‘appeals to individual moral and political judgment, perhaps the most enduring and pernicious form of identity in the Western tradition, powerfully influence the quality of our communal commitments.’⁵² Collins’s appeal is directed through masculine principles understood in a social and cultural context. He continues, projecting the image of a man who is proud of his roots:

In our Private Sessions we have been treated to harangues about principle. Not one Deputy has stated a clear, steadfast, abiding principle on which we can stand. Deputies have talked of principle. At different times I have known different Deputies to hold different principles. How can I say, how can anyone say, that these Deputies may not change their principles again? How can anyone say that anybody—a Deputy or a supporter—who has fought against the Irish Nation on principle may not fight against it again on principle? I am not impeaching anybody, but I do want to talk straight. I am the representative of an Irish stock: I am the representative equally with any other member of the same stock of people who have suffered through the terror in the past. Our

⁵⁰ Douglas Walton, *The place of emotion in argument* (Pennsylvania, 1992), p. 69.

⁵¹ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Éireann, 1919-2002, DVD* disc I, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 19 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

⁵² Bradford Vivian, *Being made strange: rhetoric beyond representation* (New York, 2004), p. 189.

grandfathers have suffered from war, and our fathers or some of our ancestors have died of famine. I don't want a lecture from anybody as to what my principles are to be now. I am just a representative of plain Irish stock whose principles have been burned into them, and we don't want any assurance to the people of this country that we are going to betray them. We are one of themselves. I can state for you a principle which everybody will understand, the principle of "government by the consent of the governed." These words have been used by nearly every Deputy at some time or another. Are the Deputies going to be afraid of these words now, supposing the formula happens to go against them?⁵³

Through the medium of parliamentary debate, Collins affirms his political principles and implicitly his personal principles as part of his identity, the characteristics of which are derived from plain Irish stock. He sees his identity as a proud member of the ordinary Irish people. His standards are representative of the morals that sustain the people, the underpinning of their social and cultural values. His appeal to political principle is directed through the core of social values or what he perceives as his value system and its derivatives. No complicated ideological ramblings here, but the rhetoric of practicality and common reason. Look at the situation as it is and find sensible means of solving the problem – the practicality of the plain people, a plain speaking man, from the plain people of Ireland. His emotions and sentiment are directed in a reasoned manner, representative of the culture from which he comes.

Collins's rhetorical consistency is again evident when he appeals to emotional practicality, while alluding to the implicit discourse of the Irish American political support base. He had the following comments to make in response to their offer of financial aid:

Again I want to speak plainly. America did not recognise the Irish Republic. As things in London were coming to a close I received cablegrams from America. I understand that my name is pretty well known in America, and what I am going to say now will make me unpopular there for the rest of my life, but I am not going to say anything or hide anything for the sake of American popularity. I received a cablegram from San Francisco, saying, "Stand fast, we will send you a million dollars a month." Well, my reply to that is, "Send us half-a-million and send us a thousand men fully equipped." I received

⁵³ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol. 1, T, debate on the Treaty, 19 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

another cablegram from a branch of the American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic and they said to me, "Don't weaken now, stand with de Valera." Well, let that branch come over and stand with us both (applause).⁵⁴

His disdain for the offer from America is clear. He views their idiom as homage to ideological discourse. For Collins, the philosophical speak is cheap and the words easy to utter from a distance; action is what's required and if you can't act then all the words and promises will not alter the situation. He makes it clear that his popularity will not be subject to the principled rhetoric of republican ideology. Forget your promises of money, come and stand with us in the struggle for political stability. Work within the parameters of reasoned tangible practicality not in the realm of ideological fantasy – itself an emotively principled subject. Collins sees himself as a man of action, making difficult decisions in a difficult situation. His is a 'hands on' philosophy, a masculinity that requires people to make hard choices and stand by their word. He continues in the same vein:

And as this may be the last opportunity I shall ever have of speaking publicly to the Dáil, I want to say that there was never an Irishman placed in such a position as I was by reason of these negotiations. I had got a certain name, whether I deserved it or not. (Voices: "You did, well"), and I knew when I was going over there that I was being placed in a position that I could not reconcile, and that I could not in the public mind be reconciled with what they thought I stood for, no matter what we brought back, —and if we brought back the recognition of the Republic—but I knew that the English would make a greater effort if I were there than they would if I were not there, and I didn't care if my popularity was sacrificed or not. I should have been unfair to my own country if I did not go there. Members of the Dáil will remember that I protested against being selected...I only want to say that I stand for every action as an individual member of the Cabinet, which I suppose I shall be no longer: I stand for every action, no matter how it looked publicly, and I shall always like the men to remember me like that. In coming to the decision I did I tried to weigh what my own responsibility was. Deputies have spoken about whether dead men would approve of it, and they have spoken of whether children yet unborn will approve of it, but few of them have spoken as to whether the living approve of it. In my own small way I tried to have before my mind what the whole lot of them would think of it. And the proper way for us to look at it is in that way. There is no man here who has more regard for the dead men than I

⁵⁴ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 19 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

have (hear, hear). I don't think it is fair to be quoting them against us. I think the decision ought to be a clear decision on the documents as they are before us —on the Treaty as it is before us. On that we shall be judged, as to whether we have done the right thing in our own conscience or not. Don't let us put the responsibility, the individual responsibility, upon anybody else. Let us take that responsibility ourselves and let us in God's name abide by the decision (applause).⁵⁵

Collins is arguing for each person to stand up and be counted, an emotional appeal to practicality. No hiding, as he sees it, behind political principle buttressed with emotively heroic rhetoric. In outlining his reasons for taking responsibility and accepting a place on the treaty delegation his sentiment is strong and delivery firm. He believed his presence would influence the British delegation into making a greater effort at brokering a settlement. Collins reiterates what he sees as his moral responsibility to 'stand by every action no matter how it appeared publicly.'⁵⁶ It is this aspect of his character that is most of all how he wants to be remembered, for there is an implicit suggestion of moral courage in a manly ideal. No doubt Collins is conscious of how he is or will be judged as a signatory. However, taking responsibility for his actions he projects the image of a man who is true to his convictions and above board in his dealings.

These public declarations of reasoned contention in support of the Treaty, that draw on socially and culturally recognisable images of exemplary manliness to support the arguments, are representative of Collins's personal emotional investment directed through symbolic representations or commendable images as a means of strengthening the line of reasoning. Simultaneously, these arguments portray how the individual wants to be viewed. For Collins, this self-representation is indicative of how he sees his own investment in the process and how he views himself in the overall political picture. The analogies and images act as a reassurance of both self-worth and the righteousness of the choices he has made.

⁵⁵ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002*, DVD disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 19 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Private insight

With this in mind it is therefore interesting to contrast this public portrayal of self, with an account that provides insight into the personal turmoil Collins endured before accepting a place on the delegation that travelled to London to negotiate a peace settlement with the British. Through her recollection of a childhood experience, Una O'Connor provides an insightful view of the emotional turmoil Collins experienced in coming to his initial decision to go to the talks:

My mother and father adored Meehaul.[*] We all did, and he listened to them and they had great influence over him. In the summer of 1921, I had a fall and I hurt my hip, I had to go to bed, and I was in bed by myself in the room next to the room where the men used to meet. One night I was kept awake all night long by the sound of my Dada and Meehaul talking in this room, and I remember that Dada was doing most of the talking, and they went on all night long until the morning, and I couldn't get any sleep, and I was in pain from my hip, and I didn't understand what it was all about...What it was, was [sic] that de Valera had refused to go to London for the Treaty talks and he wanted to send Arthur Griffith and Meehaul. Meehaul flatly refused to go. He wouldn't go. "The soldier never goes," he said. Why de Valera wouldn't go, I don't know. I think he knew that they couldn't get a republic that they would come back with a compromise and that whoever brought it back would get the blame and he didn't want to get the blame...But Meehaul wouldn't go. He said it was wrong, that his place was in Ireland and that de Valera should go. And he couldn't be persuaded to change his mind, so he was sent to see Dada, because they knew that my father had great influence over him, and they sat up all night in that room next to where I was in bed. Dada told him he had to go, that it didn't matter that de Valera would not go, that he had to go to London, and in the end he did go. That was what they were talking about all night long until the morning, and I couldn't sleep, Meehaul knew that he was signing his death warrant when he signed the Treaty. I think he knew it then that night and that my father and he talked about it.⁵⁷

This recollection is an insightful view into the private emotional turmoil Collins experienced when faced with a major political decision. It is in contrast to the reassured 'reasoned' rhetoric he projects during the Treaty debates. The suggestion that Batt O'Connor had 'influence' over him is an interesting remark. However, we must be careful in understanding the meaning she attaches to influence. Is influence meant to suggest advice or the ability to change someone's mind? Whatever the meaning, it is

⁵⁷ Notes of interview with Sr.Margaret Mary. (Formerly Una O'Connor) 3 November 1988. (N.L.I. 'Papers of Michael Collins referring to his uncle General Michael Collins', MS 40, 429/7). *Meehaul is the phonetic pronunciation of Mícheál, which is the Irish form of Michael.

clear that Collins sought the advice of an older man. Equally, it is analogous to a father/son relationship, or an older brother to younger. Collins, the young man in a moment of emotional uncertainty, seeks the advice of an older more experienced man.⁵⁸ Notwithstanding, in the public arena of the reasoned political debate this private moment of emotional uncertainty is subsumed beneath arguments for the Treaty's merits. In effect the private feeling is concealed from the public persona. In her account, Collins seems caught between personal feeling and his public duty. It helps to understand why he is so intent on conjuring images of exemplary manhood in support of his political argument. Ultimately, Collins definition of self is tied to his participation in the Treaty and subsequent political consequences. Una O'Connor's recollection gives a sense of how Collins reconciled his personal emotions in light of the major political decision facing him. In this case personal feelings are resolved in the face of political expediency. Collins appears to understand his place within the schema as one requiring a flexible dimension, reached in a reasoned manner. He is reacting and responding to expectations that his political position entail, understood through his own subjective experience of it 'being the right thing to do'.

Throughout the debates, codes of masculinities are summoned in 'harangues about principle', with each side presenting what it sees as exemplary images of masculine practices to support their respective arguments. Crucially for Collins, his way of dealing with the personal turmoil is 'to do the right thing' despite his expressed reservations, a rational and reasoned decision where personal sentiment is subservient to the requirements of the public domain.⁵⁹

Notwithstanding, when this private insight is contextualised in relation to Collins's public explanation for accepting a role at the talks, we get a sense of the emotional experiences that preceded his reasoned decision to go – a subjective interpretation of his position. Consequently if we were to evaluate Collins's masculinities on the Dáil statement alone, it would provide only one means for our understanding of the issues that affect overall perceptions of gender identity understood through emotions – a particular image in a particular setting conforming to codes and practices of masculine

⁵⁸ See, Julia Martin, 'As big as the world: imagination, kindness, and our little boys', in Mark Allister (ed.), *New perspectives on masculinity and nature* (London, 2004), pp 181-95, for further discussion and reading.

⁵⁹ An aspect to bear in mind for perceptions of gender identity is that our knowledge of this meeting is informed by someone else's recollection of Collins in a private moment – thus their interpretation of it – Sister Margaret Mary's recollection of an experience from her own childhood.

behaviour in a public space. Without knowledge of the personal emotional insight provided in the above account, Collins's masculinities could only be evaluated on his public performances. Una O'Connor's recollection serves to enlighten aspects of the subjective experience of gender identity perception. It shows Collins in an uncertain frame of mind, the emotional experience must be gone through in order to determine the rational decision. Furthermore, it contrasts and highlights the reasoned nature of the rhetoric that defines male codes of practice in the political arena.

When dealing retrospectively with the issue of his decision to accept a place on the delegation, Collins asserts the need to focus the current deliberations and subsequent decisions in the present. For him, emotive patriotic rhetoric and remembrance rhetoric only serve to deflect from the political realities of the present. Important in his conceptualisation is the projection of courage and vision to see beyond the current contentions to the inherent benefits that the Treaty has to offer. The important thing is to work with what has been gained so, 'let us take that responsibility ourselves and let us in God's name abide by the decision.'⁶⁰ Considered in the context of Una O'Connor's childhood memories, his rationalisation of his political principles can be understood as a reflection of the choices he made in sacrificing personal feeling to serve the national good.

Ultimately, Collins sees himself as someone who has the courage to stand by his decisions, no matter how difficult the circumstance. His strength of conviction and force of character is evident – be strong enough to accept that responsibility. His plea is to put aside reservations based on personal sentiment and look at the practical picture of the greater good. This is not the place for those private emotional deliberations based on nostalgic or futuristic considerations. Keep the decision practical: keep personal emotional issues out of this domain. There is a moral responsibility to do so, an underlining of the reasoned and rational nature of the public domain that is the political stage.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the issue of emotion in the context of Michael Collins and his contributions to the Treaty debates of December 1921 and January 1922. In this

⁶⁰ Michael Collins, *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Éireann, 1919-2002, DVD* disc 1, vol., T, debate on the Treaty, 19 December 1921. Also available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192112190002.html> (10 June 2006).

public forum where reasoned argument and subjective experience sought justification in statement of principle and moral righteousness, images of manliness were utilised and interpreted to support one's perspective and undermine the credibility of the opposition. Socially and culturally designated images of masculinities dominated the proceeding, both in the numerical supremacy of men over women and through the image evoked within the contextual setting. The female deputies through their contribution sought to indict the masculinities of those in favour of the Treaty, by evoking heroic images of republican martyrs, holding Collins and his ilk to task as betrayers of that legacy. Deputies like Etchingham summoned Republican ideological rhetoric to support their perspective and use it as a yardstick to demean the Treaty supporters by calling into question their moral and manly integrity.

The political arena is, as seen in this case, a public forum where images of masculinity were part of the debates and arguments on both sides. In this sense images of manliness were evoked in emotional but reasoned arguments, to bolster the relative perspectives of the speakers. Equally the debates restricted personal emotional expression, as the rules of engagement demand that the contributions be kept within reasoned guidelines. However, this did not stop the evoking of deeply emotional language, in particular from the anti-Treaty factions. Speakers conjured images of past heroes and ardently aligned themselves to emotional and nostalgic conceptualisation of idealistic retrospective masculinity reflective of republican ideology. The issue of principle was the fulcrum around which both sides evoked masculine images to justify their actions, decisions and rhetoric. Images of 'ideal' masculinity were a feature of the respective arguments, with the female contributions challenging the heroic masculinity of the pro-Treaty supporters. With an inward looking political focus and definition of new political terms, participants wrestled between their hearts and heads as character judgments were made (publicly) against fellow Dáil members as never before. Personal feelings on both side served to harden attitudes. Choosing to vote for or against the Treaty meant aligning one's identity and idea of self with the political viewpoint espoused.

Collins defined himself in moral terms, conjuring images of 'ideal types' of masculinity to support his stance. He discussed the signing of his name in virtuous terms, in one instance evoking manly images of the way business should be done – signing his name to the document and seeing the process through – as the embodiment of his masculinity. He viewed responsibility on very principled terms, as a matter of emotional and personal responsibility using political morality and masculine idioms to

strengthen his argument. In aligning his identity to the plain Irish stock, his use of this imagery was designed to project the image of a plain speaking man, someone who will stand up and be counted. This demonstrates how he used commendable social and cultural images of masculinity to strengthen his argument. Emotions were channelled through reason, with images of masculinity the embodiment of the conceptualisation with which people could identify the morally righteous alignments of exemplary manly behaviour.

From Una O'Connor we get a flavour of the personal emotional distress that he experienced ahead of his involvement in the political process, displaying the dichotomous nature of public and private spheres of emotional expression. The example demonstrates that the 'reasoned space' of the political arena is not the place for private emotional considerations.

Through the images of masculinities that he evoked, Collins's like the other participants discussed in this chapter, was reflecting social and cultural conventions of masculine codes of practice in the political arena in 1920s Ireland.

Chapter five

Private man, emotional masculinities: the letters of Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan.

This chapter examines a selection of the private correspondence of Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan. These letters provide a glimpse into Collins's private thoughts at a crucial period in Irish history during which he went from being a clandestine rebel to political broker and Commander-in-Chief of the Free State army. This presents an excellent opportunity for exploring the dichotomy between private and public formation of masculine identity through the issue of male emotional expressions or lack thereof.¹

This investigation focuses on Collins's subjective experience in dealing with his political responsibility, as well as providing an opportunity to examine the gendered complexities and contingent connotations of his personal relationship with Kitty.

The letters serve as a vehicle to investigate the relationship between Collins and Kitty Kiernan, as well as providing a medium of necessary private emotional release for Collins. 'Letters add to our historical view of gender, of women and men and the differences thought to belong to their different "natures." Letters reveal how important it is to think about gender in the past not as a status, but as a process.'²

When considering issues of masculinities, utilising private correspondence to explore this dynamic offers a valuable method of investigating a particular area of history. This allows for the opportunity to explore questions involving male emotional investment and expression. 'Focusing on the letter genre, which is crucial to politics, and using the analytical tool of gender studies, has enabled scholars to open up new historical

¹ Emotion is to be understood as the encompassment of the entire various elements that constitute its spectrum, love, anger, sadness, joy, frustration, etc. Private in this instance is taken to mean those moments in life when a person is alone with their thoughts and emotions. Collins is also alleged to have had relationships with other women during his engagement to Kitty. Furthermore, Vincent McDowell, *Michael Collins and the brotherhood* (Dublin, 1997), pp 21-4, controversially claims that Collins fathered two children for Moya Llewellyn-Davis. These issues are not the concern of this chapter.

² *History matters*, available at available at: <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/letters/model1.html> (16 July 2006).

perspectives...and [to] examine the three dimensional relationship between politics, gender and letters.’³

The methodological approach undertaken in this chapter is outlined below. This is followed by a discussion of the significance of the personal writing process to expressions of male private feelings and emotions. Attention is given to the language Collins utilises in writing about his feelings. Questions concerning whether or not he found it difficult to express emotions and how he articulated himself in this regard are core issues under investigation. Towards this end attention is then turned to examining a selection of the Collins/Kiernan letters.

The correspondences that form the collection have been published in a volume edited by Leon O’Broin, *In great haste*.⁴ The letters are arranged in chronological order and cover the period from October 1921 until August 1922. They reflect both the changing nature of Collins’s and Kiernan’s personal relationship, as well as the increasing strain and pressure Collins endured as the Irish political situation intensified.

The letters selected for inclusion in this chapter were written during particular periods of political change in Ireland. These include letters written during the Treaty talks between mid-October and early December 1922; the Dáil Éireann debates on the Treaty from mid-December 1921 to early January 1922, the political upheaval and threat of Civil War that loomed from January to May 1922, the lead up to and outbreak of Civil War, to Collins’s untimely death in August 1922. This correspondence is examined with a view towards discerning any changes in the way Collins expressed himself through the course of these dramatic events as both the political and personal situations intensified.

Further discussion regarding the letters examined, as well as the reasons for their inclusions is provided later in the chapter. Theoretical considerations of the investigative process are provided in the relevant sections throughout the text.

Private writing and emotional expression

The previous chapter’s analysis of emotion and the Dáil debates highlighted the way in which Collins’s public justification and rationalisation of his decision to participate in

³ Caroline Bland and Máire Cross, *Gender and politics in the age of letter-writing, 1750-2000* (Hampshire, UK, 2004), p. 5.

⁴ León Ó’Broin (ed.), *In great haste: the letters of Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan* (Dublin, 1983). (Hereafter referred to as, Ó’Broin (ed.), *In great haste*).

the Treaty negotiations subsumed the private turmoil that the decision entailed. Examining the letters as a method of comparing and contrasting Collins's emotional revelations offers an opportunity to further illuminate this issue by highlighting the public versus private issue that is at the heart of both epistolary and gender studies, as well as the differences in the public and private sphere of male emotions. For instance, displays of emotion in the private letter are not subject to the same considerations as emotional displays within the public realm. The fact that the personal correspondence is meant to be read by one person and particularly someone trusted by the writer, suggests that the author may feel freer to express themselves in ways that they could not do in the public sphere. Roper argues that 'the putting of pen to paper may, for example, not only be a means of expressing feelings, but part of an attempt to work upon and transform the psychic reality.'⁵ The writing process then, by its inherent creative and constructive nature, may unlock thoughts and feelings that would not necessarily find manifestation in oral expression.

This raises the issue of the differentiation between oral and written expression. Crucially, less socially constricting considerations are employed when writing a private correspondence, particularly if the recipient is a trusted friend and/or lover.⁶ In other words, there is only an immediate need to consider what that specific person's reactions and interpretations are to the content. This is not to suggest that other factors aren't important, as many considerations may influence the type of information the writer chooses to convey, thus placing restrictions on emotional outpourings in the private correspondence. Consideration must, however, be given to the fact that in utilizing the written word when writing, the correspondent has more time to consider the content than if the words were spoken orally, and thus subject to the possibility of immediate response.

In developing an investigative framework for analysing soldiers' letters during the First World War, Michael Roper argues for an approach that focuses on the emotional significance of the communication of the men involved:

⁵ Michael Roper, 'Splitting in unsent letters: writing as a social practice and a psychological activity' in *Social History*, xxvi, no. 3 (October 2001), p. 321. (Hereafter referred to as, Roper, 'Splitting in unsent letters.')

⁶ For example the writer may feel safe in the knowledge that letters will not be seen by a third party or that they may be saved for posterity.

It means placing relationships, and the webs of care in which they were suspended, at the centre of study, charting their histories and place in the formation of masculinity, understood now as a psychic as well as a social and cultural construct. It means looking, not only at the codes of discourse operating in a letter or diary, but at the ways in which relationships are conducted in writing.⁷

The epistolary medium provides an opportunity to examine a more private, and in many respects a more 'hidden' aspect of masculine identity. By utilising this avenue it is possible to gain a greater understanding of the functions and practices of masculinities, as well as a greater understanding of male identity formation. Such an approach offers a more inclusive and comprehensive depiction of masculine identities. The private aspect is more often than not the hidden unspoken arena of identity formation: in this case the ability or inability to express intimacy, frustration, fear, joy and depression.

The public image of masculinity is frequently presented as an exemplar of male behaviour, or more specifically as an exemplar of manliness. 'The public sphere is a place that males are supposed to inhabit naturally, a place they must colonize, occupy, conquer, overcome, and control. It is the site where men come to be men.'⁸ Therefore, examining the private arena focuses on an issue that is a fundamental aspect of human existence yet paradoxically tends to be predominantly underutilised when conceptualising images of masculinities, the expression of male emotion. Moreover, to whom a letter is addressed may have an important bearing on the content. Men writing to fathers, sons, brothers, mothers, sisters, daughters and lovers (either male or female) also alters the nature of the correspondence.⁹ Therefore, exploring displays of masculine emotion, such as provided in this case study, informs our understanding of male practices and conceptualizations of personal feelings of self. 'Subjectivity, in so far as it can ever be understood through a personal source such as a letter or diary, is clearly never wholly anterior to language.'¹⁰

Examining a selection of the Collins and Kiernan letters provides an opportunity to investigate the nature of Collins's emotional expressions, through his investment in his the relationship with Kitty, his need for reassurance and their function as an outlet for

⁷ Michael Roper, 'Slipping out of view', p. 65.

⁸ Whitehead, *Men and masculinities*, p. 114.

⁹ Other factors include, class, education levels, age, personal maturity, cultural considers, etc.

¹⁰ Roper, 'Splitting in unsent letters', p. 322.

private expression of frustration, sadness and despair. Equally, they reveal how Collins conceptualised his place in the political landscape, through the images of masculinities he aspires to as a mark of personal identity. The process of letter writing to Kitty offered him a means of personal expression; albeit a limited one, brief moments where the private and public overlapped. It provided him with a place in the private realm where displays of male emotion may be articulated (even badly) in a way that makes them easier to communicate or express. According to Walter Ong, 'writing establishes what has been called 'context-free' language or 'autonomous' discourse, discourse which cannot be directly questioned or contested as oral speech can be because written discourse has been detached from its author.'¹¹ In this sense it may be easier to write in a more personal manner especially when the one to whom you are communicating is a close friend and in Collins's case also a romantic relationship. 'In this way the technology of writing itself contributes to an elaborated sense of interiority.'¹² Furthermore, that act of writing 'makes possible increasingly articulate introspectivity, opening the psyche as never before not only to the external objective world quite distinct from itself but also to the interior self against whom the objective world is set.'¹³

While internal feelings and emotions may pull men towards one course of action, perceived codes of practice or behaviours dictate that acting on such feelings- or indeed even *feeling* such feelings- reflect negatively on identity perceptions. Goss makes a case that many men will often rationalise and attempt to control their feelings as opposed to allowing themselves to experience them, searching for reasons as to *why* they feel the way they do as opposed to understanding process that gives rise to the feelings.¹⁴ Daniel Goleman argues that 'the emotions...matter for rationality. In the dance of feeling and thought the emotional faculty guides our moment-to-moment decision, working hand-in-hand with the rational mind, enabling – or disabling – thought itself.'¹⁵ For Michael Collins, his involvement in negotiating the Treaty,

¹¹ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and literacy: the technologizing of the word* (London, 1995), p.78. (Hereafter referred to as, Ong, *Orality and literacy*)

¹² Michael Roper, 'Splitting in unsent letters', pp 319-20.

¹³ Ong, *Orality and literacy*, p. 105.

¹⁴ Phil Goss, 'Discontinuities in the male psyche: waiting, deadness and disembodiment; archetypal and clinical approaches' in *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, ii, no. 5 (November 2006), pp 681-99. (I am not suggesting that this is only an issue for men. Many women experience this also. The issue at stake here is developing an understanding of the 'process' that gives rise to emotional expression.)

¹⁵ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ* (London, 1996), p. 28. (Hereafter referred to as, Goleman, *Emotional intelligence*)

debating in the Dáil and dealing within the fragmented internal politics that followed, brought challenges and pressures. When examining Collins's correspondence to Kiernan, close attention is paid to the method by which he appears to rationalise, express and avoid emotions, such as frustration, anger, love and stress. Through letters 'composure in its first sense involves the construction of an account through specific practices, technologies and genres of expression.'¹⁶ Examining the letters in this context allows the spotlight to be placed on the ways in which Collins expressed and understood the processes of his own emotions.

Rational man, emotional 'reason'

In private, many males have difficulty in understanding their feelings, their separation from rational thought and concepts that surround them. For example, the pressure of expectation of behaviour that is dictated by their socially constructed environment fuelled by the rationally perceived ideas and ideals of masculine activities blurs the lines and can serve to disorient and confuse the picture for many men. Here, the more rational world of the public domain impacts the private, often serving to leave the subjects unsure about themselves. Consequently their self-esteem may suffer. 'If the public world of men is rooted in myth and mystery, then men's private lives can appear deep, dark, almost gothic in their impenetrableness.'¹⁷ In terms of personal embodiment in men's public and private practices – or the sense of what it means to be a man – it is 'that which is 'private' in men and masculinity...which is ultimately most revealing.'¹⁸ Therefore in the broader sense, the scope for the exploration of emotions offers enormous potential both to enhance an understanding of this cloaked subject and to develop our knowledge of the gender dynamic that informs the understanding of masculine emotion.

Emotional negotiations: the Treaty talks

Brought about by the commitments of his political and military work, one of the main facets to emerge on reading the Collins/Kiernan correspondences is the issue of stress in Collins's life. This strain and anxiety is particularly evident in the latter days of the Treaty talks, in late November and early December 1921, and shows a marked and

¹⁶ Michael Roper, 'Splitting in unsent letters', p. 320.

¹⁷ Whitehead, *Men and masculinities*, p. 146.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

increased intensity during and after the Dáil debates of December 1921 and January 1922, an intensity that displays a subtle escalation in momentum up until his death in August 1922.

I will now examine a selection of correspondence written and received during the period of Collins's participation in the Treaty negotiations between Ireland and Great Britain that took place in London between October and early December 1921.

While letter writing was serving as an emotional outlet for Collins, there is evidence to suggest that he found emotional reprieve in reading the ones he received from Kitty, highlighting the importance of this communication channel as a means of emotional expression. On 13 October 1921 he received a letter from her that was full of delight, joy and compliments. She spoke of her growing affection for Collins and her hopes for closeness and happiness in their relationship. They had spent some time together recently and Collins had given her a present of a watch. Her warmth and respect for him is obvious from the content of that correspondence, to which she added the following P.S.:

In the other note is my real feelings for you too, how I hope that all my future may be the same, filled with the same feelings for you. If so, ours ought to be the biggest love in Ireland. I want to be sure, very sure, very sure of this.¹⁹

The next day Collins sent the following reply:

I don't know how many times I have read your letter. It's awfully good, and I do really love it...You'll never know what good that letter did me yesterday – it helped me all through the day, and it was one of the hardest days we have yet had. At it from early morning until 8 almost and you don't know what an ordeal that is...Do you like my letters or only some of them?²⁰

Judging from the nature of his response, Collins found great personal satisfaction in receiving this letter from Kitty during his involvement in political matters of enormous public significance. In referring to the 'ordeal' of the long day he had spent in negotiations, Collins lets her know that in the letter he found the inspiration to keep him going throughout the day. The only information he supplies in relation to the

¹⁹ Letter from Kitty Kiernan to Michael Collins, received 13 October 1921, Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 29.

²⁰ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 14 October 1921, Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 32.

political proceedings is his acknowledgment that the hectic agenda is placing a strain on his energies. Noticeably, Collins is concerned as to whether Kitty likes his letters, pointing to his need for her reassurance or approval. Equally present is his desire for an emotional understanding or connection with her, perhaps a reflection their private relationship. The dynamic here shows the man seeking the approval of his female companion. This provides an example of how his personal relationship is used to reinforce his sense of public duty. Roper argues that British soldiers' correspondence back home during World War One, contained a dynamic in which the soldiers sought approval and reassurance to bolster their own sense of self-worth. 'In [these] letters...the emotional situation of the child was never far beneath the effort to compose a self-image as a soldier and man.'²¹ Significantly, Collins 'the adored youngest son of the household'²² grew up in the company of women. Here, perhaps he is displaying expectations of how he assumes the way a woman, Kitty in this case, will respond to his male coded expressions.

Collins's duress is evident when he wrote the following to Kitty on a date sometime between 14 – 17 October:

You'll have seen all the praise and flattery that has been showered on me since I came here and have been publicly known. You will know I hope that they leave me untouched just as their dispraise and their blame did. All the same to me. That upper lip of mine had been called on to do much scornful upturning since I've seen you.'²³

There is a reiteration from Collins to Kitty that the publicity surrounding him will not alter or affect his character. He portrays the disposition of a man not interested in personal fame. This may be as much a reassurance to himself as it is to Kitty. The element of scorn revealed is indicative of the frustration he is obviously feeling as a result of the talks process. This private correspondence used as a means of venting – if only mildly – his frustration, dually, his mode of coping on an emotional level.

On 19 October Collins wrote of feeling claustrophobic amidst the intensity of the proceedings:

²¹ Roper, 'Slipping out of view', p. 66.

²² Ryan, *Michael Collins and the women in his life*, p. 13.

²³ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 19 October 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 44.

Last night I escaped from all my people and went for a drive alone. Rather funny – the great M. C. in lonely splendour. I am lonely actually and I suppose you won't believe that, and that's that.²⁴

In the above he is rather self-jibing of his need for 'the great M. C.' to languish in 'lonely splendour'. However, the tone projects a yearning for such a place – a deep expression of his personal feelings underwritten by a sense of frustration and a necessity for personal space. In admitting his loneliness to Kitty, Collins portrays the tone of a man who is almost apologetic for feeling that way. His 'that's that' summation curtains his journey of explanation, a sort of embarrassed withdrawal from veering down to road of emotional vulnerability. The emotion is rationalised as something that has to be endured. Crucially though, he shares these feeling with Kitty. He continues in the following vein:

Sorry that some of my letters should fall short. Read those ones again. They are not meant of fall really short. But life has to take in the serious things as well as the light things, and even though we may like sunshine always, it is not practical nor indeed – and remember this – is it desirable. And that's that.²⁵

His statement is once again qualified by the 'that's that' ending. It signifies Collins rational understanding of his political position, of the practicality of his situation and how the things one wishes for are not always possible or in fact necessary. There is a kind of personal reassurance here that hard roads have to be travelled, endurance tested, and reserve drawn upon in order to strive to reach the end goal. It is as if Collins is seeing the practicalities of compromise, personal compromise for the greater good. The private letter provides a place for him to find expression for these thoughts and feelings, even in their limited form. Equally, his portrays a certain sense of anger. Perhaps he is concerned that his letters are not romantic enough for Kitty and this disturbs him. Whatever his motives, the correspondence portray an emotion– the practicalities between the serious and the light are his rationalised analysis of his emotional uncertainty.

²⁴ Letter from Michael Collins to Kiernan 19 October 1921, p. 44.

²⁵ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 19 October 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 44.

Deborah Kerfoot argues that, 'in seeking to control the uncertainty that might be generated by emotional intimacy, many men – consciously or otherwise – reach of conventional practices and behaviours of stereotypical masculine behaviours: masculinity thereby becomes a means of rendering social relations manageable, thus avoiding the emotional intimacy that is so threatening.'²⁶ In the correspondence thus far, Collins appears to reflect this premise.

Collins wrote to Kitty from London on 8 November 1921:

You'll be glad to know that I'm feeling tip top but I am lonely, and very very discontented. You needn't ask if I thought of you at mass and a candle – yes indeed and I'm thinking so very much of you now... Are you thinking of me now? And how are you feeling about it all? When do you come to town again? That's important! Do you understand? Must go to breakfast. Goodbye for today with all my love and every blessing to my Kit.
Michael.²⁷

Once again there is evidence of Collins consigning his emotions to paper. He seeks understanding from Kitty. There is a discernable attempted emotional connection with her. Collins admits to being 'lonely' and 'very very discontented'. This may also be a means of reassuring Kitty that he misses her. He asks her when she is coming 'to town again?' There is a subliminal message in the question, 'Do you understand?', which appears to make reference to something of emotional importance that has taken place between them. It seems important enough for Collins to seek Kitty's acknowledgment in relation to the matter. In a time of personal stress in this public dealing, Collins seeks emotional reprieve in his female companion. 'Because of the emotional intimacy so desired by many women, such intimacy, by its very nature, requires that the men responds authentically. For in order for the moment to be experienced as genuine, and thereby unscripted, emotional intimacy requires merely responding to the other, rather than drawing on a knowledge of *how* to respond.'²⁸ Equally it may be his way of letting her know, without having to say it directly, how important the relationship is to him.

²⁶ Deborah Kerfoot, 'The organization of intimacy: managerialism, masculinity and the masculine subject' in Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (eds), *The masculinities reader* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 237. (Hereafter referred to as, Kerfoot, 'The organisation of intimacy')

²⁷ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 8 November 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 58.

²⁸ Kerfoot, 'The organization of intimacy', p. 237.

Indications of Collins's emotional need to communicate with Kitty are portrayed in his frustration towards her for not writing to him. Receiving her letters obviously mean a great deal to him during this stressful period in his life, evident in the following extract:

How are you? You deserve my silence as you've only written once during the week. I mean, I've only got one letter. Goodbye, in great haste.
Fondest love, Michael.²⁹

These apparently scornful lines portray a man in need of his emotional outlet. It appears that it is not sufficient for Collins to write letters to Kitty, but he is also in need of receiving them from her. The letters provide a means of relief from the strains of his political endeavours. The absence of correspondence from her is a source of annoyance. It appears he needs the emotional reassurance that his relationship with Kitty offers him. In the context of soldiers' letters during the First World War, Michael Roper argues that, 'men's expressions of abject disappointment at failures to receive mail, or of unbridled delight when the mail was plentiful, convey a desire for...intimacy...that at first sight seem surprising given the cultural context of stoic reserve and manly independence.'³⁰ Similarly for Collins, his need to receive letters from Kitty displays similar sentiment shaped around the desire for emotional intimacy and understanding.

Six days later Collins penned the following lines to Kitty during a crucial time in the Treaty negotiations:

I read all your letters again last night and I started writing to you sitting up in bed but I had to give up. Positively I was too worn out to write legibly...Even so I was up at 7.30 and am feeling as well and as vigorous as it is possible to feel. Don't worry about my rest. It's really all right. You know my maxim: "It's better to wear out than to rust out". That's really the important essential point, isn't it? Am writing this early before anyone has started here. I went to St. Mary's, lit a candle for you, came back, had breakfast and started this before 9! What do you think of that?³¹

²⁹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 24 November 1921 in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 73-4.

³⁰ Roper, 'Slipping out of view', p. 64.

³¹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 30 November 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 76.

There is a discernible sense from the above extract of Collins's apologetics and then cheeky compensation for his inability to write her a letter, due to his level of exhaustion. He deflects the extent of his tiredness from the previous day's endeavours by referring to and repeating his maxim. Collins is on one level reassuring Kitty that he is up to the task and secondly, reassuring himself that tiredness due to hard work is indeed a productive and worthy consequence of his endeavour. Notwithstanding, a strong sense of stressfulness and pressure emerges from these few lines. In a way, alluding to his tiredness provides Collins with a mechanism of expression by providing both release from and justification for his heavy workload. The letter functions as a kind of pressure release valve, a means of expressing feelings that have no outlet in the reasoned political world in which he is engaged. Implicit in his communication is a suggestion that she will have empathy for the stress he feels. The letter provides his means of emotional expression. In Collins's maxim the idea of the work ethic dominates his rational thought. Somehow it is included as a reassurance to Kitty that he is coping with the workload. However, much more significantly it is a personal statement of self-reassurance, a line consigned to paper that reiterates his feelings of stress and pressure, akin to a personal justification of their necessity. The writing of these lines is a means of reassuring himself, whilst simultaneously divulging his feelings to someone who he implicitly trusts. In these lines Collins searches for an emphatic understanding of his emotional investment and turmoil. As Roper contends, 'the process of writing itself might encourage a desire for reflection in response to distressing events.'³² The above content of Collins's letter appears to support this premise.

As the talks reached their climatic phase in early December 1921, Collins wrote a letter to Kitty that portrays a flavour of the personal strain he was experiencing at this juncture:

Thus far I got yesterday morning when I was called to go to a conference and what a day I had afterwards. Finished up at Downing St at 2.15 this morning. To bed about 5, and up to go to Mass and didn't

³² Michael Roper, 'Maternal relations: moral manliness and emotional survival in letters home during the First World War' in Stefan Dudink, et al (eds), *Masculinities in politics and war* (Manchester, 2004), p. 302. (Hereafter referred to as, Roper, 'Maternal relations').

(need I say it) forget your candle. My plans in regard to home are as yet uncertain. I don't know how things will go now but with God's help we have brought peace to this land of ours – peace which will end this old strife of ours forever.

I should have liked very much to write fully to you but today is worse than yesterday: there are all sorts of interviews, photographers, etc., etc.,. There are further meetings to be attended also and therefore I must finish. You will not think any worse of me by not receiving a letter this morning – you will see I wrote part of it, so that the spirit was there all right.³³

Collins is noticeably apologetic for not having more time to write to Kitty. His use of the word 'worse' suggests an agenda of duties that border on strain and time constraint. He seems concerned with how she will respond to getting such short letters from him. Yet he makes the time to write despite the constraints of the situation, signifying the underlying importance of his correspondence to her.

At this point, his letters never venture into the politics of what was involved in the political discussions. There may be several explanations for this, not least the fear of the letters being intercepted and important information falling into the wrong hands. Whatever the grounds, Collins conveys a sense of the anxiety he was feeling and the letter serves in some small way as a source of outlet for these feelings. Equally, 'the desire to maintain the image of a great man in the making – heightened by the compliments [or criticism] paid by others – could itself become a source of [personal] anxiety.'³⁴ During the intense few weeks in which the Treaty debates took place, Collins's need for private release from the tumult is evident in his letters. He frequently refers to things being 'difficult' and 'awful'. He portrays the image of a man under great personal stress, yet consumed with an avid determination to get things done. It is interesting to notice the sense of pressure and troubled mind that consumes him at this point. The demands on his time seem incessant.

'Debating' private emotions

As the pressure on Collins's energies assume greater proportions, the ever-increasing importance of his correspondences with Kitty is evident in the following letter that he wrote to her on 12 December, two days before the start of the Dáil debates on the Treaty:

³³ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 5/6 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.). *In great haste*, pp. 85-6.

³⁴ Roper, 'Splitting in unsent letters', p. 327.

Kitty dearest, am back but I'm so tired that I can scarcely remain awake. This is a line just to tell you so, and to say I am thinking very very much of you today, also to say that, no matter how short my note is, I am writing it. May God bless you always and may I see you soon again. Your own, Micheal.³⁵

The need to write such a short note is an emotional reiteration of their connection; the important factor is that he is 'writing it'. By keeping the lines of communication open, Collins is showing Kitty that she is important enough to him to make the effort, no matter how minimal the content. This is also a reinforcement of self through the communication.³⁶ The Treaty, as history has recorded, was not greeted with universal approval in the Irish political landscape. Collins and his fellow signatories were now faced with the task of convincing the members of the Dáil that the document was a worthy settlement for everything that had been endured over the previous years and for the extremist in the chamber, the bygone centuries. As the Dáil debates commenced, signs of Collins's personal stress and anxiety began to emerge in the correspondence to Kitty. She wrote to him around this time in reassurance of her support for him, 'Ireland knows only too well that you are her strong friend, and the people are no fools.'³⁷ Her encouragement echoes his troubled state of mind amid the mounting political situation.

The day the debates began, Collins's strain is evident in his short note he penned to Kitty:

My dear Kit,
Got your letter today. Ever so many thanks. Am trying to show you that you are in my personal mind notwithstanding all cares and worries. I have so many. Do keep on praying for me.
Write to Gresham Hotel. Mark personal. Put in inner envelope and mark personal only.
With all my love, M.³⁸

³⁵ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 12 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 91.

³⁶ See, Anne Marie Dadoly (ed.), *Stress control: techniques for prevention and easing stress, A Harvard Medical School publication* (Boston, 2002), pp 23-4, for insight into benefits of writing as a means of relieving stress.)

³⁷ Letter from Kitty Kiernan to Michael Collins, possibly written in December 1921 in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 88.

³⁸ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 14 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 94.

Here, as with previous sentiment, Collins alludes to his personal anguish and troubles resultant from his political participation. Simultaneously, he is letting her know that he is thinking of her. It is significant that he mentions his 'personal mind', distinguishing between his personal and public affairs. In the time he has for himself he is thinking of her.

On the following day he wrote:

It's all a dreadful strain and it's telling a good deal on me, but, with God's help, things will be all right and some good will have been done in any case, and that's something.³⁹

There is discernable personal anguish in Collins's words that he seeks to rationalise, with the help of God, through the prospect of some good coming from his torment. In other words, the personal torment is a price he is willing to pay towards a fruitful conclusion. The next day his mood had become even more sombre:

The times are getting worse indeed and these coming days will be worse still, but I suppose they'll be over and done with soon enough.⁴⁰

Again, there is a hint of his personal strain, brushed away in a rational manner. The prospect that all will be concluded in due course put his venture at personal expression, back in its rational place. Later he adds, 'your letter was very nice and pleasant and I do like these messages from you. I appreciate them so much that I never return them – just in the same way I mean of course.'⁴¹ Here, he acknowledges, in an admittedly awkward manner, the importance of her letters and in particular the sentiment she expresses in them. His appreciation for her 'messages' is that they are important to him but that he doesn't return the sentiment, as it wouldn't do it justice. Equally, his comment also serves to signify his deflection at having to express himself in a deeply intimate manner. Kerfoot comments that 'in seeking to control the uncertainty that might be generated by emotional intimacy, many men – consciously or otherwise – reach of conventional practices and behaviours of stereotypical masculine behaviours: masculinity thereby becomes a means of rendering social relations manageable, thus

³⁹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 15 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 95.

⁴⁰ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 16 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 96.

⁴¹ Ibid.

avoiding the emotional intimacy that is so threatening.⁴² This sequence of extracts from Collins's letters during the Treaty debates displays the emotions of a man seeking empathy for his personal turmoil, yet subtly avoiding a deeper level of expression and feeling.

In response to this portrayal of a troubled mindset, Kitty writes to reassure him that in these stressful times that he is not toiling in vain:

You must be having a very anxious time, but don't worry, all will yet be well, and it won't be your fault if the country is brought into trouble again. You did your best. The people here have no thought but one, and you are the one.⁴³

Her reply is addressed to Collins's personal feelings of self. She focuses on his anxiety, personal responsibility for the political situation and the general populace's evaluation of his political efforts. Collins displays an increased intensity of personal feelings bordering on self-doubt during these few days. His troubles seem so many and the process of his communications to Kitty offers him a means of expression not possible through other channels. Her words bestow comfort and reassurance that his efforts are appreciated by a great deal of people. 'The affirmation of manhood constitutes a fundamental form of emotional support. If there is such a thing as a continuum of need for emotional support, then surely that continuum is put into place by the fundamental emotional need of manhood affirmation.'⁴⁴

A distinction that emerges in the personal correspondence is the space it provides for the conveyance of private feelings and emotions. Consigning words to paper is a recognised method of personal expression.⁴⁵ Where thoughts are conveyed to a close and trusted acquaintance, feelings that most likely would not normally be projected into the public domain, there is a level of emotional trust. Consequently, these letters also

⁴² Kerfoot, 'The organisation of intimacy', p. 237.

⁴³ Letter from Kitty Kiernan to Michael Collins, 17 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 96.

⁴⁴ Laurence Mordekhai Thomas, 'Feminist ambiguity in heterosexual lives: reflection on Andrea Dworkin' in Digby (ed.), *Men doing feminism*, p. 331. (Hereafter referred to as, Thomas, 'Feminist ambiguity').

⁴⁵ Annette L. Stanton, Anita Parsa and Jennifer L. Austenfeld, 'The adaptive potential of coping through emotional approach' in C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez (eds), *Handbook of positive psychology* (Oxford, 2002), p. 149.

act as a means of providing a space to voice feelings that otherwise may not have been possible. Simultaneously, the solitary nature of the writing process allows for the freedom to express thoughts in a manner where they are not subject to immediate and instant rebuttal. Writing in this way induces a psychic portrayal of the personal need that underlies the more public persona of Collins. Personal writing offers a means of relieving that stress, evident in his note to Kitty, written on 17 December:

Am sending this note by hand with Séan so as to send you some message for tomorrow. Am writing this very late on Saturday night, still at Dáil meeting and very worn out indeed. But am thinking of you and would dearly love to travel with Séan tonight – so as to see you, but alas cannot do it. Goodbye dear and God bless you.
Fondest love, Michael.⁴⁶

The pressure of the late night meetings are having an effect on Collins. One can only imagine the level of exhaustion he was feeling at this juncture, firstly, induced by the process of the Treaty Talks and secondly because of the intense protracted and fractious nature of the Dáil debates. There is a sense that he somehow feels trapped by the necessity for him to remain with the political process and to sort out the passionate intensity of the current dilemma, the conflict between the emotional and rational mindset and his private and public self. He also reassures her that he would love to see her but his public commitments are both the psychic and physical impediment of his true desire. Even though short, it is important enough for him to write it and have it hand delivered. The next day Collins followed up his hastily scribbled note with the following 'longer' correspondence:

Am taking advantage of a temporary cessation to drop you a line. By this time you will have received my 'scrag' from Sean...All this business is very, very sad. Harry has come out strongly against us. I'm sorry for that, but I suppose that like many another episode in this business [it] must be borne also. I haven't an idea of how it will all end but, with God's help, all right. In any event I shall be satisfied. Don't know whether or not we shall finish tomorrow, but it's hardly likely...No letter from you today. I wonder why?⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 17 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 97-8.

⁴⁷ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 18 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 98.

Once again Collins takes time to write to Kitty amid his busy schedule. The need to communicate with her offers an important outlet for his frustration and personal anxiety. He is saddened, yet seemingly resigned to the fact that his friend Harry Boland is opposing the Treaty. This almost stoic resignation is rationalised as another unfortunate consequence of how things seem to be turning, as it 'must be borne also'. Also, the fact that Boland once had a romantic interest in Kitty may also possibly be a factor, albeit a lesser one.⁴⁸ Ultimately, Collins seems to be acknowledging something deeper here. There is a sense that he is resigned to political upheavals however personally upsetting they are. It is all just part of the unfolding political drama. Collins feels he is giving the process his full energies and that no matter what happens he will be satisfied with the outcome, secure in the knowledge that he has given all he can – indicative perhaps of his means of contextualising his emotional reaction towards the events and their unfolding drama. Equally, it serves as his means of convincing and calming himself, a reiteration of his own doubt that all will be well. In writing these lines, perhaps Collins is appropriating his fears and worries, whether deliberately or incidentally, in a way that buttresses his doubts and self-belief – emotions presented and conceptualised in a rationalised manner. Joanna Bourke argues what 'is a 'fear' for one individual or group may be an 'anxiety' for another.'⁴⁹ She suggests that the difference lies in the capacity of people to believe themselves capable of rationalising their situation and thus reaching a solution to the dilemma. 'Put another way, the difference lies in the ability to externalize threat, thus providing a sense of personal invulnerability.'⁵⁰ In this way Collins assuages his personal doubt through the process of writing, thus instilling in himself the necessary reassurance to face a new quandary. This is where the two-way nature of the letters is an important source for the expression of these private thoughts. The continuing need for Collins to receive correspondence from Kitty is evident when he included the line, 'no letter from you today. I wonder why?'⁵¹ A substantiation of the mounting stress level and the concurrent need for emotional comfort gleaned from the knowledge that she takes the time to write to him – an indication of a man under emotional stress and craving understanding for his plight.

⁴⁸ Letter from Harry Boland to Kitty Kiernan, 17 June 1920 in O'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 8-9.

⁴⁹ Joanna Bourke, 'Fear and anxiety: writing about emotion in modern history' in *History Workshop Journal*, lx, no. 1 (spring 2003), p. 126. (Hereafter referred to as, Bourke, 'Fear and anxiety').

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁵¹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 18 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 98.

Four days later an unfinished note to Kitty opens with the following line:

Your letter this morning was very very nice. I think your letters do get nicer and nicer – at any rate that's what I think about them.⁵²

The letter to which Collins is referring has unfortunately not survived and consequently there is no way of knowing why he said what he did. However, the fact that he felt her letters were 'nicer and nicer' may imply his need for receiving correspondence from her that distracts his attentions, even briefly, from the intense political debating that was taking place. The next day he began his letter in following manner:

The wee note which accompanies this was written yesterday morning but the day came so strenuous that I was unable to finish it. You'd scarcely credit a thing like that, would you? Today is, however, somewhat of a free day – alas! Free only from the routine of a debate – and I must try to do some shopping.⁵³

Here the words 'strenuous' and 'free' are laden with connotations of an all-consuming energy. The private dimension of the lettered communication, in telling Kitty of his predicament, allows Collins a means of dealing with his stresses and emotions. In the letter he talks about the uncertainty of his Christmas plans. He tells her that due to both needing to visit his family in Cork and the commitments that participation in the debates involve, then he probably will only be able to make it down to Granard on New Years Day.⁵⁴ These brief snippets of written communication can be viewed as his means of both understanding and releasing his emotional frustration, as much as there was a need to see or keep in contact with Kitty for her sake.

The first days of January 1922 were momentous occasions in Collins's life and comprise historic implications for the political landscape of Ireland. The debates took on ferocity in that the contrast and division on the central issues came more sharply into focus. This culminated in the vote that led to the ratification of the agreement in the Dáil and the subsequent 'walkout' by the anti-Treaty supporters under the

⁵² Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 22 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 98.

⁵³ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 23 December 1921, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 99.

⁵⁴ Kitty's family owned a shop and hotel in Kiernan Granard, Co. Longford.

leadership of Eamon de Valera.⁵⁵ In this hotbed of passionate principled dialogue, Collins's need for an emotional outlet in the private dimension becomes increasingly necessary. When issues of a personal nature concerning him were voiced in the chamber, Collins had very strong reaction to the issue being raised in the political arena. On 3 January 1922 he sent a telegram to Kitty explaining the reference made by Madame Markievicz- that Princess Mary of England's impending wedding was to be cancelled to facilitate her marriage to Collins.⁵⁶ It read:

My dearest Kitty, this will reach you before the letters I sent today. My dear, dear Kitty, see the reference to yourself and Princess Mary of England. My betrothed,
My fondest love, Michael.⁵⁷

On that same day Collins had responded to the matter in the Dáil and asked the remark be withdrawn. He obviously felt great personal insult at the suggestion and making sure that Kitty did not misunderstand the rumour was of great importance to him. Quite simply he wanted to assure her that there was no truth to the remark. This letter represents a crossover of the private and the public spheres. In other words, Collins felt it inappropriate to have any reference to his private life dragged into the public domain, even though Madame Markievicz in raising the issue had acknowledged it was nonsense. As the Dáil debates moved towards their momentous conclusion and the time for the vote on issue drew near, Collins's expression of his personal frustration and despair is evident in a short note he wrote to Kitty on 5 January 1922:

Just one or two lines. This is the worst day I have had yet – far far the worst. May God help us all. I got no letter from you. I wonder why. In awful haste.
My fondest Love, Michael.⁵⁸

At this juncture the Dáil debates on the Treaty were reaching their climax and the issue of principle, accusation and counter-accusation were being bounced back and forth in

⁵⁵ See Dáil Éireann, debate on the Treaty, Resignation of President de Valera, 9 January 1922, available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192201090002.html> (22 July 2006).

⁵⁶ Dáil debates on the Treaty. 3 January 1922, available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/D/DT/D.T.192201030002.html> (22 July 2006).

⁵⁷ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 3 January 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 101.

⁵⁸ Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, probably 5 January 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 102. (Probable date suggested by Ó'Broin)

the contributions.⁵⁹ Collins's private frustration and despair is evident in these few lines. He is increasingly relying on Kitty's letters as a source of solace. The need for him to write even these short few lines is indicative of his desire to find an outlet for his frustration. 'In awful haste' suggests urgency reflective of both his personal feelings, most likely with particular reference to the whole political process. The lines read like a psychic release valve. Concurrently, he is craving a letter from her. There is a sense of desperation and want. It is like he feels alone, confused and very frustrated that he has not received her acknowledgement – his limited means of emotional comfort disappointingly unavailable as a temporary refuge. Collins even goes so far as to evoke God's help for the plight in which he finds himself.

On 9 January 1922, Collins's level of exhaustion and inner conflicts emerges in a note he wrote to Kitty on that day:

I'm absolutely fagged out and worn out and everything, but I send you this note to give my little remembrance of you. If you knew how the other side is 'killing' me – God help me. We had to beat them again today. Please come up as soon as you can or I'll wire when my brother Johnny comes up. In awful haste and trying to catch a post so that you'd know I was thinking of you.
My fondest love, Kitty dear, Michael.⁶⁰

Once again Collins calls on God's help for his predicament. Sending Kitty the note is important to show her he is thinking of her, as he mentions it twice in the short few lines. This communication channel is important to him, his emotional outlet. When he speaks of the 'other side' there is a strong sense of sadness detectable in his writing. Having to beat them again seems to be taking its toll and Collins appears to carry a heavy heart with him in this regard. The following day his need and desire to hear from her is even more pronounced. The pressures of striving to cope with the unfolding political situation and the personal implications that ensue, are manifesting in his thoughts. Consequently, his need for emotional reciprocation is evident:

At a restaurant. I am scribbling you a note before running back to the University for more talk – talk – talk. How I wish I could see you for a few minutes and if you only realised how I have missed hearing from you – three days now – why,

⁵⁹ See Dáil Éireann, debate on Treaty, in particularly 4 and 5 January 1922.

⁶⁰ Letter from Collins to Kiernan, 9 January 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 102-3.

oh why, do you not write? I wonder if you are taking me at my word and not writing so as to tease me. Well if that is so you have succeeded in sufficiently alarming me and please do write.

You scarcely realise how I wish for you.

Yours, Michael.⁶¹

The content of this letter projects the image of a man on the verge of personal despair. Not having received any correspondence from Kitty is adding to the pressure Collins is feeling. His channel of private emotional outlet is unavailable to him and he feels 'sufficiently alarmed' in this regard. On the date that Collins wrote this letter, de Valera resigned as president and a new administration came into existence with Arthur Griffith as its president. The political situation had taken a turn toward instability and there is a strong sense that Collins was feeling personal turmoil. He seems somehow fed up of 'talk – talk – talk.' He is in need of Kitty's comfort, a turning away from the public duty into the private realm of emotional sanctuary.

Coping with the fallout

Following his receipt of Kitty's letters, Collins's need for this written emotional outlet is evident in his reply, the following day:

Kitty dear,

your letter came safely this morning and I was very sorry to hear that you were in bad form. I hope you've recovered after seeing today's papers. I wired you to say I would go down on the 1.30 train on Saturday. I wired because I feared you might think my depression would make it necessary to come up – not that I didn't want you to see you, but to let you know everything was all right once I'd got your letter. And I hope you'll be likewise when you get mine. Yes indeed, the whole business was awful and I feel exactly like you about it. Wishing to God I could be with you and had left it all. The tactics of the opposition were not very creditable at times, but a great many things are allowable in positions like this – and that's that. With all my love, Micheal.⁶²

⁶¹ Letter from Collins to Kiernan, 10 January 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 103.

⁶² Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 11 January 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 103-4.

Collins seems so appreciative that she has written and is apologetic about what he terms his 'depression'. Crucially, the arrival of her letter seems to have had a positive effect in elevating his morale. He expresses a wish that he could leave all the political turmoil behind him and be with her. What is important here emotionally is his expression of the sentiment, not whether he is serious about doing it or not. There is a therapeutic value to this acknowledgment as it allows Collins to express a private emotional wish or deeply held feeling – vent his frustration so to speak. It presents an escape from the political turmoil through his expression. Here, the letter reinforces the dynamic of gender practices, where Collins seeks emotional comfort in Kitty's understanding. She is his personal ear, his sanctuary. The issue is not one of Collins ever walking away from his political duties, but that his outlet for his private feelings is provided in his correspondence to Kitty – his channel of emotional communication. Thomas argues that 'the affirmation of manhood constitutes a fundamental form of emotional support. If there is such a thing as a continuum of need for emotional support, then, surely that continuum is put into place by the fundamental emotional need of manhood affirmation.'⁶³ Collins appears to seek this reassurance from Kitty. He mentions the tactic of the other side as being awful – a reply in acknowledgment of the letter he had received from her. Once again, his 'that's that' phrase appears at the end of his letter, Collins's designated acceptance of the difficulties to be confronted in the political field, namely, what he sees as the undignified political methods of those who oppose the Treaty. In having this emotional outlet, Collins is capable of adapting a practical if not altogether entirely satisfactory peace of mind regarding the political climate.

The following day Collins wrote to Kitty regarding his need for 'personal space'. The talk's process is obviously taking a heavy toll on him:

Honestly you wouldn't believe how I am looking forward to Saturday and I do hope that nothing will go wrong to keep me here...this place is full of people and I'm wishing to God I was away with you.⁶⁴

⁶³ Thomas, 'Feminist ambiguity', p. 331.

⁶⁴ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 12 January 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 104.

In this instance Collins's need for emotional liberty is manifesting itself in a desire for a physical space removed from all the political wrangling. There is an underlying claustrophobic component, suggested by his need to get away with Kitty, leaving behind his public duties and retreating to the comfort and joy of his relationship. Collins's tension is evident in his expressed wish that nothing will go wrong to prevent him from seeing her. There is an underlying sense of desperation in his tone, to the point that he is so emotionally strung, that he is expecting something to go wrong. In his expressed anxiety he is cushioning himself against the possibility that he may be prevented from following through on his wish. His fears are consigned to paper, his outlet for expression, the receptive eyes and ears of his fiancé, his reassurance. According to Bourke, 'the act of speaking (or writing) one's fear changes the sensation of fear. Emotional utterances or acts have a 'unique capacity' to alter what they 'refer' to or what they 'represent'.⁶⁵ Collins's claustrophobic sentiment is further reiterated in his note the following day:

Kitty dearest, your wee note received today. I was glad to get it for I had kind of feared that you might not have written in view of my visit. I wonder if you are writing today? That will be the test. I'm looking forward very much indeed to seeing you after all the turmoil here, and to a quiet[,] nice weekend with you. Are you feeling this way also? If anything intervenes tomorrow I shall be wild. And then there's the rail strike, so will have to motor back. Did I tell you of our last journey back? May God be with you until I see you.
Very fondest love,
Micheál.⁶⁶

From Collins correspondence, there is a growing sense that he is desperate to see Kitty. For him, it is getting to a stage where he needs to physically see her in order to satisfy his increasing emotional needs. His letters are displaying an increased sense of emotional investment in his contact with her. Collins private self is very present through his affecting rhetoric. He contrasts the 'turmoil' with how much he is looking forward to spending a pleasant calm time with her. The investment of craving goes a step further when he wonders if she is also feeling this need. His fear of outside intervention is again voiced, reinforcing his deep emotional need of time, for private investment, a sort of longing for personal attention and in particular an understanding

⁶⁵ Bourke, 'Fear and anxiety', p. 120.

⁶⁶ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 13 January 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 104-5.

of his vulnerability. For him, to be preoccupied wondering if she is writing to him and the suggestion that this is a test, portrays the image of an man requiring emotional security. Despite his powerful political position and the symbolic connotations of its masculine image, there is a discernable level of emotional vulnerability in his correspondence. He needs support and assurance.

Not all Collins's correspondence displayed this level of emotional vulnerability in displaying a need for an outlet and/or understanding from Kitty. On 14 January Collins was elected to the post of chairman of the Irish Free State Provisional government. He wrote the following letter to Kitty at an historic juncture in the history of Irish state:

My dearest, dearest Kitty, I am as happy a man as there is in Ireland today. My thoughts just now are all with you, and you have every kind wish and feeling of mine. Have just taken over Dublin Castle and am writing this note while awaiting a meeting of my Provisional Government. What do you think of that? Otherwise I see all sorts of difficulties ahead, but never mind. Please come up tomorrow night – send a wire. Failing that, Wednesday. There is nobody like you, I find, and I wish I'd been nicer to you. 'Twas my fault.
Fondest love, dear Kit,
Your own, Micheal.⁶⁷

Although not overtly vocal about it, Collins is quite obviously delighted at the takeover of Dublin Castle. The historical symbol of British rule in Ireland, now in the hands of an Irish administration was a source of great satisfaction for him. Yet again he is consistent in not divulging any political information in his letters. For instance, he makes reference to the event and I suggest that his, 'what do you think of that?' question is meant to portray to Kitty his sense of joy over the event, captured in the lines – 'I am as happy a man as there is in Ireland today.' He courts her understanding as to the personal implication for him on such an occasion. She is the one with whom he wants to share his personal joy. However, he is preoccupied with perspective future problems, perhaps the possible stumbling blocks of dealing with former comrades now turned political foes. Notwithstanding this brief glimpse of happiness, Collins portrays the air of a man under immense personal pressure. His need for her, reaches out beyond the process of letter writing into the arena where he craves and desires her physical presence. There is an increasing sense that he is struggling with the political pressure,

⁶⁷ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 16 January 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 105.

signified in how it's encroaching on his personal equanimity, evidence for which appears in the same correspondence:

Really and truly, I feel very much improved for my weekend. This is honestly true – even though I know I did not properly appreciate my feeling and luck while I was away.⁶⁸

Again, it comes back to the state of his own welfare and the part Kitty is playing for him in relieving his stress and strain, as he says to her, 'am looking forward to seeing you tomorrow.'⁶⁹

On 20 January Collins travelled over to London for a meeting with James Craig, the prime minister of Northern Ireland. Law and order in the partitioned north of Ireland was an issue for many Catholics. For his part, Collins was hoping to reach some sort of political compromise on an issue that had presented one of the stumbling blocks on the Treaty's term, both during the negotiations in London and subsequently in the Dáil Debates. In revisiting this vexed question, combined with the mounting political pressure on all fronts, Collins's need to express personal feelings assumed a growing importance:

Am writing this on the train just before going to bed. I have been thinking of you all through the journey. You are somehow very vividly before my mind and very much with me just now. May it always be like this any time we have to leave each other.⁷⁰

Collins wrote this section of the note on the overnight mail train to London as he was going to bed. Writing at this late hour depicts a man with a sensual need to relay his feelings to Kitty, or at least letting it be know he was thinking of her and was taking the time to write that down. This line of thought is continued the following morning as he resumed the letter in the same frame of mind:

I hope also that you were not and are not too lonely. I always think when I've left you how much nicer I ought to have been to you. Do you think that about me when I'm gone?⁷¹

⁶⁸ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 17 January 1922, p. 107.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 107.

⁷⁰ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, on night mail to London, Friday night, 20 January 1922, and in London the next morning, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 108.

⁷¹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, on night mail to London, Friday night, 20 January 1922, and in London the next morning, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 108.

This is the second time in his recent letters that he has a retrospective consideration of how he behaved in her company. He is apologetic for not behaving towards her in a better manner. Yet in his words there is a detectable need to be near her. Letting Kitty know this is important for him, Collins is signalling that her closeness and understanding is of deep significance for his emotional outlet. His inquiry as to whether she thinks that about him when he's gone is a significant pointer to his emotional needs. His previous correspondences have served the requirements of emotional outlet but his expressed sentiment has now advanced to craving a space of personal contact – a deeper understanding. His emotional investment has reached an increased intensity, in conjunction with the political situation and consequently the need for an outlet for his private feelings have assumed similar proportions.

As the political intensity increases, Collins's requirement in seeking Kitty's acknowledgment of his emotional needs displays a level of misunderstanding and frustration, to the point where his internal turmoil borders on desperation for his need to communicate with her – itself an indication of his emotional (in)security.

Just one word only. I am really and truly having an awful time and am rapidly becoming quite desperate. Oh lord, its honestly frightful. How are you? I'm looking forward to your letter in the morning. Did you get home safely? And were you met all right? Have you been lonely since? At any rate I have and I was very cross with myself last night and had the idea all the time that you got into a depressed mood over something I said to you. Please forgive me if that is so. Slán leat my Kit. Fondest Love,
Michael.⁷²

His despondency at the political situation is weighing very heavily on him. This is as much information about the intricacies of what is taking place which he divulges to her. For him it is important to tell her that the political pressures are causing him to experience personal distress. Collins's tendency to write snippets of his feelings to Kitty combined with his apologies for not being nicer to her, points to a man who has a difficulty with expressing intimacy, at least in letters.

⁷² Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 27 January 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 109.

It is not possible to know what they talked about when in each other's company, but the content of Collins's written correspondence implies an emotional frustration. Annoyed with himself for not treating her better, writing his apology can be a relatively safe method of expressing his regret. As a written expression it is not subject to any deep immediate emotional probing. Crucially it is the written expression not the verbal. This can be understood as Collins's 'comfortable' way of dealing with his feelings.

Coping with new responsibilities

As the political events moved into the following month, Collins's correspondences depict a man engaged in a very hurried schedule. Concurrently, in Kitty's replies, there is a strong sense of her deep personal feelings for him. Crucially though, the majority of their relationship was being conducted at a distance through correspondence, inter-dispersed with brief rendezvous, whenever Collins's busy work schedule allowed him the luxury of some free time. Therefore, revealing emotions at a distance, exemplified through the writing process, discloses aspects of Collins's state of mind that display a tendency for the compilation of letters as his method of coping with the pressures he experienced.

The following example is an extract from a letter that Collins wrote to Kitty from a hotel room in London on 5 February 1922. He had travelled over from Dublin for talks with the British delegation. The earlier part of the letter contained a brief narration regarding his sleep the night before, the boat and train journey and the workday ahead of him. In relation to the political situation he said:

Things do no appear to be very promising but perhaps it's a question of "being the darkest hour before the dawn". At any rate today will tell a great deal, and I suppose we shall have something for the newspapers for the morning. I find I am rambling in a descriptive kind of way, and as I must not depart from my well-known failing of being most close-mouthed, I'll have to go off the bye path that may "lead me astray". Goodbye for the day. I may write again: I feel like writing a lot.
With fondest love,
Michael.⁷³

Collins's reference to 'rambling', his acknowledgements that '[he] feel[s] like writing a lot' suggest that he finds the process a useful outlet for his stress and frustrations.

⁷³ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 5 February 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 117.

Firstly he is almost apologetic for his ramblings, which suggests that he found this method of communications uncomfortable, for rambling veers off the path of rational thought delving instead into the subconscious world of emotions. Yet this apology may also infer his personal discomfort at mentioning it at all. He refers to it in a joking manner, implying that it may 'lead me astray'. Although expressed in a cloaked and awkward style, his need to write is indicative of the undercurrent of private feeling that occupy his thoughts.

It could also be inferred that Kitty was pushing him to be more communicative with her, or expressing feelings that he found uncomfortable to reciprocate – not so much that he didn't feel them but that he found it difficult to express them.⁷⁴ Or was it just the fact that he needed to find a place to deal with his stress and the letters provided this medium? In this sense Collins is being humorous regarding being 'led astray'. The humour may be a means of masking his unsteadiness or discomfort when evoking personal emotional issues. The fact that he mentions it at all is significant, in that it is a method of self-jibing that acknowledges the issue without confronting it in a serious manner. Crucially, in the world of practical reasoned politics, 'rambling' is not a luxury afforded to the participants. Continuing in this vein, his need to receive her letters is projected in what he wrote to her two days later:

It was certainly very wrong of you not to have written that letter but I suppose I must no longer find fault with you now since it seems somewhat like blaming myself. What do you think of that?⁷⁵

His statement rings of curious contradiction. Finding fault with himself because Kitty didn't write to him makes it more difficult to express his true feeling, his emotional need to receive her letter. There is however a recognition of the paradox of scolding her for not writing, bordering on an acknowledgment of the importance of her letter to his emotional demeanour. 'I am just trying to write a line so that I may get the mail train',⁷⁶ he wrote at the beginning of the note, to which he finished with the lines, 'am rushing to catch the train. Wish I were catching it'.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Two of her letters at this juncture do contain reference to how she felt about him. See letter from Kitty Kiernan to Michael Collins, received Friday, 27 January 1922; letter from Kitty Kiernan to Michael Collins, received Friday, 28 January 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 110-11.

⁷⁵ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 7 February 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 118. Collins was rushing to write this letter so as to make the mail train.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Collins's urgency to write the letter, so it will reach Kitty the next day, is consigned to the script. Its significance is portrayed in the fact that he mentions it twice in the short few lines. His wish that he were catching the train may be more a signal of his emotional needs than the actual physical process of travelling on the train to see Kitty. His emotion is cloaked in the rationale of his situation – safety in the expression. For in reality, he is aware that he is not actually going on the train and is seeking emotional reassurance in their relationship.

On 10 February Collins received a very earnest and emotional letter from Kitty. In it she professes her love for him and how confused and anxious she feels when around him. She wants him all to herself, needing his full attention. She mentions the contradictions of her feelings and how she struggles to understand him:

If only the day comes soon when I can thoroughly understand you, and even when, in Dublin, I won't be so greedy, wanting you, always and ever wanting you.⁷⁸

From the perspective of masculine emotion his acknowledgment of what she wrote to him makes interesting reading:

You'll be surprised to hear it but I was not displeased with your letter written on Wednesday night. It was thoughtful, and made me think that I had not been explaining things sufficiently, and that that was the real reason you did not understand me.⁷⁹

Collins's reply takes a rational perspective on the issue of Kitty's feelings. He acknowledges he has not been 'explaining things sufficiently' and hence it was not possible for Kitty to understand him. For Collins, the issue here is the demand on his time due to political commitments, cast against Kitty's yearning to be closer to him emotionally. He doesn't mention the issue directly again but does say, 'when I meet you – and this much I'll ask also – you'll have to give me a couple of hours in the morning for work. Otherwise you'll have all my time.'⁸⁰ Perhaps this is his way of

⁷⁸ Letter from Kitty Kiernan to Michael Collins, received by Collins on 10 February 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p 122.

⁷⁹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 10 February 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p 123.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

letting her know – from a written distance – that he recognises what she is saying to him, or at the very least acknowledges there is some justification in her claims. His own level of stress is evident in the rest of the correspondence, mixed with further acknowledgment of his growing concerns:

Several people clamouring for me. Do forgive this scraggy note. Your don't know how anxious I am to see you. I have a kind of feeling that I must go away with you – strain telling on me also. May God be with you.

Fondest love, Michael.⁸¹

In acknowledging her needs Collins projects a sense of the stress he is feeling. In doing so he never appears to lose composure, in the sense that he still portrays the impression of a man in control of his feelings. As an undercurrent, he doesn't have time to explore this vast arena of personal energy consumption. This dichotomy represents a classic overlapping of the public and private dimensions of the public man seeking to strike a balance between these two aspects of his life.

On 13 February Collins wrote to Kitty following the previously mentioned visit to see her. Judging from the content of his letter they had obviously talked about personal issues in their relationship. He attempts to reassure her of his feelings towards her and his commitment to the relationship. Perhaps he had attempted to explain things 'properly':

Am back safely and oh! What a confused state I find before me. But I'm never again going to grumble or complain about anything. And I'm not going to have any necessity for being tired or anything. I wonder if you are writing me today or are you too busy? Alas I may have to go to London tomorrow night but I'll avoid it if I can. Do hope you're feeling happy today. There is always less and less reason why you shouldn't isn't that something of value for you and isn't it something that gives away rather a lot. Kind of allowing no way out. Don't you think so?⁸²

In excusing any possibility for tiredness he is projecting a positive persona that allows him to address the issue of his feeling in their relationship, despite being tired, Collins is a man in control. His reference to 'allowing no way out' is both interesting and

⁸¹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 10 February 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 123. p. 124.

⁸² Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 13 February 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 124.

curious. It is his way of reassuring her that he is committed to the relationship. In stating his commitment there is no turning back. His rhetorical question at the ends seeks an acknowledgment from her for something he recognises himself. Perhaps he hopes his coded messages will reassure her of his commitment without having to explore the subject in great depth. The important point here is that Collins seems to be genuinely attempting to communicate on an emotional level with Kitty. The rhetoric is awkward and indirect in approaching the subject. He is expressing his commitment without actually saying it directly. The 'confused state', which can be taken to mean the political spectrum, is counter to how he feels about her. However, there is a parallel in his commitment to his public duty, for in putting his name to the Treaty, he has signalled his commitment to its conclusion.

However, his rhetoric of expression is, to put in mildly, somewhat less direct than that of Kitty's. Judging from what she wrote to Collins, their weekend liaison had obvious been a pleasant experience. Although short, her note is much more revealing in its emotionally direct language (of love) than that of Collins:

Ducky, Just a line. Will write you later. I never felt so happy as I do today. T.G. So I hope you are likewise. Everything seems good and cheery and I feel oh! So happy. Bye bye.
My love to you,
Your own Kit.⁸³

She is direct and her sentiment is to the point. Kitty communicates clearly, outlining her needs and expectations. Her happiness is evident and it doesn't involve a great stretch of the imagination to know she is taking about the nature of their relationship and her emotional investment in it.

However, in a letter written the following day Collins does go a little further in revealing his feelings, although without disclosing anything too emotionally personal:

Hope you have kept in great form. Get happier and happier. Between us everything is just lovely now.⁸⁴

⁸³ Letter from Kiernan to Collins, Monday, received 14 February 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 125.

⁸⁴ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, London, 15 February 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 125.

He portrays the feelings of a man who is happier about the nature of their relationship. Crucially, Kitty is in a happier emotional condition also. Whatever took place between them, her doubts about the attention he was giving her and how he was revealing his feelings seems, at least for the present, to have been sorted out in a positive manner. Two days later there is a correlation in Collins's expression of joy that portrays his private emotion on two fronts. One in relation to Kitty and the other in the public realm of politics:

The stamp on this was the first Free State stamp ever licked by a member on the Free State Provisional government. That much for you – it was, of course, licked by me for you.⁸⁵

This is an interesting merging of the public and private spheres. His joy at being the first person to lick the stamp in the name of the Free State is projected onto his feelings for Kitty – a meeting of the public and private spheres, so to speak. There is a correlated image of both Kitty and the state as the focus of Collins's emotional affection. His expression seems at ease with itself and displays an unbridled joy in its manifestation.

However, the following day Collins's personal vulnerability reaches what can be seen as a morose, almost anxious intensity. In expressing his fears to Kitty he seeks emotional refuge from the public domain – a retreat from the previous day's joyful outpouring – worries that reveal a great deal about his troubled political mindset:

Two days won't run at all – here I am at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning writing to you after having done two hours very hard work. I'm in a cross humour also. Cross with myself. I was almost going to say cross with everybody – even you, but then I thought of you and somehow I'd regard myself as being very mean if I said that because I did not think it. And as for the two days, your letter got me on that – you know my soft corner. I hope you don't know them all or I shall have no refuge at all. God help me.

Am going off to a meeting now and am asking one of the staff to telephone to the meeting to say I'm kept for five minutes on very important business – this is the important business. When – oh when do I see you?

With all my love,
Michael.

⁸⁵ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin 17 February 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 130.

I'm really cross this morning and if this letter reflects it please don't blame me. The telephone exchange is not working and everything – oh damn everything is my feeling. Have you ever felt that way? God protect you anyway.⁸⁶

Collins's personal frustration and anger is very evident in this correspondence. Crucially he views the letter as a safe space in which to vent his frustration. There is a sense that he realises Kitty will understand. Again as with previous correspondence, particularly during the Treaty talks process, Collins can be understood to be using the letter as a safe space for venting his frustration as a means of coping. The letter may also be viewed as an expression to himself as much as it is to Kitty. By consigning his thoughts and feelings to paper he is somehow able to rid himself of the immediate burden of carrying them around with him. As before, the letter writing serves as a dual purpose of a correspondence to Kitty and a vehicle for the release of his own baggage of frustration. He pleads for her understanding at his cross mood and this may be as much an appeal for himself to go easier on himself as it is for Kitty to understand him. Ultimately, the letter portrays a great deal of emotional expression and awareness of the process, hitherto absent from this letters. He explains the source of his frustration, but crucially, recognises that he is the one in control of how he chooses to deal with them. He displays an awareness of how his rantings have an unreasonable edge to them.

One month later, Collins displays an increased sense of his growing necessity to communicate with Kitty. His emotional needs seem to crave her as his outlet and he appears more forthcoming in his communication with her:

Was glad to get your letter this morning but did really think it ought to have been longer than mine. It ought, you know. I have you this time but it's not the length that matters, it's the letter itself. I have really had rather a terrible day and have just sat down to write a line to you before post time. Did you like my letter yesterday? I meant it to be nice – at least as nice as I could after I had returned and found several things gone wrong and piles and piles of work. It's all dreadful but sometime it will all be well and everything will be settled one way or the other, and we may have some little rest. But alas that's a long way off yet...

Indeed I was sorry I could not have stayed with you. You know that well enough. But I really do think I shall have a little time soon and I really do mean to take some days off. How are you today? Are you in

⁸⁶ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 19 February 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 130-31.

good form? Don't forget what is said about spending more time in the open air. Please don't think I'm lecturing you. I'm not really. I'm only asking for my sake.⁸⁷

In gently jibing Kitty for not writing a longer letter Collins acknowledges the importance of the correspondence between them. He is gently ridiculing her, as she would normally be the one to pen a longer correspondence. In him there is that acknowledgment of 'it's the thought that counts', for it is the act of sending the letters that's important, not the actual length of it. Is he perhaps excusing himself for not writing longer letters and sending a message to her in this regard? Letting her know, despite how short his own letters are at times, he does still take the time to write them, reinforced in this case by his acknowledgment that he had a 'terrible day'.⁸⁸ Collins wants to know if she liked his letter, something that is obviously important to him as he has mentioned in previous correspondence. In reiterating the extent of his workload Collins reinforces the concept, whether intentional or not, of the meaning of the letters as his emotional outlet, a premise supported by his desire to spend time with her. Equally, the promise to himself to take some time off is an acknowledgement of the stress he is feeling. His concern for her health is buttressed in the re-assurance that he is not telling her what to do, but that it is important for him to know she is doing ok.

On 5 April Collins's frustration, with his attempts to portray his feelings through his letter writing is evident when he wrote the following to Kitty:

Writing is really a very unsatisfactory way of communicating but it's better than nothing. I'm looking forward to seeing you again and having a good talk, or rather resuming our talk.⁸⁹

In these lines there is an immense sense of frustration at not being able to communicate face to face with her. However, the fact that he expresses himself in this way highlights the process of letter writing as a method of emotional release amid the mounting pressure of the political situation. Here, we see the private dimensions of the public man, an aspect of Collins's character that doesn't spring to mind when considering the

⁸⁷ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 10 March 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 141.

⁸⁸ Many of Collins letters are no longer than 3 to 6 lines written in apparent haste.

⁸⁹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 5 April 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 154.

stereotyped images of his historical legacy. Instead, we see a man seeking intimate emotional connection, expressing dissatisfaction at being unable to articulate himself in the manner that he would like to.

Five days later Collins's frustration and gloom are evident in relation to both private and public concerns. Once again we see his growing dependence on the letter as an emotional conduit:

No letter again today...What has happened to you – though seriously – not to have written for three days? I suppose you've been enjoying yourself too well or something – staying up all night and in bed at day. Is that it? How did your hunt go on? Honestly I do think it's a shame you haven't written. But then I may be hard on you, and there may be a real reason, and if I said anything – but then I don't say any things that I have to regret afterwards.⁹⁰

Collins is both scolding and cautious in his rebuttal of Kitty in not receiving a letter from her. There is detectable undercurrent of anger towards her as he attempts to mask his disappointment, perhaps indicative of his desire for emotional comfort or understanding. He has exposed himself emotionally and it is not being reciprocated adding a sense of vulnerability to his feelings. The paragraph of his letter that alludes to his public duties is perhaps revelatory in this regard, expressing a darkening sense of the impending political crisis:

Things are rapidly becoming as bad as they can be, and the country has before it what may be the worst period yet. A few madmen may do anything. Indeed they are just getting on the pressure gradually – they go on from cutting a tree to cutting a railway line, then to firing at a barracks, then to firing at a lorry, and so on. But God knows I do not want to be worrying you with these things.⁹¹

Conceivably, Collins not wanting to worry Kitty has more to do with his need to unburden himself of the frustration he is feeling in his attempts to reach a politically viable solution that will allay republican concerns and avoid civil strife. He is troubled about the 'madmen [who] may do anything', and therefore the need to make haste and reach a compromise is taking on an increasing significance.

⁹⁰ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 10 April 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 156.

⁹¹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 10 April 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 156.

In relaying these snippets of information pertaining to his public duties Collins gives the impression (or expresses the hope) that Kitty will have empathy for his worries and how they affect him privately. In other words, the effect they are having on his personal peace of mind rather than the actual complexities of the political situation *per se*. Noticeably, there is nothing in the letter concerning the actions of the anti-Treaty supporters that is not public knowledge. The letter acts as a therapeutic means of consigning some of his anxieties to textual expression. There is a merging of the private and public man here, for how it reveals the emotional aspect of the method Collins uses to deal with his private feelings.

Over the course of the year the letters have taken on a heightened significance for Collins on an emotional level, as writing them is important for both his capacity to find an outlet of expression and for the significance of them as a channel of communication in his relationship with Kitty. On 14 April he writes:

It's all very well for you to find fault with my letters. If you could only see the circumstances under which most of them are written, you wouldn't be so mighty quick to disparage them. At any rate I won't mind you this time.⁹²

This gentle scolding of her reflects his irritation regarding comments she had included in the letter he received from her, earlier that day, in which she refers to him in the third person as 'Ducky'.⁹³

And how is poor old Ducky? Killed writing me wonderful love letters, like the one I got today, in fact every day. They are certainly most wonderful from the point of view of love! See if Ducky can't write a love one for a change. Tell him I said so. Now don't forget, and love and love and love and – from Me.⁹⁴

Kitty appears to be chastising him for not writing a more in-depth letters to her, perhaps a reflection of her insecurities towards his lack of intimate correspondence. Alternatively, she could also be playing a joke on him. Although clearly annoyed at her

⁹² Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kieran, Dublin, 14 April 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 159.

⁹³ Kitty addressed Collins by the name 'Ducky' in many of her correspondences to him.

⁹⁴ Letter from Kitty Kiernan to Michael Collins, Received 14 April 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 128-9.

for compounding his already strenuous workload, Collins somehow seems to recognise this, signified in his comment, 'I won't mind you this time.' However, he still doesn't write the 'love letter' she desires, as he is clearly more preoccupied with the increasing gravity of the political situation:

We did nothing at the Conference yesterday – except talk, talk all the time – it's simply awful. And the country! But they never think of the country at all – they only think of finding favour for their own theories, they only think of getting their own particular little scheme accepted.⁹⁵

Collins appears so frustrated and annoyed at what he sees as the small-minded bickering and personal egoistic nature of unnamed people involved in the search for political compromise. They, unlike him, cannot see the bigger picture. While these people theorise and pontificate the country suffers, his obvious frustration bursting onto the pages. He quickly shifts from this avenue of thought and says; 'I very sincerely trust you'll find this letter a bit more acceptable than the others,'⁹⁶ an obvious reference to her request for a greater display of intimacy in his correspondence. Collins concludes his letter with following PS, 'The Rebel Army has taken over the Four Courts. God help them!'⁹⁷

In choosing to finish with this information Collins projects the thoughts that are most pressing in the forefront of his mind at this juncture. He is consumed with the high stress world of political brokering and brinkmanship. His reference to the country, egoists and the rebels project these concerns to the forefront of his thoughts. Even with Kitty's request for more intimate letters, which he partly acknowledges, Collins is still unable to get his thoughts away from the highly charged political affairs in which he is engaged. Emotionally, the need to relay these worries to Kitty are the driving force of his sentiment – the pressure release valve for emotional expression.

During the period from early December 1921 until the outbreak of Civil War Collins's letters to Kitty reflect an ever-increasing sense of a man in need of emotional relief from the political pressures he was facing. Where he mentions it there is a discernible sense of his growing frustration at the political process and its incumbent players. As the civil war begins in earnest a strong sense of Collins's fears, frustration, pressure and

⁹⁵ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 14 April 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 159

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

personal darkness emerges in the correspondence. The political fallout is weighing heavily on him and the letters echo this sentiment.

The pressure intensifies: the looming crisis.

Written on a date suggested as possibly 28 May, Collins digresses from his normal manner of writing and divulges a little more political information to Kitty than is usual for him to do – suggestive perhaps of the growing stress and pressure that he feels:

Things are serious – far far more serious than anyone at home thinks. In fact it is not too much to say that they are as serious as they were at the worst stage of the negotiations last year. And even while we are here there comes the news of two British soldiers being killed in Dublin and two ex-policemen in Boyle. Coming at such a time it is impossible to get away from the conclusion that they are done deliberately to make things more difficult for us in our task here. It is not very credible to those who are responsible for the actions themselves but it is simply disastrous for the name of Ireland.⁹⁸

Collins's growing sense of personal despair is reflected in the above message. We have seen previously how frustrated and pressurised he felt during the Treaty talks and now he describes things as being worse. He relays this anxiety to Kitty, perhaps displaying his need to off-load the burden of stress and pressure he is feeling. He continues:

Am writing this in the midst of a very worrying time. But I mustn't make you worry. I wish you were here. I'll never forget Greystones. It was lovely and I shouldn't like to think of being there now unless you are still there.⁹⁹

After briefly divulging his political fears to Kitty, Collins ventures into the private realm of his emotions. He reiterates that he mustn't make her worry but instead he will carry the burden of his political duties inside himself. So his expression of his position is a sort of halfway relieving mechanism. Consigning his thoughts so as to provide him with a means of unburdening himself or putting them into perspective.

Collins's darkening mood is evident in the short note he wrote in London two days later where he seems even more needful of expressing himself to her:

⁹⁸ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kieran, New Metropole Hotel, London, Possibly 28 May 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 175.

⁹⁹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kieran, New Metropole Hotel, London, Possibly 28 May 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 175.

Things are bad beyond words, and I am almost without hope of being able to do anything of permanent use. It's really awful – to think of what I have to endure here owing to the way things are done by the opponents at home.

In any case, home or no home, I want to see you on Saturday, and that's that for the moment.¹⁰⁰

Collins's resentment at being placed in a predicament not of his own creation is placing an enormous strain on his resolve. There is a sense that he feels as if his hands are tied, almost to the point that he feels his attempts at resolution are proving ineffectual. His desire to see Kitty and escape from the intensity of his duties is obvious in what reads like a demand to see her. Yet again his 'that's that' expression signifies a desire to skip over emotional self-examination and proceed to the objective – in this case an actual physical meeting with her. The pressure of his heavy schedule and fears over the possible failure of his endeavours are too tedious and gruelling to emotionally scrutinise. Perhaps Collins is fearful of his ability to reach the desired conclusion, namely, attaining that political compromise that will suit all parties. To consider any possibility of failure would induce a personal negativity too unbearable to contemplate. In the lines he wrote to Kitty the next day, Collins's need and desire to escape his emotional turmoil, induced by the mounting political pressure, displays an even greater intensity. He expresses a desire to meet Kitty, an increased intensity bordering on panic, that suggest a man needing to comprehend his emotional realism or perhaps someone searching for a method of attaining that harmony:

Still no word from you – perhaps you have written to Dublin and they have not forwarded you letters. At any rate I am returning tonight, and I shall see you with God's help on Saturday. The weather is awful here and everything is awful. I wish to God someone else was in this position and not I. But that's that.

It's almost heartbreaking not to have heard a word from you and I feel somehow or other that you're not thinking of me – but that's not it, is it?

Anyway unless you forbid it, I'll see you on Saturday.

May God bless you.

Fondest love, M.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, London, 30 May 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 176.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, London, 31 May 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 178.

Collins's increasing personal stress is very prominent in this correspondence. The weather is reflective of his mood and vice-versa. Although longing for someone else to be in his shoes he is resigned to his political position. Again, his 'that's that' rationale leaves him very little room for emotional outlet. Somehow relaying it to Kitty in the note allows him some form of personal expression however minimal – a desire for outlet expressed in his wish to see her. More than just expressing his feelings, Collins is attempting to rationalise them and put them in context in a time of increasing personal frustration and worry.

This escalating personal anxiety is palpable in the following series of letters. They give an insightful view of his personal peace of mind, the broader political process and Collins's attempts to reach a compromise with the British delegation. Furthermore, they offer an insightful perspective of the mental strain that he is experiencing due to the complicated political turmoil:

Things have got very much worse overnight and I'm looking forward to my last appointment with them. I'm returning tonight no matter what happens, as I feel I can do no more good here. Ireland will have cause to remember her present day extremists.¹⁰²

These lines reflect a rather sombre and exhausted man. He displays a mixture of resentment and frustration tempered with an element of relief at the idea of getting away from the political hotchpotch, even if only temporarily. However, his stress displays an increased intensity five days later, both in a psychological and physical sense:

Had rather a hard day yesterday, and went to bed early last night – neighbourhood of 10 o'clock or earlier – but after a while woke up coughing and was, alas, kept awake most of the night, therefore I decided when Joe called for me this morning that I had better not travel and that I should stay on in bed, which I did until 2 o'clock. Am feeling a good deal relieved, but in a way am seedy. Going back to bed shortly, that is as soon as we have got our representatives despatched to London. Things there are no better, and it's possible that I may have to go across again this coming weekend. But my cold must be better.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 1 June 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 183.

¹⁰³ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, 6 June 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 184.

Collins's physical exhaustion is evident in these lines. Even though ill, the chance to rest is good for him, yet he is concerned about getting rid of his cold so as to be in best of physical health for the upcoming workload. It is like he is grabbing a 'window of opportunity' amid the chaos, to find time to repair himself emotionally for the ordeal of travelling over to London again. His rationale for rest seems geared towards or is at least justified in the need to be in good physical condition for the challenge of the upcoming weekend. However, the fact that he is laid low and needs to justify his illness in these terms is indicative of the stress he is under. He explains it all away in physical terms and doesn't mention the mental exhaustion that surely must have accompanied if not directly contributed to his physical condition.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, his emotional anxiety is evident in the P.S. he adds to his letter of 14 June, saying, 'this is an uninteresting letter – but you'll understand the circumstances and the hurry and the worry and everything.'¹⁰⁵ His need to include this at the end, of what was not one of his shortest letters, is symptomatic of his state of distracted mind. He spoke of the weather, Kitty's need to get away for a holiday break and the nature of their correspondence. In a sense Collins acknowledges his avoidance of the deep emotional issues that consume his mind, yet alluding to their absence in the note signifies their importance in the realm of his consciousness. Collins's stress levels are escalating and the personal pressure assuming proportions that belie the public stereotyped historical impression of his political and military legacy. Rather than diminish, this sense of strain increases as is demonstrated in his admission of such in the correspondence to Kitty.

A month later his letters reflect this ever-increasing personal pressure and strain. On a date circa 5 July 1922, he penned the following letter to Kitty. It is a correspondence filled with angst and stress:

This is a really unpleasant letter, but I cannot pretend to be in good humour when I am not. You know me better than I think?... And O'Connell St is broken down and I'm sorry that the poor old Gresham is gone and destroyed. But it is gone, and I suppose I can't restore it or can I or what? And what must I do?

And now I'm called. So goodnight and love and everything. And if I'm in places where I can't even wire to you or where you don't hear at all of me or from me, I'll think of you and it will be all the harder because

¹⁰⁴ See, Denis Coon, *Psychology: a journey* (Cambridge, 2004), pp 418-458, for a discussion on the correlation between physical and mental exhaustion.

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 14 June 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 191.

you won't know and harder still because you'll be wondering that you don't hear and all sorts of things. What I mean is, you'll say it's my fault. And if it's not, there'll be no one to say it's not. And that's that. And fondest love, no matter what.
Michael.¹⁰⁶

From his initial tirade towards Kitty in relation to O'Connell Street and the Gresham, his obvious frustration is evident in this letter. It is as if he takes her comments on the destruction as a reflection of himself – like she is asking him to fix it or he feels she is asking him this. In the second paragraph is his deeply felt emotional plea for some understanding from her. He appears to suggest that above all people she is the one who should not be placing expectations on him. There is the suggestion in the correspondence that he harbours feelings that everyone expects him to do things perfectly and that this sense of pressure is proving an incredible burden. It may also be, that he feels he should do things perfectly and with situations outside of his control, consequently, he experiences frustration and stress. Whatever the reason, Collins is a man under extreme emotional pressure and his letter writing is providing him with a voice of expression, personified in the following lines of a letter he wrote to Kitty on 17 July:

Truly any time I have ever had in my life was a holiday compared to the present whirl and the terrible sufferings and shame of it all. The only thing that consoles one is that no stone was left unturned by us to avoid such a climax. May God help those responsible.¹⁰⁷

This comment signifies what I believe is Collins's utter frustration at not being able to influence the political proceedings and bring about a solution that would pacify the majority. His reference to 'sufferings and shame' on one hand, point to the horror and sheer futility of the situation. On another level he shows disdain for those who had the ignominy to allow this situation to develop to such a level – how wasteful and sorrowful that these conditions prevail. For Collins, consolation is found in his own belief that every avenue was explored in his attempts to bring about a solution suitable to all. It is scant consolation for his emotional turmoil but consigning these thoughts to

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, circa 5 July 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 198.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 20 July 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 209-10.

words somehow helps him to project his feelings onto paper and perhaps relieve these elements that harbour within.

On 28 July he wrote, 'honestly, the pressure is very very heavy and there is little sign of relaxation.'¹⁰⁸ Present here is a sense of the enormity of the political task that Collins faced. The words 'pressure' and 'relaxation' jump out from the page. The fact that he included this in his short note is telling in itself, as these signify polar extremes of the emotional spectrum. In writing about them he seeks an understanding from the recipient. Two days later he apologetically courts her understanding of his political predicament. 'I may not be able to write during day – I have rather a hard day before me I'm afraid.'¹⁰⁹ Here, he is also dealing with Kitty's expectations of a letter from him. Conversely, he is also dealing with his expectation of being able or not to write one to her. 'If I have a chance during day I'll write properly. You'll understand.'¹¹⁰ By seeking, in a questioning manner, her understanding for the constraints under which he operates, Collins is finding a means of expressing the emotional tumult of his pressurised experiences. It reads as a plea for emotional understanding – private snippets of vulnerability from a man operating in a public realm where the scope for the outlet of such expressions are limited, delineated by the rationalised necessities of the situation – in this case – the Civil War conflict.

Coping with the death of a former comrade.

In the spectrum of emotions perhaps there are no more poignant circumstances for such expression than in dealing with the issue of death – especially the loss of those close to us. This form assumes a personal grief factor, having the effect on the individual concerned, to the extent of not being able to function in a so-called rational manner. In other words, that the emotional feelings are so strong or so deeply felt that they make it difficult for the person concerned to do very little else but feel the grief. Dealing with sorrow can be very difficult or even disabling, causing a breakdown in a person's normal coping mechanism. It varies in degrees of intensity, depending on the nature of

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Collins to Kiernan, Dublin, 28 July 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Collins to Kiernan, Dublin, 30 July 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 216.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

the relationship and the emotional significance attached to it.¹¹¹ The last few weeks of Michael Collins's life called for him to draw on these reserves of character and to find a way of understanding and expressing the enormity of a very human existence. Historically, much has been discussed around the issue of Collins's friendship with Harry Boland and the love triangle involving Kitty Kiernan.¹¹² An analysis of this issue is not within the remit of this chapter, but Collins's reaction to Boland's death, as revealed in the letters to Kitty is. In the aftermath of Harry's death he writes to Kitty:

Last night I passed Vincent's Hospital and saw a small crowd outside. My mind went into him lying there and I thought of the times together, and whatever good there is in any wish of mine, he certainly had it. Although the gap of 8 or 9 months was not forgotten – and of course no one can ever forget it – and I only thought of him with the friendship of the days of 1918 and 1919. They tell me that the last thing he said to his sister Kathleen, before he was operated on, was "have they got Mick Collins yet?" I don't believe it so far as I'm concerned and, if he did say it, there is no necessity to believe it. I'd send a wreath but I suppose they'd return it torn up.¹¹³

The personal pain is obvious in the above correspondence. Without saying it directly, the tone of Collins's letter exudes painful bereavement at the death of his former friend and confidant. Perhaps there is an element of personal guilt or feelings of regret attached to his sentiment? In Kitty, he seeks empathy for how he personally feels about Harry's death. By eluding to the last words Boland was alleged to have spoken, Collins touches on the deeply emotional issue of his own grief. He fears sending a wreath, as the gesture may be met with hostility and therefore present an even more painful condition with which to deal – where his gesture is misunderstood or blankly rejected, thus leaving him exposed to an even greater feeling of emotional vulnerability. In a sense Collins is trapped in finding an outlet for his grief and in some way writing about his feelings to Kitty gives him at least this limited form of manifestation. Such

¹¹¹ See, Terry Martin and Kenneth J. Doka, *Men don't cry, women do: transcending gender stereotypes of grief* (Philadelphia, 2000). This text, while emphasizing that there are many ways to cope with grief, offers a refreshing change from the popular gender stereotypes of grief. Two patterns of grieving are described: an intuitive pattern where individuals experience and express grief in an affective way (stereotyped as female); and an instrumental pattern where grief is expressed physically or cognitively (stereotyped as male). A third pattern representing a blending of these two is also introduced. Of critical importance is that such patterns are related to, but not determined by, gender; and each has distinct strengths and weaknesses.

¹¹² See, Coogan, *Michael Collins*, pp 114-5; Mackay, *Michael Collins*, p. 152.

¹¹³ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, circa 2 August 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 219.

expressions of feeling, consigned to paper, may be seen as a useful mechanism for coping with loss. Factor this into the already heavy and tumultuous military workload and the complexities of the Civil War, and a sense of his personal feelings emerges in a quagmire of confused melodrama, where the main character's inner turmoil is somehow symbolic of the overall trauma of the political divide.

This aspect of Collins's struggle to comprehend and conceptualise the conflict's human tragedy is evident in his correspondence two days later. He attempts to rationalise the mindset of those he sees as the perpetrators of the tragedy that grips the country, juxtaposed with idea of Irish nationalism and the irony of their misplaced actions:

You will not misunderstand anything you have heard me say about poor H. You'll also appreciate my feelings about the splendid men we have lost on our side, and the losses they are and the bitterness they cause, and the anguish. There is no one who feels it more than I do. My condemnation is all for those who would put themselves up a paragons of Irish Nationality, and all the others as being not worthy of concern.¹¹⁴

Clearly, his wrath is directed at those who – as he sees it – hide behind the nationalist agenda, or their version of it. The suggestion is that they are doing it for their own ego driven agendas and not the good of the country. Collins is distancing himself from those not worthy of concern, yet these people are central in the unfolding situation. Beyond the obvious political practicalities of the conflict he is also dealing with his private emotions. Namely, the impact the unfolding political drama is having on his personal feelings. There is deep hurt and frustrated anger projecting from his words. He admits to feeling their losses and the anguish that is the consequence of his turmoil.

Four days later he writes:

The scenes at Mass yesterday were really heartbreaking. The poor women weeping and almost shrieking (some of them) for their dead sons. Sisters and one wife were there too, and a few small children. It makes one feel I tell you.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin, 4 August 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, pp 220-1.

¹¹⁵ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin 8 August 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 221.

His direct reference to the sadness of his feelings are revealing for insight into his emotional condition. He admits to feeling an immense sadness. Interestingly, his focuses of consolation are women and 'small children'. The image he conjures of the screaming, out of control with grief women, is used to portray his own sense of sorrow and torment. There is vulnerability and sadness in his words yet he is quick to strike a note of reassurance to Kitty, a kind of guarantee that he is capable of coping with all that is happening:

Kitty – you won't be cross with me for the way I go around. I can't help it and if I were to do anything else it wouldn't be me, and I really couldn't stand it. And somehow I feel the way I go on is better. And please do not worry. Fondest love, Michael.¹¹⁶

The immense personal strain on Collins is evident as he apologetically writes to Kitty concerning his way of behaving and his reasoning for doing so. He aligns himself with his actions and behaviours reassuring her that he wouldn't be himself if he didn't behave the way he is. Simultaneously, Collins is invoking the same feelings and reassurance to himself. This is his last known correspondence to Kitty.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined a selection of the private correspondence of Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan written between October 1921 and August 1922. The letters show how Collins attempted to cope with personal and emotional anxiety brought about by his participation in the political events that defined the period. The letters provide evidence of the immense and increasing stress experienced by Collins at this juncture. Collins's letters slowly develop an emotional intensity (not always obviously) through this period. Crucially, Collins didn't confide in or divulges any political information or secrets to Kitty. When he writes about his public commitments, Collins speaks about them in terms of the effect on his peace of mind. He mentions his personal feeling in terms of stress, frustration, and anxiety and to lesser extent to express joy. In the letters written during and in the aftermath of the Dáil debates on the Treaty, the pattern is the same. However, there is an emerging sense of Collins needing a place to vent his personal frustration and despair at the unfolding political events. His writing portrays a

¹¹⁶ Letter from Michael Collins to Kitty Kiernan, Dublin 8 August 1922, in Ó'Broin (ed.), *In great haste*, p. 221.

man who is struggling with the pressures induced by the political process. There is a strong sense emerging from the letters that Collins is seeking re-assurance from Kitty or at least needing a space where he can feel free to express personal anxieties or worries. The latter correspondences display an increased sense of despair and frustration at the negative developments in the political process.

Collins approached emotional issues in a very rational manner. The early letters reflect his tentative attempts to find a place to express personal frustration. At times the content of his correspondence appears cold and needy, yet I believe that this reflects Collins's tendency to approach his emotions in the same way that he approached his political work, in a rational and practical manner. Collins portrays the personality of a person who attempts to logically work out the reasons he was feeling so frustrated and anxious. The appearance of 'that's that' in so many of his letters, in particular at times of intense political manoeuvring, suggests as much. Writing to Kitty was a space where he sought an outlet for these uncomfortable feelings. As the months passed he did display an awareness (and not always that obvious or in the way Kitty would have liked) that his correspondences were perhaps lacking in deep introspective emotional expressions. I feel Collins had difficulty expressing and really understanding his emotions, particularly where love was concerned. The letters were a sort sanctuary for him, a place he could go to try and expresses and attempt to 'work out' his personal frustrations. In many examples what may appear as controlling and demanding lines of communication, were I believe, the writings of a man who desperately sought emotional solace and comfort from the highly charged political climate in which he was engaged. The letters reflect his struggle to cope with this aspect of his life. In an environment where methods of reason, rationality and logic pertain to problem solving, attempting to comprehend his emotions in this manner only served to confuse and stifle rather than provide understanding of the underlying source of the frustrations.

Chapter six

The hero: imaging masculinities in the rhetoric and discourse of Michael Collins's commemoration

Heroes are made, not by their deeds,
but by the stories that are told about them.¹

This chapter analyses depictions of Michael Collins as recorded in the rhetoric of commemoration and discourse of remembrance at various stages during the course of the twentieth century. The investigation focuses on the masculine images of Collins conjured in the articles and speeches and contextualises them and their geo-political significance within their social, cultural and political settings. As demonstrated in previous chapters, historical images inform our perceptions of how the stories told and images created form an impression onto which individual meaning and interpretation is attached. How those ideas are interpreted, understood, perceived and projected is central to the overall understanding of heroism and the masculinities inherent within it. Masculinities are inextricable components of the male heroic image. Moreover, heroic characteristics are representative of exemplary masculinities because they are idealised representations of these qualities. Examined in context these have resonance for contemporary and historical understanding of specific types of manliness. For example, to define manliness or masculinities can mean defining a political status and the values that constitute that status. Historically, 'loss of control at the frontier is a recurring theme in the history of empires, and is closely connected with the making of masculine exemplars.'² As someone credited with being such a leading protagonist in the inception of the Irish State, through its separation from the British Empire, Michael Collins's public masculinities are integral into these events. Consequently, Irish history assesses his actions in terms of the role he played in the formation of this imagined community.³ Therefore, 'if masculinity has had a role in imagining the nation, then so

¹ Dawson, *Soldier heroes*, p. 118.

² Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 187.

³ I mean this as discussed by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined communities*.

too has the nation played its part in constituting preferred forms of masculinity.⁴ Before examining the Michael Collins commemoration rhetoric it is first necessary to consider the general definition of a hero, the origins of the heroic ideal in the context of Irish nationalism and its relevance in contemporary Ireland. The methodology for analysing the commemoration discourse is then outlined and explained following which a selection of Michael Collins commemoration speeches are examined.

Defining the hero

The term hero is derived from Greek mythology, where exceptional individuals overcome seemingly insurmountable odds, face arduous challenges, achieve feats of superhuman proportions, navigate tests of mental and physical endurance and are driven by an ultimate desire and perseverance to succeed.⁵ The hero displays key traits valued by that culture. The hero is an ideal type – a mythical cultural representation, a social ideal of exemplary manhood in context. As a representation of character typology ‘the mythic figuration of the hero thrives in...culture, functioning as both an unattainable ideal against which contemporary masculinity is measured and a mythic means of assuring survival.’⁶ At its simplest, it is a complimentary label connoting specific masculine actions and behaviours, understood in the context of their social meaning and significance regarding men practices. Kevin Boon claims that:

However heroes emerge, they tend to be recognized by a certain characteristic social behaviour of hero worship: they are honoured and given special status; they are commemorated by dramas, legends, memorial, relics, and the like; and they frequently receive regular veneration or celebration by organized cults. A hero is defined as a person, real or imaginary, who evokes the appropriate attitudes and behaviour. The hero in social life is thus essentially more than a person; he is an ideal image, a legend, a symbol.⁷

⁴ Dawson, *Soldier heroes*, p. 1.

⁵ In this chapter I will deal with the term ‘hero’ as a totally masculine entity, in the sense that hero connotes the male exemplar and heroine the female. The hero and heroism is examined with a view to delving deeper into the masculine characteristics that have been and are the focus for the conceptualisation of Michael Collins’s legacy in commemoration over the course of the twentieth century. For definitions of the hero as presented and understood in the context of this chapter see, ‘Hero’, in *Oxford English Dictionary* online, available at: <http://dictionary.oed.com> (12 September 2006).

⁶ Kevin Alexander Boon, ‘Heroes, metanarratives, and the paradox of masculinity in contemporary western culture’ in *The Journal of Men’s Studies*, xiii, no. 3 (Spring 2005), p. 301. (Hereafter know as Boon, ‘Heroes, metanarratives’)

⁷ Orrin E. Klapp, ‘The creation of popular heroes’ in *The American Journal of Sociology*, liv, no. 2 (September 1948), p. 135.

The hero's qualities are therefore contingent upon contemporary cultural and social attitudes pertaining to the behaviours that constitute the heroic reputation. Considerations of time, space and place are important factors when analysing heroic characteristics, for a hero to some might well be a villain to others. The hero is a socially and culturally delineated category of definition the composition of which is contingent upon the perceptions and beliefs that underpin it. Crucially, the stories of the hero's deeds and the ideological and more particularly the moral significance attached to them are what make these individuals the focus of appraisal. Social and cultural considerations that deem the person's actions as heroic are paramount to the nature of the concept. Therefore, heroism can be seen as a particular set of values or criteria against which the actions and deeds of an individual are considered. In other words, heroism is in effect a formula used to quantify the deeds of an exemplary individual (or individuals) through the recording and interpretative relaying of stories regarding their actions and deeds. For Douglas Parpora, a person's heroes are better conceptualized not as idols of worship but as an idealized reference group. 'One seeks to stand with one's heroes rather than not be one's heroes in actuality, and heroes thus are one mechanism we use to tell ourselves what it is we stand for. For those who have them, then, heroes are an important inner marker of identity. They are of the landscape of the soul.'⁸

The term hero then, is both a cultural and social stereotype. The name stands as a marker of idealisation aligned to a particular criteria set down by those who make the judgment. It is a relational category of definition contingent upon the perspective of those making the judgment. The hero is a classified idealisation of manly endeavour, whose characteristics are dependent upon contextual understanding and remembrance of the circumstances to which the actions of the hero pertain. As a category of delineation, the heroic stature sustains itself as a cultural icon and/or stereotype, an exemplar of something to be admired, romanticized and acclaimed for the feats that bestow the status on the particular figure in question. 'The essence of heroism is an unbreached and unbreachable allegiance to good in the face of any possible form of opposition.'⁹ Furthermore, 'the mythos of heroes may directly shape cultural and historical currents in the absence of any individual who can objectively manifest the

⁸ Douglas V. Parpora, 'Personal heroes, religion, and transcendental metanarratives' in *Sociological Forum*, ii, no. 2 (June 1996), p. 211.

⁹ Andrew Bernstein, 'The philosophical foundations of heroism', available at: www.andrewbernstein.net/heroes (1 July 2006).

heroic qualities outlined in the symbolic.’¹⁰ Therefore, attaching personality and meaning to characteristics deemed heroic serve to contextualise the concept in a social and cultural setting thus bringing a sense of connection to both the hero and ideals that support his status. As a signifier of gender identity, ‘the figure of the hero is central to the Western cultural imagery of the masculine.’¹¹

Origins and connotations of the heroic Irish masculine exemplar

For Irish nationalism, the roots of this focus on the heroic male are found in the plays and stories of the theatrical movement that emerged at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. As part of what Irish history has termed ‘Cultural Nationalism’, the organisers of the Irish Theatre presented ‘a unified cycle of plays based on Irish legend, focusing in particular on the warrior hero Cuchulain°...[thus] ...project[ing] the Irish archetype [male hero] into the national consciousness via a new nationalist school of journalists.’¹² One such image that emerged from this cultural movement was a male representation of a markedly Irish heroic identity that bolstered the concept of a national character and provided a template for the conceptualisation and identification of the iconic Irish archetypal warrior. Subsequently, Irish history contains examples of many male figures whose actions and endeavours mark them out for consideration as exemplars of their time. Following in the genre of Cú Chulainn, men like Brian Boru, Hugh O’Neil, Patrick Sarsfield, Robert Emmet, Wolfe Tone, Daniel O’Connell and Charles Stewart Parnell are all accorded special focus within the context of their contribution to the political landscape of their respective epoch. Each man is accredited with achieving or striving to achieve political advancement for his respective cause. The crucial issue is that these men are synonymous with significant political events in the history of the ‘Irish nation’. In other words, they are remembered for their political and/or military endeavours. The important point is that their names dominate their respective periods, because they displayed exemplary characteristics in an effort to surmount difficult obstacles. Their names signify a marker of identity that exudes a nationalist pride in their respective endeavours. In this context Seán Farrell Morant argues that:

¹⁰ Boon, ‘Heroes, metanarratives’, pp 301-312.

¹¹ Connell, *Masculinities*, p. 213.

¹² John Hutchinson, *The dynamics of cultural nationalism: the Gaelic revival and the creation of the Irish Nation State* (London, 2003), p. 134. (°Spelling as per Hutchinson.).

The symbolic system in Irish nationalist imagery reached its peak in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the story of Irish nationalism reached a dramatic climax. The nationalists' use of these images, like those used in other movements which have sought to radically overturn existing political arrangements intended not merely the seizure of power but the seizure of meaning. Nationalist images played no small role in the redefinition of what it meant to be Irish and they continue to speak to ontological needs that exist beyond the bounds of rational thought. The issue of identity remains at the forefront of Irish politics and culture and the nationalist images reemployed from the 1870s if not earlier, retain and iconographic power that continues to inspire and infuriate. These images draw upon a mythic understanding of the Irish past serving to recall and codify that past.¹³

Within the context of nationalist cultural awakening, the Easter Rising of 1916 – a date marked as being seminal in the changing political landscape of Irish politics – projects images of men as exemplars of heroic endeavour. Coakley contends that 'despite military defeat, the 1916 rebels were elevated to the pantheon of Irish nationalism, and Patrick Pearse and the other executed leaders were for long to be regarded as the spiritual fathers of independent Ireland.'¹⁴ Many of the leading men associated with this era of Irish history are names recognisable to a sizeable percentage of Irish people.¹⁵ Moreover, the Rising constitutes an important point of departure in the political history of Ireland. Equally, it produced contemporary figures onto which these emerging cultural concepts of the heroic ideal were projected with tangible political meaning. For the men of 1916 in particular, the emergence of the Irish Free State and the subsequent declaration of a Republic have, over the course of the twentieth century, cemented the concept of their heroism as a national legacy.

Snapshot of present day context

In the months leading up to, during and following the commemoration of the ninetieth anniversary of the 1916 Rising, in Easter 2006, a debate ignited that centred on the nature of the ceremony. Specifically, the ethical significance for modern Ireland in

¹³ Seán Farrell Moran, 'Images, icons and the practice of Irish history' in Lawrence McBride (ed.), *Images, icons and the Irish nationalist imagination* (Dublin, 1999), p. 174.

¹⁴ John Coakley, 'The foundations of statehood' in John Coakley and Michael Gallagher (eds), *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (Limerick, 1996), p. 11.

¹⁵ For instance, the seven signatories of The Proclamation were, Padraig Pearse, Joseph Plunkett, Thomas Clarke, Eamon Ceannt, James Connolly, Thomas MacDonagh and Sean MacDiarmada.

choosing to honour a violent event as a focal point for celebrating the inception of the new state:

The pomp and ceremony surrounding the official commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the 1916 Rising has provoked a healthy debate about the past. Since last Sunday, politicians, with the next election uppermost in their minds, have been wondering what impact the intense focus on the violent events of the Easter Rising will have on the future. The clear intention of the Government in reinstating the military parade through the centre of Dublin, after a lapse of almost 30 years, was to prevent Sinn Féin “hijacking” the anniversary commemorations for its own ends.¹⁶

The suggestion that the government’s choice was derived from a desire to reclaim these events from the arena of present-day republicans is a matter for another forum. Notwithstanding, the basic premise of the debates centred on whether it was useful to celebrate and glorify such a violent event in the context of modern cosmopolitan Ireland. In a special *Irish Times* supplement to mark the occasion Fintan O’Toole made the following observations:

When we talk of the Easter Rising, as we will do in this 90th anniversary year and even more so on the 100th anniversary in 2016, we are talking about two quite distinct things. One of them is, in the simplest sense, a myth. It is a story to which great significance has been added by the meanings that people wish to read into it.¹⁷

Crucially, what the debate highlighted is the perception of what is deemed heroic when conceptualising the nation-state and how that definition is subject to cultural, social and political consideration. Simultaneously, the issues are dependent on time, space and place subjection, particularly in how they are imagined and imaged – in this instance, a nation’s inception conceptualised from a violent incident. The fact that the leaders of the Rising subsequently became national icons suggests an admiration for the nature of their actions. Their actions were indicative of a time when, ‘as Benedict Anderson

¹⁶ *The Irish Times*, ‘Opinion’, 24 April 2006.

¹⁷ Fintan O’Toole, *The Irish Times 1916 Rising commemorative supplement*, 28 March 2006.

famously put it, the willingness to die for the nation, to sacrifice one's body, memorialised in poetry and monuments, became the extreme heroic form for the suturing of the male individual and the nation.'¹⁸ This observation is exemplified in the versed tributes to the memory of a number of the leaders, written by their contemporary, William Butler Yeats:

'MacDonagh and MacBride
Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.'¹⁹

Yeats's lines reflect the paradox at the centre of the ideological concept of the nationalist political ethos. A new state is 'born' out of a violent conception, the celebration of a deliberate policy of killing other humans as a means of establishing political legitimacy. As a leading protagonist in the event, poet and political ideologue Padraig Pearse's romanticism of the 'blood sacrifice' concept is the personification of these endeavours.²⁰ His idealism is best defined as an emotive spiritualism, essentially a belief in an idealist concept of death in the name of a political belief. Commenting on the political context of the Rising, Roy Foster argues that 'the first stage of the blood-sacrifice ritual had been accomplished, and the first act of what Collins contemptuously called a "Greek tragedy" had been played. The form of the next act was up to the British government.'²¹ The event occurred during a period of enormous political turmoil, not just in Ireland, but also across Europe and the World. The rush by men to defend their respective national territories signified a willingness to protect the principle of the nation. For the protagonists of the Rising, it served to imbue this

¹⁸ Karen Hagemann 'German heroes: the cult of death for the fatherland in nineteenth-century Germany' in Dudink et al, *Masculinities in politics and war*, p. 117.

¹⁹ William Butler Yeats, *Yeats poems* (Dublin, 1989), p. 289. Concluding lines to the poem 'Easter 1916'.

²⁰ P. H. Pearse, *Political writings and speeches* (Dublin, 1962), pp 215-8. Pearse claimed that the First World War represented a glorification of manhood and the nation and that 'the last sixteen months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe. Heroism has come back to the earth. On whichever side men who rule the peoples have marshalled them, whether with England to uphold her tyranny of the sea, or with Germany to break that tyranny, the people themselves have gone into battle because to each the old voice that speaks out of the soil of a nation has spoken anew. Each fights for the fatherland. It is policy that moves the governments; it is patriotism that stirs the peoples...It is good for the world that such things should be done. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields. Such august homage was never before offered to God as this, the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country.'; *Ibid.*, p. 216.

²¹ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland: 1600-1972* (London, 1989), p. 484.

ideology by seeking the right to the same political manifestation.²² It was an era when images of masculinities, personified by the military figure, symbolised the nationalist political ideology. 'The First World War brought nationalism's aggressiveness into sharp focus, and made man as warrior the center [sic] of its search for a national character.'²³ However, this merging of social and political actor and ideological political configuration was already a growing concept of exemplary manliness. For, 'heroic narratives have been given a particular inflection in discourses of the nation generated since the emergence of the nation-state in early modern Europe. Intimately bound up with the foundation and preservation of a national territory, the deeds of military heroes were invested with the new significance of serving the country and glorifying its name.'²⁴

For the Irish context, the events proceeding, during and following the Easter Rising are laden with gendered implications for nationalism's pursuit of political power and its contingent philosophies of heroism. The declaration of intent, signified in both the textual content²⁵ and Pearse's enthusiastic public reading of the Proclamation, represents a declaration of aspiration by a small group, comprised predominantly of men, who aligned their personal fates to the ideological attainment of Irish independence. The symbolic militarism of their actions constituted Irish nationalisms' embracing of this manly ideal. Consequently, 'the execution of Patrick Pearse, James Connolly and the other leaders created separatist martyrs.'²⁶ These catalytic events served to provide the inspiration and momentum that ignited and sustained a campaign that propounded an alternative legitimacy for the governing of Ireland. 'Soon, public opinion among nationalists was ready for a separatist message, delivered by a younger generation of leaders under the banner of a revived Sinn Féin, and dominated by the survivors of the 1916 Rising.'²⁷ By virtue of their endorsement of its content the seven signatories of the document not alone sealed their own physical destiny but fashioned a symbolism of resistance that provided the motivation for momentous changes in the political landscape of Ireland – Yeats' 'terrible beauty'. Through their military

²² For an analytical discussion of the cultural and social significance of the ideology that underpins the significance of the event see, Patrick O'Mahony and Gerard Delanty, *Rethinking Irish history* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp 94-129.

²³ Mosse, *The image of man*, p. 110.

²⁴ Dawson, *Soldier heroes*, p. 1.

²⁵ The full text of the declaration is available at, <http://www.iol.ie/~dlubv/proclaim.htm>. (3 July 2006).

²⁶ R. V. Comerford, *Ireland: inventing the nation* (London, 2003), p. 42.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

endeavour and the subsequent executions, their legacies are enshrined as testament to personal sacrifice; an emotive stance in the name of an imagined ideology; a struggle to manifest the legitimacy that is political power. It was the subsequent meaning attached to their actions that exalted their status. Commenting on the ideological significance of the event Declan Kiberd argues:

Pearse summoned Cu Chulainn^o to his side to validate his ideal of a welfare state which would, so said the Proclamation, "cherish all the children of the nation equally". In reading out the Proclamation, as he stood before Ionic pillars of the Post Office, to "a few thin, perfunctory cheers", Pearse was knowingly enforcing the classical analogies. He saw that in a traditionalist society, it was vitally necessary to gift-wrap the gospel of the future in the packaging of the past.²⁸

The event presented symbolic representation of Irish nationalism's authenticity and provided both the seeds and fertilisation for its growth. The ethos of heroism was set in its contemporary social and cultural context thus projecting the image of military man as exemplar of nationalism's authentic agent. It was within this climate of growing nationalist political identity, with its contingent concepts for perceptions of masculinity that the actions and events that constitute Michael Collins's historical legacy took place.

New warfare, new masculinity

In the aftermath of the execution of the Rising's main protagonists,²⁹ the methodology of military engagement was about to be redefined in a distinctly Irish manner, casting the harbingers of the tactics as agents of national honour. With the ethos of the soldierly image already set in the international arena, these men through their action would become the symbolic representation of Ireland's right to self-determination. Collins, as the man credited with the organisation of the new 'tactics'³⁰, emerged as a leading personality whose historical image has assumed legendary proportions.³¹

²⁸ Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: literature of the modern nation* (London, 1996), p. 206. *Spelling as it appears in Kiberd.

²⁹ Not all of those executed were the ringleaders of the event. Willie Pearse, for instance, was shot simply because he was Padraig's brother.

³⁰ See, Colm McInerney, 'Michael Collins and the organisation of Irish intelligence, 1917-21' in *The History Review*, xiv (2003), pp 34-45.

³¹ Peter Hart's biography stands alone in its challenge to the heroic image of Collins in Irish history.

Commenting on the 2006 ninetieth anniversary commemoration of the Rising, Deirdre McMahon observed that:

The resurgence of interest in 1916 may seem like a new phenomenon, but, looking back, the signs were there 10 years ago when Neil Jordan's film about Michael Collins was released. Like the sea change of opinion after the Rising itself, the interest has long roots in the cultural undergrowth.³²

This suggests that these men and the period in question hold a significant place in the cultural mindset of the Irish Nation; their efforts and endeavours and ultimately their deaths are a source of ideological inspiration: masculinity and death perceived as a political success. In effect these men were cultural icons, human symbols of an emerging political identity. During the period 1916-23, men, militarism and politics were inextricably linked to the concept of heroic endeavour for a nationalist cause. For his military credentials, Michael Collins had fought in the GPO and having witnessed what he believed were the needless deaths of many comrades he subsequently developed a different ideological outlook in seeking Ireland's political independence, through the 'new' Sinn Féin movement. Following his experiences of the Rising Collins now viewed the conflict in a different light:

I do not think the Rising week was an appropriate time for the issue of memoranda couched in poetic phrase, nor of action worked out in similar fashion...it had an air of a Greek tragedy about it, the illusion being more or less completed with the issue of the before mentioned memoranda.³³

Once he found himself in a position to do so Collins's interpretation of his experiences in the G. P. O. led him to consider and approve of an alternative military strategy of engagement. Pearse's sense of romanticism and belief in the ideal of the blood sacrifice is a well-documented theme in Irish historical research. Tactically and practically, his methodology for the attainment of Irish independence stands in stark contrast to the philosophy of engagement orchestrated by Collins during the War of Independence years, yet both men have been apportioned heroic manifestations within Irish nationalism, albeit for different actions. The essential point for the context of this

³² Deirdre McMahon, *Irish Times*, 'Weekend section', 13 May 2006.

³³ Quoted in Taylor, *Michael Collins*, p. 57.

chapter is that each man presents an image of heroic masculinity. The nature and composition of their relevant status is defined under different criteria, highlighting the socially interpretative nature of what constitutes heroic status. In this case their common bond of identity is Irish nationalism. Here, nationalism's inherent masculinity comprises reverence to a soldierly or military figure and Collins, from the onset, was part of this discourse.³⁴ The resultant cultural and social perceptions that these images stimulate have far reaching connotations for political power and for those who have access to that power. Moreover, these deserve a greater degree of attention in order to reveal the significance of their impact on the historical legacy of major political and military events. Michael Collins's association with the various political and military deeds in which he was involved define, how he is remembered as a public man. In effect his public masculinities and our recollections of them are inseparable. These cultural images, in turn, become the focus of conjecture, debate and argument as to their significance. Dawson argues that 'within nationalist discourse, narratives about soldier heroes are both underpinned by, and powerfully reproduce, conceptions of gender and nation as unchanging essences.'³⁵ As the opening quote of this chapter asserts, 'heroes are made, not by their deeds, but by the stories that are told about them.'³⁶

Defining the hero in the national consciousness

The following analysis is not an attempt to present a detailed history of the way Collins has been viewed throughout the course of the twentieth century. Anne Dolan provides an excellent study on this issue in her publication, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War*.³⁷ Whilst touching on aspects raised by Dolan the analysis focuses on the images of Collins as depicted in the rhetoric and discourse of commemoration where images of masculinities that are summoned to extol the merits of his contribution to the Irish state. Initial press reporting of his death is investigated to discern the image of him

³⁴ Collins wore an army uniform when he fought in the G.P.O.

³⁵ Dawson, *Soldier heroes*, p. 11.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

³⁷ Dolan, pp 57-99. The author deals with the various treatments of Collins beginning with the new state's hasty attempt and miserliness over the erection of the initial cenotaph monument on Leinster lawn to Eoin O'Duffy's blueshirts attempt to align themselves with Collins; attempts by Fine Gael at the reclamation of respectability in the 1940s; attempt at civil war reconciliation in the memorials of 1950 and 1960s; the controversy over his omission in *Facts about Ireland* and his overshadowing in the 1966 commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising. Collins, she claims, became fashionable again in the 1990s firstly with the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his birth and second and Neil Jordan's movie opened him up to a whole new generation of people.

portrayed in the immediate aftermath of his death. Within this contextual framework General Richard Mulcahy's graveside oration is examined to discern the significance of the speech and the establishment of the grave as a site of hero worship. A selection of commemoration speeches over the course of the twentieth century, delivered at the commemoration ceremonies at Béalnabláth, are considered for how the significance of such a place and the rhetoric used there reflect the interpretative nature of heroic analysis. The symbolism of both the place and the rhetorical deliveries reflect the discourses of heroic imaginings. Furthermore, the political awkwardness of commemorating Collins is considered in its historical context. Moves to repair old Civil War bitterness is examined in Tom Barry's 1965 speech at the unveiling of a monument to Collins at Sam's Cross, Clonakilty, Co. Cork. In 1972, the re-introduction of the army at the Béalnabláth ceremony is investigated through the speech of John Costello. Brid Rogers speaking at the site in 1986 was a historical moment, both for her prominent role in the Sinn Féin party and the fact that she was the first woman to give the oration at the ceremony. Finally aspects of a selection of speeches delivered from the 1990s to 2003 are analysed. Included in this is an examination of a speech delivered, in 1990, during the official opening ceremony of Collins's birthplace, as an official site of remembrance.³⁸

The heroic masculinities of Michael Collins

As discussed, the term hero itself is a contested one as it means different things to different people. It is contingent on perceptions of ideals that constitute bravery, courage, belief and chivalry. This is not to suggest that these don't have tangible meanings. In fact it is their very identification as attainable components of personal identity that makes them so effective in creating the idea of the hero. Put another way, the characteristics that are deemed heroic fit a recognised pattern of symbols and identities that are particular to understanding of masculinities. It is a category of distinction, definition and more significantly a marker of identity. Furthermore, as heroic ideals mean different things to different people at different times therefore must be considered as exemplary characteristics of masculinity understood within their social and cultural setting. For Michael Collins, (there is) the mystique that has surrounded the circumstances of his death, which consequently has cast a theoretical

³⁸ Collins was born in Woodfield, Clonakilty, Co. Cork.

conundrum of speculation that permeated debates on the subject, to the extent that the controversy itself served to highlight his profile and status. Carlton Younger is in no doubt about the significance of Collins's death:

Perhaps the greatest achievement of Michael Collins was to die young. What Ireland lost by his death can never be reckoned; it may be that he had already lived his finest days. What she gained was an immortal hero. For the hero who loves sheds his aura; his moment has passed and his is seen to be as ordinary men. But he who dies young is ever young in memory and ever a hero. It is upon the loom of Collins's memory and the memory of all those other hero-patriots who died in the dynamic youth, that Irishmen are weaving the pattern of enduring national unity.³⁹

Conceivably, the Collins's story can be viewed as one that juxtapose itself with the old myths and legends of the landscape of pagan Ireland, producing a twentieth century modernised speculative version that gives cultural credence to the concept of the nation-state, while concurrently, feeding the popular and academic imagination with material that fuels discursive opinions and places Collins as the focal point of imagination. Like the mythical exemplar of heroic warrior, Cú Chulainn, Collins was killed while standing upright, in a quest of moral goodness. Reminiscent of Cú Chulainn, the heroic qualities of his life are matched by the manner of his death.⁴⁰ 'The belief that the nation lives through the ages, informed by the same indefeasible, characteristic culture is a fundamental tenet of modern essentialist nationalism, assiduously propagated and widely imbibed.'⁴¹ As a stereotype of exemplary nationalist masculinity the heroic ideal sustains this myth of continuity in the ideological belief, whilst simultaneously projecting images of political and military manhood onto the spectrum of symbolic attachment. 'What aspects of the cultural system are mobilised in a given society depends upon its cognitive schemata, belief systems, structures of reciprocity and expressive models of individual identity.'⁴²

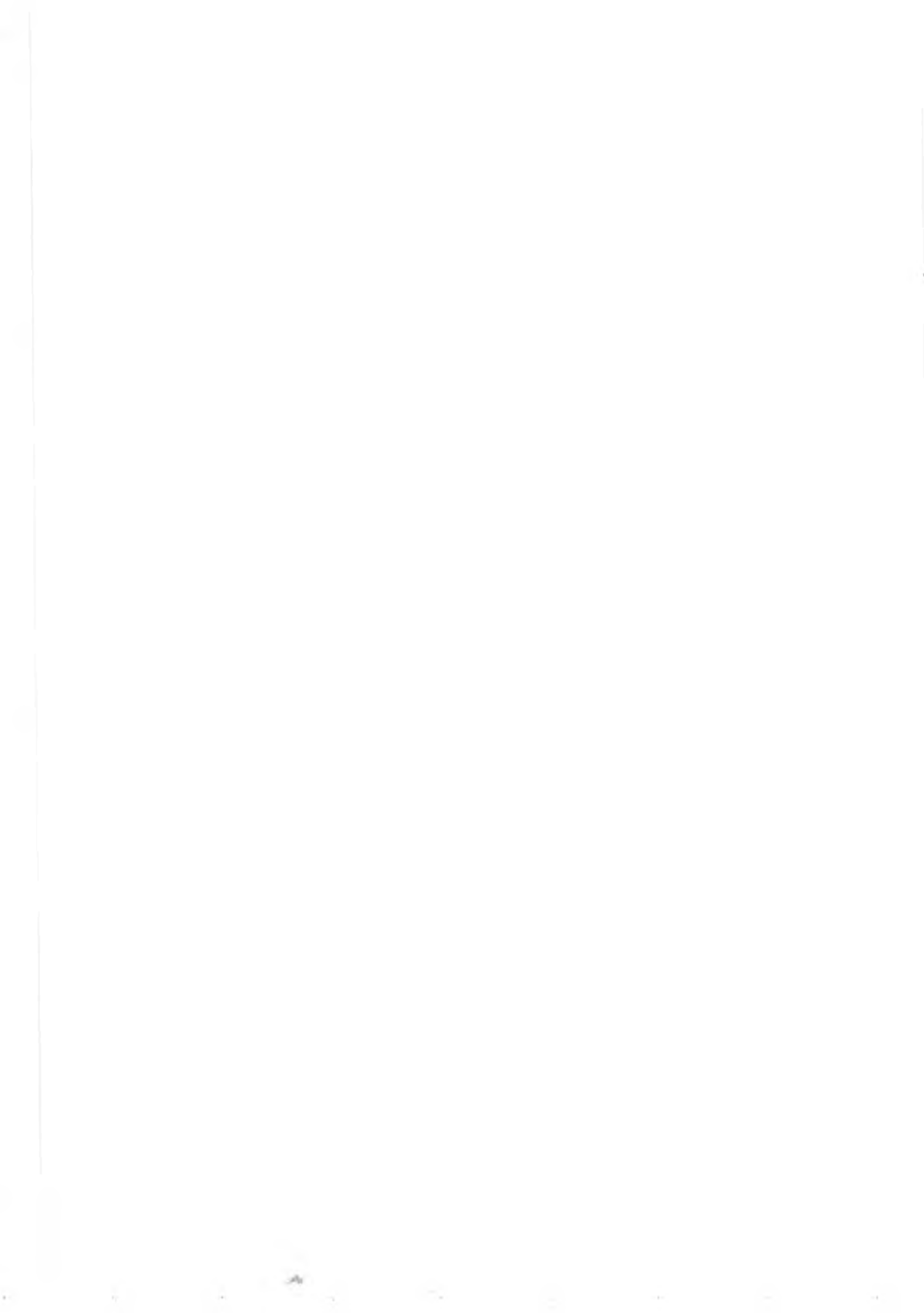
Reporting the death of a hero

³⁹ Carlton Younger, *Ireland's Civil War* (London, 1968), pp 2-3.

⁴⁰ Tom P. Cross and Clark Harris Slover (eds), *Ancient Irish tales* (New York, 1996), pp 137-52; Ibid., pp 176-198.

⁴¹ Comerford, *Ireland*, p. 15.

⁴² Patrick O'Mahony and Gerard Delanty, *Rethinking Irish history: nationalism, identity and ideology* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 32. (Hereafter known as, O'Mahony and Delanty, *Rethinking Irish history*)



In the days following his death the collection of newspaper reports, stories by comrades and acquaintances, poems and eulogies, provided images of Collins's personality and heroic stature that were shared by a nation. People from all parts of the country who had no contact or knowledge of each other's existence and would never have seen let alone met Collins, could participate in the heroic narrative and share a common bond of mutual membership in a country's sense of sorrow.⁴³

In his examination of the British public's reaction to the death of Sir Henry Havelock, Graham Dawson has noted that the upshot of this [type of] mass reporting of national sorrow had the effect of simulating localised 'face to face mourning shared among friends' on a nationwide scale, through a 'consciousness of belonging to the national collective.'⁴⁴ This intense focus on the significance of Collins's loss for the Irish nation served to cast his image centre stage for the projection and attachment of a nation's collective grief.⁴⁵ If not already, Collins was now truly a focus of national collective imagining. He was a masculine image for which people could form opinions, draw conclusion and attach meaning that reached beyond the realm of local communities into an international arena dominated by Carlyle's cult of 'great men'. It is the projection of the opinion that's important here, the myth of the great man.

On 24 August 1922, in a front-page article announcing Collins's death, the *Cork Examiner* contained the following headline and opening commentary:

IRELAND'S WOE. NATIONAL HERO DIES.

An appalling catastrophe has befallen the Irish people. The Nation was plunged into grief yesterday morning when the almost incredible fact became known that General Michael Collins was dead. Though generally disbelieved at first, the news was but too true...

At noon yesterday, the dead hero was accorded a military funeral from the [Shanakiel] Hospital to Penrose Quay. The body was taken to Dublin on the steamer *Classic*. Crowds who thronged the streets openly displayed their grief at the loss of a gallant Corkman and an Irish National Hero.⁴⁶

⁴³ (See Dawson, pp 114-5; he uses Anderson's idea of the newspaper spreading the commonality of identity; Anderson, *Imagined communities*, pp 30-1 and pp 37-40.

⁴⁴ Dawson, *Soldier heroes*, p. 115.

⁴⁵ I use the word collective with the caveat that there were people who would not have shared in this sense of loss. But the point is that the sheer scale of the reporting and public reaction, the vast number of people who turned up to file past his coffin as it lay in state and the throngs that lined the cortege route to Glasnevin, suggest that those who didn't mourn his loss were in the minority. (An estimated half-a-million turned up in Dublin on the day of the funeral).

⁴⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 24 August 1922.

The piece projects the image of Collins across the Irish nation proclaiming him to be a national hero. His death is seen as a devastating blow to the country. Collins's corpse is accorded central focus of homage as the multitudes turned out in a public display of grief, focused on a casket containing the dead body of a man. Dead at the age of 31 he remains so in eternal memory.

On 30 August 1922, *An Saorstát* published a special edition commemorating Collins. It contains a variety of articles, photographs and poetry in remembrance and appreciation of his contribution to Irish nationalism. In his article on the front page entitled 'Cork's gift to Dublin', Seamus O hAodha personifies the attachment of meaning in death to the image of Collins in life:

Cold as is his corpse, calmly reckless of its funeral trappings, yet does it proclaim to us in tones of stout command the lesson of faith and confidence that was Mick Collins's life. "Carry on! Carry on!" we hear him call. "Think and act and play the man. Ireland is yours for the making – make it!" What's the passing of his body if that message of his soul, his essential self, but grips our minds and inspires our lives. One man though alive could not do everything, but he has left us a breathing, and arresting example of how everything could be done, and his death will drive this lesson home.⁴⁷

Focusing on the symbolism of the funeral, Collins's legacy is portrayed as the inspiration to 'carry on' and finish the task of cementing political legitimacy. The imagined perceived projection of his voice from beyond the grave delivers a political message, calling on Ireland's manhood to stand up and grasp the mantle of opportunity to define its political future. Collins's humanity is projected through the image of his soul as the essence of selfhood. Life beyond the grave so to speak, personified in the ideology of the nation. For O hAodha, Collins represents the spiritual personification of man's identity, constructed around the premise of nation and displaying 'the zeal for the achievement of Ireland's full and natural rights as a nation.'⁴⁸ He is, without question an exemplar of manhood in the political quest. 'Fresh from the recital of his daring exploits in arms, we stand astounded at the moral greatness of the man.'⁴⁹ In terms of his heroic credentials Collins's moral greatness is evaluated through his

⁴⁷ Seamus O hAodha, *An Saorstát*, 30 August 1922.

⁴⁸ *An Saorstát*, 30 August 1922.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

contribution to the political struggle at hand. The combination of imaged male body and bequeathed masculine spirit serve to exalt Collins as paragon of Irish nationalism's moral righteousness – an iconic male exemplar. Although his body lies lifeless, the greatness of his deeds and the spirit of his exemplary moral courage are his legacy.

In the same publication Eoin MacNeill wrote an article entitled, 'How we can make him live', in which he highlighted Collins's manly leadership and visionary qualities. 'I want to give testimony the testimony of an older man, and my testimony is that Michael Collins was and is the greatest Irishman of our time.'⁵⁰ In summation he reminds the Irish army that it is their responsibility to honour his legacy and continue his influence for the cause of Irish nationalism:

You will make him live among you and lead you still, until his work is finished. In that way you will teach the world the man he was, and you will be faithful to him, and through him, to Ireland.⁵¹

These comments are as reflective of the times as they are of Collins. The military and religious imagery is prominent in the rhetoric and the alignment of the moral code of exemplary conduct with the concept of nationalism is inescapably obvious. These examples echo George Mosse's contention that nationalism exalts male stereotypes, particularly military figures, as a means of self-representation.⁵² In this case, Collins is the soldier hero cut down in defence of a moralistic belief in the concept of a social and political order called nationalism.

Collins's political allies and friends chose to honour him in the national media with words that aligned his contribution to Irish politics, in tandem with symbolic representations of the nation thus enshrining his masculinities as being emblematic representation of the character of manhood required to steer it through to fruition.

'En-graving' the heroic image

Perhaps one of the first, most poignant, heartfelt and in effect emotion evoking rhetorical pronouncements of a person's life is the graveside oration. Graveside speeches signify the final goodbye, the last chance to eulogise the corpse unseen within the

⁵⁰ Eoin MacNeill, *An Saorstát*, 30 August 1922.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Mosse, *The image of man*, p. 53.

sealed casket before it descends into the ground to be covered by, in the case of Collins, the symbolic soil for which his life was given in pursuit of. Doherty and Keogh have argued, the republican funeral is an acknowledged focal point and source of symbolism for the ideological aspirations of Irish nationalism, commemorating the dead as heroic martyrs.⁵³ The sentiment that surrounds the loss is enhanced with emotive rhetoric that conjures images of heroic status for the person in question. The life of the dead martyr is exalted into the pantheon of iconic discourse. Memories of his image are the focus of political imagining. The graveside speaker has the last public word before the final descent, broadcasting the political image of the cherished nationalist ideal in emotive memory upon the 'airwaves' of passion, sentiment and loss.

The graveside oration functions as the opening soliloquy in the heroic project, the opening chapter of the 'story'. The minds of the 'grieving' audience are focuses and the words carefully noted as a tribute to the heroic dead; words that have a power far beyond the grave and far beyond the life of the person in question. In this way the images evoked are for the living, those who remain, remember and continue on the ideological path from which the sentiment springs. The death serves as an inspiration, or more correctly, the memory of achievement of deeds serves as motivation to continue the process. The oration evokes a passion that juxtaposes human endeavour with political aspiration. In delivering Michael Collins's graveside oration, General Richard Mulcahy's speech conjures images, evokes sentiment, postulates ideology and connotes myth:

Our country is to-day bent under a sorrow such as it had not been bent under for many a year. Our minds are cold, empty, wordless, and without sound. But it is only our weaknesses that are bent under this great sorrow that we meet with to-day. All that is good in us, all that is strong in us, is strengthened by the memory of that great hero and that great legend who is now laid to rest.

We bend to-day over the grave of a man not more than thirty years of age, who took to himself the gospel of toil for Ireland, the gospel of working for the people of Ireland, and of sacrifice for their good, and who had made himself a hero and a legend that will stand in the pages of our history with any bright page that was ever written there.⁵⁴

⁵³ Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh, "Sorrow but no despair – the road is marked": the politics of funerals in post-1916 Ireland' in Doherty and Keogh (eds), *Michael Collins*, pp 186-201.

⁵⁴ General Richard Mulcahy, graveside oration at funeral of Michael Collins. *Irish Times*, 30 August 1922.

In these opening lines Mulcahy sets the tone of heroic remembrance. His words conjure the image of a silent chilly vacuum enveloping the collective national mindset. This ardent grief symbolises the weakness within, but strength is found in remembering the emblematic life of the ‘great hero and that great legend’. He eulogises the corpse of the silent fallen, assigning to memory the image and status of protagonist and prodigy. His Christ like comparison of Collins is patently imaged in the suggestion of gospel and sacrifice. The similarities in age with Jesus, the concept of personal denial for the greater good and the self-made nature of his deeds, suggest that Collins defined his own status. Mulcahy posits that the pages of Irish history will be the bible from which the legacy of Collins will be ‘scribed’ and etched; the source from where the doctrine of nationalist ideology reaches the collective audience, projecting the truth of political belief, in effect, the basis from which faith in the righteous of a politically free and self-governing Irish state finds the tangible and human form of its legitimacy. This is an image of masculine sacrifice and denial to support and inspire its achievement. This rhetoric of religious analogies is continued later in the speech as Mulcahy evaluates Collins in the following terms:

“Prophecy,” said Peter, who was the great rock, “is a light shining in the darkness till the day dawn.” And surely “our great rock” was our prophet and our prophecy, a light held aloft along the road of” danger of hardship or bitter toil,” And if our light is gone out it is only as the paling of a candle in the dawn of its own prophecy.

The act of his, the word of his, the look of his was day by day a prophecy to us that loose lying in us lay capabilities for toil, for bravery for regularity, for joy in life; and slowness and in hesitancy and in weariness half yielded to his prophecies came true in us.⁵⁵

He evokes the imagery of Saint Peter as rock and prophet, as beacon of inspiration and hope, to which he equates Collins’s legacy. The simple vocalised pen pictured image of Collins he conjures is built around a focus on aspects of his personality. Descriptions such as ‘act’, ‘word’ and ‘look’, serving as the fulcrum for remembering his contribution to the Irish nation. Mulcahy sketches the image of Collins as prophet of Irish destiny, embodied through the everyday actions he undertook towards this end. In doing so, he projects the focus of remembrance through the image of Collins as man of

⁵⁵ General Richard Mulcahy, graveside oration at Collins funeral, *Irish Times*, 30 August 1922.

action. Consequently, this image becomes representational of the ideological concept of the state through the human symbol of Collins. He is both man and prophet to a higher cause, one that he served with all his energies and for which he sacrificed his life for the greater good.

Having established the memory of Collins in the above terms Mulcahy continues to conjure a militarist image of masculinity to enhance both the ideology and consequently the association of Collins's heroic legacy:

And just as he as a person was a light and a prophecy to us individually, he looked to it and wished that this band of brothers, which is the Army, will be a prophecy to our people. Our Army had been the people, is the people, and will be the people. Our green uniform does not make us less the People. It is a cloak of service, a curtailer of our weaknesses, and amplifier of our strength.⁵⁶

The collective brotherly body of the army will now take up the mantle of the prophet. They will become disciples to the nation, of the people, for the people, from the people. The military uniform is the symbol of this representation, the agents of Collins's bequeathed legacy to the nation. The army is cast as harbinger of the necessary characteristics that shall manage the internal flaws and project the manifestation of power. Collins's image is firmly aligned to the idea of a militaristic legacy to the Irish nation – the man, alias the prophet, in the military uniform. Mulcahy concludes his appraisal of Collins in the following terms:

We last looked at him in the City Hall and in the small church in Vincent's Hospital. And, studying his face with an eager gaze, we found there the same old smile that met us always in our work. And seeing it there in the first dark hour of our blow, the mind could not help travelling back to the dark storm-tossed Sea of Gallilea and the frail barque tossed upon the waters there, and the strong, calm smile of the Great Sleeper in the stern of the boat...Men and women of Ireland, we are all mariners on the deep, bound for a port still seen only through storm and spray, sailing still on a sea full of dangers and hardships, and bitter toil." But the Great Sleeper lies smiling in the stern of the boat, and we shall be tilled with that spirit which will walk bravely upon the waters.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ General Richard Mulcahy, graveside oration at Collins funeral, *Irish Times*, 30 August 1922.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Once again he summons religious imagery to buttress the sagacity of Collins's legacy. The physically tangible focus of remembrance is the etched impression of the dead hero's smiling demeanour – a concentration on the human image. Amid the stormy water of the Sea of Gallilea floats a small boat in which calmly rests the body of the great sleeper – a representation of the driving force behind Ireland's struggle for self-determination. To the 'men and women of Ireland', he leaves this allegoric inspiration, to strive through climates tempestuous and obscure, filled with hazardous and painful impediments, buttressed in the knowledge of a human spirit that inspired the virtue of courage that is required to see the project to its end – to steer the barque to the port of independence. Not alone is the image of man and nation as consummate spirit evoked, but in a geographical sense the grave is established as a place of national remembrance, where people can come and pay homage to the slain hero. The grave is the crucial focal point for the outpouring of tribute and reverence, a place where people can come and remember and honour in whatever way they see fit – the last resting place of the great sleeper.⁵⁸ As a place of reverence, the gravesite's symbolism is emblematic of the representation of both the man and the State that he sought to bring into existence. The site represents a place where the focus of attention rests on the imaging of Collins. It is a place of honour and reverence where the interpretation of meaning takes a significance all to itself. It is symbolic, not of the corpse that lies within but the imaginings of the living, those who come to the site for whatever reason or motive. Quite simply, it is a place for the living to come and revere whatever interpretation they see fit to attach to the deceased. The grave is a focal point for the imaging of their own identities in how they conceptualise what they perceive Collins to represent.

The death of Collins signals the beginning his heroic project, the story of the significance of his contribution to the nationalist cause. It is from this place that the imaging of Collins as national hero begins. Here in this hallowed ground lies the corpse of the heroic dead – representative of a concept greater than the individual – the sacred son immortalised for the holy grail of Irish nationalism. Collins's death highlights his significance as the focus of imaginings. Although he didn't die fighting a foreign foe, the circumstances of his death make it all the more tragic. Crucially, for the image of masculinity that defined this era, classified by E. J. Hobsbawm as 'the apogee

⁵⁸ I have visited Collins's grave on a number of occasions over the last few years. On each visit I have noted that visitors have left either cards or flowers.

of nationalism'⁵⁹, Collins, dressed in military uniform died in physical action, shot down whilst fighting the enemy.

Béalnabláth: the early years

Over the course of the twentieth century the location of the ambush site where Collins was killed has become a place of homage for those who have wished and wish to pay tribute to his memory – or their particular interpretation of how they projected the commemoration of association with his name. However, from its inception the association of commemoration at Béalnabláth has raised many a contentious issue concerning the use of Collins's image for political purpose. Whilst examining the treatment of Collins's legacy over subsequent years Anne Dolan has unearthed the tensions and conflicts that beset the new Irish state, symbolically enacted in the commemoration at the site.⁶⁰ She argues that the simple ceremony to mark the first anniversary, involving the erection of a crude wooden cross and conducted by a small group orchestrated by Commandant Frank Bolster, was a more genuine and heartfelt attempt to remember a fallen comrade than the militaristic ceremony that marked the unveiling of the 'large limestone cross, haughty and tasteless, atop its spacious platform,'⁶¹ that took place the following year. Dolan claims that 'grief's simple crosses were like Bolster's: they were not equipped with their own rostrum; they were not a mere prop on a stage set for future political speeches. With firing parties and marching bands they conquered Béalnabláth in the name of the Irish Free State. They created a place of oratory, not sanctity.'⁶² The author posits that honouring Collins in this manner represented a display of authority by the government, directed towards the mutinying elements in the army, who, over the previous months, had 'questioned the government's commitment to Collins's stepping stone approach to the Treaty; they had questioned the government's loyalty to Collins; they had challenged its nationalism...Honouring Collins, it snatched him back from the men who branded it traitor in his name.'⁶³

I would take this analysis a step further and suggest that in addition to a display of legitimacy the event should also be viewed as an assertion of masculinity, where the forces of the state, represented as the inheritors and guardians of Collins's legacy – the

⁵⁹ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 2000), pp 131-161

⁶⁰ Dolan, pp 57-99.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 57.

⁶² Ibid., p. 58.

⁶³ Ibid., pp 59-60.

army – enact their symbolic assertion of legitimacy in order to proceed along the path that Collins had played such a central role in laying. In effect they are reasserting themselves as custodians of his legacy in the name of the state. The symbolism of the senior military figures on the stone platform with the rank and file lined in orderly attention on a country road, buttresses Mulcahy's graveside oratorical tenet of them as upholders of the Collins legacy. The event casts masculine figures at the centre of its protocol, through the male symbolism of the military event and the alignment of the heroic figure with the State. These images were in keeping within the culture of an age where, following the First World War, displays of militaristic masculinity were a common feature of national remembrance, a point I will return to and set in context later.

The *Cork Examiner* described the 1924 Béalnabláth ceremony in the following terms:

The second anniversary of the death of General Michael Collins of the National Army was fittingly honoured yesterday when a magnificent memorial cross to his memory was unveiled at the spot at Béalnabláth where he was killed two year ago. It was a deeply impressive ceremony and was marked by many striking evidences of the high esteem and respect in which the late General Collins was held by every class in the community, as well as the profound loss that the country sustained by the untimely death of such a brilliant, distinguished and patriotic Irishman.⁶⁴

In the conclusion of his oration General Eoin O'Duffy made it clear what he felt the significance of the spot represented to the Irish nation:

We stand to-day on the spot made sacred by the blood of General Collins. Let us of the Army here resolve that we will try, so far as we can, to emulate his great soldierly qualities, and self-sacrifice when discipline may appear to press sorely upon us.⁶⁵

Just as Mulcahy had done two years previously at Collins's graveside, O'Duffy presents the image of Collins the Christ-like martyr. He places the responsibility in the masculine figure of the Army to live up to the legacy and expectation of endurance for

⁶⁴ *Cork Examiner*, 24 August 1924.

⁶⁵ *Irish Independent*, 24 August 1924.

the greater good. Collins is the exemplar of the standard to be achieved, the ideal of perfection and honour. He continued in the following vein:

Let us remember that 'Mick' Collins was the best disciplined man in the G.P.O. in 1916. He obeyed every order cheerfully. Later on when he took control altogether, he encouraged a spirit of comradeship and goodwill between officers and men, but he was nevertheless a strict disciplinarian. We should ask ourselves how can we best do honour to his memory now. Certainly not by nursing personal grievances or by saying of discussing what might he might or might not do under certain circumstances. I think I have as much right to interpret what he would do under certain circumstances as anybody else. The best way to do honour to his memory is to do the work that is at our hands faithfully and well, to have self-respect for ourselves and the uniforms we wear, and to give unqualified loyalty to the State for which he died.⁶⁶

Here, O'Duffy constructs the image of a disciplined patriot of 1916 who followed military protocol to the letter. Connecting him with the events signifies the attachment of legitimacy to political values he espoused. Equally, aligning his legacy to these events serves to enhance Collins's credence as the man-of-action and ideologue of the nationalist ethos. Collins was a man who encouraged a spirit of loyalty and bonding within the ranks of the army, based along the principle guidelines of orderly authority. The way to honour him is to have respect for the ethos of the soldierly discipline through the symbolic uniform of the state, military and the army. For O'Duffy, Collins qualities are exemplars to be admired and equalled, becoming part of a communal experience for the military and by association the State.

In her essay on the culture of British commemoration that evolved following the First World War, Catherine Moriarty argues that the creation of a culture of remembrance was achieved through numerous discourses. The significance of this was in the formation of a collective experience. Here, the idea of communal recognition played such a vital role for those left to commemorate the fallen and maimed. The significance for remembrance is contingent on how that memory is organised. As she demonstrates, without transference from individual to collective memory the iconography and

⁶⁶ *Irish Independent*, 24 August 1924.

symbolism that emerged would not have received such an important focus when it came to attaching meaning and significance to human sacrifice.⁶⁷

Reflective memory evokes a nostalgic tendency within the individual and the transference of this into the public arena is crucial in creating the sense of collective participation necessary for recognition to grasp the public mindset and become a cultural phenomenon. 'Remembering war, [and those who participated in it], can be part of a process of reconciliation, grieving and healing as well as a political act designed to reinforce other meanings.'⁶⁸ It would appear from what Dolan has revealed, that in 1924, O'Duffy was attempting to appeal firstly to the army and secondly to the public, through the masculine image of its first Commander-in-Chief and in the process assigning to Collins's name the concept of the slain political hero. As we have seen this was in keeping with the rhetoric in the immediate aftermath of Collins's death, so it may not be so much reclamation, but a reaffirmation of his status as a national icon as well as advancing O'Duffy's own political agenda. His was an image of consolidation in a time of new beginnings for the fledgling state, mirroring similar social endeavour to remember war dead across Europe, as a means of expressing solidarity and unity within the nation.

Tempering the hero

In 1932 the Free State had been in existence for ten years under the rule of a Cumann na Gaedheal led administration. By August of that year the Fianna Fáil party, under the leadership of Eamon de Valera were in office, having taken over the reins of government on 9 March following their victory in the general election. Eoin O'Duffy and Richard Mulcahy had become political opponents due to issues relating to internal difficulties and personality clashes with the Cumann na nGaedheal party.⁶⁹ At the Béalnabláth commemoration in August of that year, Mulcahy used the occasion to make Collins's legacy a focal point of his appeal for unity within the armed forces of the state and to those who sought to travel down the path of militarism to achieve their aims. He urged them to opt for the political over a military alternative as the route to

⁶⁷ Catherine Moriarty, 'Private grief and public remembrance: British First World War memorials' in Martin Evans, and Ken Lunn, (eds), *War and memory in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 1997), pp 125-6.

⁶⁸ Bob Bushway, 'The obligation of remembrance or the remembrance of obligation: society and the memory of World War' in John Bourne, Peter Liddle and Ian Whitehead (eds), *The Great War, 1914-1945: who won? Who lost? vol. ii* (2 vols., London, 2001), p. 490.

⁶⁹ See, Ferghal McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self made hero* (Oxford, 2005), p. 240.

expressing their opinions, using the historical image of Collins as the fulcrum for his argument:

Circumstances have only too much tended to obscure the work of Michael Collins. You men who have been his associates, perhaps in 1916 with Pearse, in 1919, 1920, and 1921 in the ranks of the Volunteers, and later in the ranks of the National Army, you love to think of Collins as a soldier, The people of this country saw him appearing on their horizon from out of the bedraggled ranks of Pearse's army in 1916. They saw him die in the uniform of Commander-in-chief of and Irish Army (cheers) here on this spot. But great and necessary as Collins's work as a soldier was, the work on his part that made it possible to have a State here in Ireland was much wider flung and much bigger and much less spectacular than the work of a soldier.⁷⁰

Mulcahy acknowledges Collins the soldier, clearly linking him to significant military events in recent history, but goes on to remind the assembled that Collins did much political work, away from the spotlight of the man-of-action image associated with the military figure. Mulcahy's words are a precursor to the much greater political legacy that defined Collins's contributions to the Irish state. He continues, directing his appeal in the following manner:

You see the work that he so laboriously built up, with your aid challenged, and particularly the Army Comrades' Association,^[71] that

⁷⁰ *Cork Weekly Examiner and Weekly Herald*, 27 August 1932.

⁷¹ On 9th February 1932 an organisation known as the Army Comrades Association had been formed, just one week before polling day in the General Election. The founding objectives were wholly uncontroversial, the body was to be a benevolent organisation for ex-National Army veterans. Its first President was to be Col. Austin Brennan a Clareman, but the driving force behind the organisation was its secretary, Commandant Ned Cronin from North Cork. The first few meetings of the ACA received little or no press attention, and there is no recorded reference of their involvement in the election campaign. A national convention was held in Wynn's Hotel, Dublin, on St Patrick's Day 1932, and it was reported that 87 branches had been founded in 24 counties. This sustained and steady growth in the association continued up to August 1932 when it was re-organised under new leadership.

On August 11th 1932 Dr. T.F.O'Higgins was elected to the presidency of the ACA. Up to this point the ACA had explicitly espoused the view that it was non-party-political, but in choosing O'Higgins, brother of Kevin and a prominent Cumann na Gaedhael T.D. as its President, the ACA seemed to be aligning itself with Cumann na Gaedhael. There was also a marked shift in policy, the ACA now were espousing a virulent form of anti-communism and had pledged to defend the right of free-speech for all, thus casting itself as a bulwark against the IRA's campaign of "No free speech for traitors". Similarly as the ACA began to create a more assertive role for itself as a counterweight to the IRA, Cumann na Gaedhael members supported this and believed that a formal alliance between the two bodies was a natural progression, given that the vast majority of ACA members were Cumann na Gaedhael supporters. The ACA from late 1932 onwards were fulfilling the role of stewards and bodyguards at Cumann na Gaedhael meetings. Later in October 1932 Cumann na Gaedhael public meetings in Kilmallock and Ennis descended into a riot, pitched battles between the ACA and the IRA were the order of the day and the political temperature began to rise. 1932 ended with a rally in Carrick on Suir. Six hundred members

have brought as members of the National Army, this people over through their struggles, faced themselves to-day with another serious responsibility likely to fall upon them (cheers). They must not be led away by the picture of Collins as a soldier. They must think of the picture of Collins as a worker, the picture of Collins as a statesman, the picture of Collins standing before his people and putting himself into the hands of his people, saying "put me in whatever position you wish, as Commander-in-chief of your army, as your Minister for Finance, as your Chairman of the Provisional Government, as your plenipotentiary to London to argue Ireland's case for freedom". You have to put yourselves in your country's hands in the same way and do the work that comes your way, and particularly you men, who have been Volunteers, and who have been members of the National Army, who have been the cream of Irish citizenship, taking upon yourselves the danger of arms in the protection of your people, and that you had the assistance of your people. (Applause)⁷²

Mulcahy presents the image of Collins as a servant of Ireland, a multi-faceted individual willing to take on whatever role is required of him to serve the greater good of the nation and state with equal vigour and gusto. To pigeon-hole him as military man would be doing him an injustice. His appeal is an appeal for unity in pursuit of the national collective good. Collins's military element is held up to appeal to the military men who revere this aspect of his legacy. Whilst acknowledging this element of Collins, the rhetoric is directing focus and attention to the many other qualities that Collins possessed. In essence it is a challenge to those who seek to achieve advancement through military gain to broaden their view of the possibilities open to them. Collins, he claims, has done similar things. Collins's qualities are put forward as an appeal to unity. Mulcahy concludes his oration with the following sentiment:

There are difficulties before this country. If you look back at Collins and his work and see his courage, his frankness, his cheerfulness, recall that smile of his that has been called the happiest and the most winning smile that any human being had. If you face your work knowing that your comrades in different parts of the country are facing theirs, that you are giving to your people as a whole confidence that order conditions will be preserved here by the full co-operation of our young manhood with our old, the work that Collins so magnificently started will be brought day by day to a more mature and more perfect end, and we will feel facing the task that come to us day by day that we are fulfilling the hope

of the ACA were present marching in military formation and wearing distinctive insignia, the Blueshirt had been introduced to Irish politics.

⁷² *Cork Weekly Examiner and Weekly Herald*, 27 August 1932.

that gave Pearse in his cell in Arbour hill that look of peace that look of confidence in his country and in his countrymen and women (cheers).⁷³

Mulcahy appeals to the military men to have a single focus, the greater good to the country. Through images of Collins's personality he appeals to the manhood of Ireland to take from the example set by Collins and finish off the work he began. There is a need for unity through honesty of endeavour, between young and old. All men should take their cue from the memory of Collins's image, faithfulness and truth in the belief of Pearse's sacrifice for the national good. His image is presented as a unifying force to soothe the wounds of different ideological outlooks. The image of Collins is one of a man willing to make a compromise, who set out on a road to liberty only to be cut down along the path. In order to honour that legacy, others need to pick up from where he left off; taking their inspiration from the manly characteristics that defined his personality. He should be the beacon, the exemplar, the focus, and the standard that defines and guides the footsteps of the political voyage.

These images of Collins's masculinities reflect the contemporary political climate, exemplifying the issue of interpretation and perception in understanding the nature of gender identity. The masculine images of Collins, depicted by Mulcahy, are designed to appeal to an audience who would consider returning to violence as a means of achieving their aims. Mulcahy's words are designed, just like in 1922 at Collins's graveside, to instil a sense of reason and contemplative consideration to the possibility of a fraught political atmosphere. Only this time Collins, the political diplomat, is the dominant image not Collins the soldier hero. The significant issue here is that even ten years after his death, he is being posited as a man of compromise, the peacemaker. The image of him as a man of adaptability – in the political and military arena – is meant as a means of highlighting the necessity, in the current climate, to adapt similar perspective – towards a political solution to opposing views within the fledgling state. However, in the changing political climate of 1932 the figure of Collins as political icon of the state was about to change. Firstly, due to the presence of a new administration and secondly by his association the actions of a group of men who manipulated the legacy of Collins for the purpose of their own political agenda.

Hail Michael Collins!

⁷³ Ibid.

Eoin O'Duffy and the Blueshirts' subsequent association with commemoration at the Béalnabláth site plunged the name of Collins into an arena that had, to say the least, awkward political overtones. The Blueshirts' perceived association with Fascism and Nazism, both in the concept of the shirted uniform and the straight-armed salute presented an uncomfortable image of masculinity for the new Fianna Fáil government in the early 1930s. According to Fearghal McGarry their actions stemmed from their efforts to claim as their own 'the legacy of the Irish Volunteers.'⁷⁴ Furthermore, 'central to this image was O'Duffy's depiction of the Blueshirts as the inheritors of Michael Collins's legacy. The fallen hero of the Irish revolution provided inspiration and legitimacy.'⁷⁵ In this context it is perhaps understandable that the political administration of the day didn't want to be associated with the legacy and memory of Collins. Notwithstanding, the lessened significance of Collins as iconic masculine symbol of the state had probably as much to do with de Valera's influence on the political landscape of Ireland as the Blueshirts association with his memory. Changing the political structures and eventually the introduction of the constitution in 1937 effectively made the memory of Collins defunct as a political entity. However, 'the government's retreat from commemoration belied a more persistent public affection for the dead commander-in-chief.'⁷⁶ The subsequent years did bear witness to commemoration at the site. The decreased significance of commemorating Collins in an official state capacity is reflected in the media reporting of the annual events. These were reduced to short columns in the national publications with a similar premise reflected in local papers. Exemplified on the 25th anniversary of his death, in what could have been a major occasion of commemoration, newspaper reports of the event were reduced to small paragraphs containing a short description of the proceedings and a list of the most significant people who attended. At this juncture no texts of the speeches appeared in any of the accounts. The following is the full text of the Irish Independent report on the event:

Bealnablath, where Gen. Collins met his death, honoured the leader's memory yesterday, when a great attendance from all parts of Munster and from Dublin recited the Rosary in Irish.

Those present included Miss Collins (sister); Col. S. Powell, Mr. M. Powell, solr., Mr. L. Collins, solr, (nephews); Mrs. Lane, Mrs. O'Sullivan,

⁷⁴ McGarry, *Eoin O'Duffy*, p. 235.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 235.

⁷⁶ Dolan, *Civil War*, p. 78.

Mrs. McGrath (nieces); Mrs. O'Brien Twohig (aunt); Mrs. S. Powell and family, Mrs. M. Powell, Mr M. O'Sullivan and family, Messrs. O'Hea, O'Brien, Kingston, and Miss M. B. Kingston (relatives)
Attendance included; Col. P. Coughlan, who led the recitation of the Rosary; Senator T. J. O'Donovan, Mr. E. O'Neill, T.D.; Comdt. J. Slattery, Comdt. Sean O'Connell, and six members of the Irish Brigade to Spain – Messrs. Horgan, O'Donogue, B. Murphy, S. B. Murphy, Lynch and Kenefick.⁷⁷

The occasion appears to reflect Dolan's assertion regarding the public interest in the Collins legacy. Family, friends and religious ceremony marked the event. But one has to read between the lines to discern it, in words like 'great attendance' and 'all parts.' However, this mixture of relatives, friends and former Blueshirts⁷⁸ project the image of Collins as a cultural icon. Uncomfortable at political level, Collins's memory was still revered and respected by certain sections of the population serving in effect to keep his memory alive. It was to remain like this for almost twenty years.

Healing the memory of masculinity's aggressive past

1965 marks a significant date in the legacy of Michael Collins. A large rough granite stone including the centrepiece of a bronze medallion containing an image of Collins was unveiled at Sam's Cross, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, a few hundred meters up the road from where he was born.⁷⁹ One of the chief speakers at the event was Tom Barry. Hero of the Kilmichael ambush,⁸⁰ Barry had taken the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War. To have a once former ally turned adversary delivering the oration, signified a moment of departure of some 43 years removed from the death of Collins. Barry's speech paints an interesting image of perception of Collins's masculinity at this juncture and under such circumstance of commemoration. He began his oration in the following manner:

I am honoured firstly because of the greatness of the man being remembered, one of the chief architects of the fight for Irish freedom without Michael Collins's great patriotism, courage, capacity, realism

⁷⁷ *Irish Independent*, 25 August 1947.

⁷⁸ Members of The Blueshirts fought in the Spanish Civil War and were often referred to as the Irish Brigade to Spain.

⁷⁹ Joining the Collins family for the ceremony were Tom Hales, the leader of the ambush at Béalnabláth and Liam Deasy former commandant general of the anti-Treaty side. The event was attended by members of the Old IRA, the *Gárdai*, the Military Police and a guard of honour from the 11th Battalion of the FCA.

⁸⁰ Tom Barry, *Guerilla days in Ireland* (Cork, 1955), pp 36-52. Peter Hart disputes Barry's account of this event. See Peter M. Hart, *The IRA and its enemies: violence and community in Cork, 1916-23* (Oxford, 1999), pp 21-38.

and his untiring work against the British forces of occupation, none of us who lived through Ireland's fight for freedom, believed or now believes, that Ireland could have so successfully withheld the enemy terrorism during those long dark days after 1916. Secondly, I readily accepted the invitation because I realised that this splendid committee of West Cork men have endeavoured by every mean in their power to avoid giving any tinge of party politics to this ceremony.

They have, in this case, tried successfully to honour the memory of one of the great men, not alone of this generation, but of Ireland's long history of armed resistance to foreign rule back through the ages.

And thirdly, I have realised that his committee has studiously avoided raking up the embers of our tragic civil strife, the very inscription on the monument which simply states: 'Micheal O Coilean, 1890 – 1922' is evidence of that and it is clearly the intentions of the Committee to give offence to none of the sides of that sad episode. I intend to follow that example here today. This committee realises that no country can exist for long much less progress on the ashes of civil strife, and all men of good will and sanity will endorse their view and actions⁸¹

Barry's opening line sets to the tone of reconciliation. He expresses honour at being asked to deliver the address. He follows by highlighting what he views as assets of a great patriot that were evident in Michael Collins. Courage, capacity and an untiring work ethic were qualities that defined Collins's contribution to the War of Independence effort. His opening words place Collins's image centre stage, as a crucial component in the fight for freedom. He places him as central protagonist, a true testament of Collins legacy, a major compliment coming from someone who so bitterly opposed the Treaty – the compliment of compromise. Barry goes on to explain his decision for accepting the invitation to speak. He sees the efforts of the Michael Collins memorial foundation as the genuine efforts of a group of people who have not got political motives for their actions. The fact that they have avoided stirring up old war wounds is evident in the simple inscription they chose to put on the plaque commemorating Collins. Barry describes Collins as one of the great men of his generation and he (Barry) will honour the ethos of the committee's intentions and not seek to cause further offence to anyone. The images of Collins's masculinity that he cites are interesting examples of the interpretative process that define heroic status in a time of reconciliation. He proceeds to give his interpretation of Michael Collins in the following manner:

⁸¹ *Cork Examiner*, 19 April 1965.

It is not for us here to go into the rights or wrongs of the civil war when Michael Collins met his tragic death. Many of you here were on opposite sides. Let us leave it that each of us, like I did myself, believed in the correctness of our choice. I concede that those who were on the opposite side believed that their decision was the right one too. But let us all end futile recriminations of an event which happened over 43 year ago, and which divided brother against brother, neighbour against neighbour.

Here at this monument, erected to commemorate for all time the greatness of the contribution made by Michael Collins in our struggle for freedom let us bury the dead past of dissensions.

He, whom we knew hated civil war and all its sad consequences, would have us all do so. We who have grown old and are nearing the end of our road have this final contribution to make, so that the young people of Ireland can march on together to our ultimate freedom and build a better life for themselves and for the coming generations.⁸²

Barry's focus is the reparation of the emotional damage caused by civil war. The speech reveals his own reflections of the events to which Collins so intensely contributed. It is his final contribution to the next generation to forgive and forget the horrors that so bitterly divided local communities. It is the act of letting go of old hatreds and anger that extols the virtues of his delivery. Honouring the greatness of Collins's contribution is his public declaration of the road he himself has travelled and an acknowledgment that the past should be left in its place; Collins should be an exemplar or reference point from where to begin. His honesty of endeavours for the cause of Irish freedom should be the shining light for future generations to respect and admire and be held in national esteem. Collins's masculinities are the exemplary characteristics that can foster reconciliation. The focus of their endeavours was for Irish freedom and Collins personified this in the qualities that Barry outlined. The attention should now be on the main issue of this freedom, the trials and tribulation that went into coming thus far have, over the years, have been clouded by internal strife and hatred. Barry's appeal is directed through the memory of Collins's qualities as a freedom fighter. Moving forward, remembering these qualities and using them, as an example to guide us along the pathway, is the best way to proceed. For Barry, it is the way to 'bury the dead past of dissensions' and move forward to enjoy the freedom that was so preciously sought.

The event at Sam's Cross, attended by approximately 15,000 people, signified that 'a strand of republicanism was prepared to concede that the pro-Treatyite had died for

⁸² *The Cork Examiner*, 19 April 1965.

Ireland too.’⁸³ The reconciliation message in Barry’s speech is built around images of Michael Collins’s masculinities, understood in term of the qualities he brought to the struggle for Irish freedom. Through these rhetorical expression of Collins masculinities, Barry suggests that old enemies can find a way to forgive the horrors of their past and consign the bitterness of that era to the pages of history. Equally, it was no coincidence that three months earlier a Southern leader had met a Northern Premier for the first time since the Craig-Collins pacts.’⁸⁴

Army returns to honour its first Commander-in-chief

On Monday 21 August 1972 the *Cork Examiner* contained the following headline from its leading story on the front page. ‘Minister lays wreath in historic gesture by Government: Army honours Collins at Beal na mBlath.’ The event was historic not least for the fact that it was the first time that the army was officially represented at Béalnabláth under a Fianna Fáil government. The article went on to say that:

HISTORY was made yesterday at Beal-na-mblath where, for the first time under a Fianna Fail government. The Army was officially represented at the 50th anniversary to commemorate the death of General Michael Collins. The minister for defence, Mr. Cronin, laid a wreath on behalf of the officers, NCOs and men of the Defence Forces, of which Collins was the first Commander-in-Chief. The Army’s tribute was a curtain raiser to a ceremony that was as memorable as it was historic.

They were a remarkable manifestation of how the memory of Collins lives on. Veterans came from as far away in Ireland as Co Donegal and from Dublin alone between five and six hundred travelled.⁸⁵

Over the course of the proceeding decades repeated requests for the army’s attendance at the commemoration had met with refusal by successive administrations. The reluctance to allow the military to attend in an official capacity is understandable in light of the Blueshirts association with Collins and de Valera’s reluctance, over the years, to publicly acknowledge the merits of Collins. It is important to remember that in the 1930s, with extreme republican elements becoming increasingly alienated from him, the risk of associating himself with the memory of Collins had the potential to

⁸³ Dolan, *Civil War*, p. 83.

⁸⁴ Dolan, *Civil War*, p. 84.

⁸⁵ *Cork Examiner*, 21 August 1972.

unravel his political vision.⁸⁶ Notwithstanding, the military presence at Béalnabláth in 1972 was an important moment for the Collins legacy. The chief orator was former Taoiseach, John A. Costello, whose speech focused on the presence of the Army and its fitting association with the legacy of Collins. He posited his view of the links between Collins, the State and the army in the following manner:

The Army which is represented here today by its officers and men is the real and only Oglagh na H-Eireann, the only legitimate Army of the Republic of Ireland, founded on, and subject to, an Irish parliament and broadly based upon the will of the Irish people. We welcome their presence here today not merely because they represent the Irish Army, but because they are a practical demonstration of the hoped for ending of the bitterness which has poisoned the spirit of Ireland and for so long divided its people. Today, however, the bitterness is passing the controversy is stilled and the reputation of Michael Collins is safe in the annals of the Irish nation.⁸⁷

Costello's remarks are aimed at contemporary political events. The campaign of the provisional IRA was gathering a momentous intensity and the national army's association with Collins is welcomed as a symbol of the road travelled in ending the turmoil that has beset Irish twentieth-century politics. The association of the official army of the state with the memory of Michael Collins ensures that his legacy belongs to the Irish nation – possible a move designed to buttress any claim by the provisional elements to seize his legacy for their own ends. He and the army are representative symbols of its existence and icons of recognition as a legitimate entity. He is appealing to the cultural phenomenon that is the commemoration of Collins. Costello continues:

One of the attributes of an independent State is its right to establish and maintain an army of its citizens for its defence. General Michael Collins was the first Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Army, it is with pride and pleasure, which I am sure will be shared not merely by all here present, but by all people of goodwill in Ireland, that we have had here today a detachment of the Irish Army to join in honouring and in affectionate remembrance of the man who, above all other by his efforts was responsible for the right of the Irish nation to have its army and for the foundation of such an army.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Dolan, *Civil war*, p 89.

⁸⁷ *Cork Examiner*, 21 August 1972.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Costello makes a strong connection between Collins, the army and the nation as buttressing forces of an independent state. Tracing the origins of the army and the state back to Collins casts him as a central protagonist in its legitimacy. The symbol of Collins the soldier decrees legitimacy to the existence of the army as the state's one true military wing. He then sets his determination in political perspective:

It is true that we do no longer require the heroic qualities of the days of Michael Collins and that it is not by fighting or by arms that what remains to be done can be done. It is however for our young people now, and in the future, to create for themselves that ideal for which they can strive and a headline to which they can conform.

Above all, in the effort to achieve the idea of a free, united and prosperous Ireland, the ideal should be always kept in mind of preserving the Irish people from the evils of what Michael Collins called "the evil of corrupt materialism"⁸⁹

Here, whilst acknowledging the 'heroic qualities of the days of Michael Collins's he makes it clear that he is not calling for a return to the militaristic strategies witnessed during the War of Independence, but presents the side of Collins that cautioned against 'corrupt materialism.' The call is for a political solution to current issue. The fighting qualities are but one aspect of the masculinities that define nationalism and belong to another era, citing what he believes to be the example of Collins's attempted retreat from violent methods as a means of achieving political aims:

Collins, however, was, above all things, a realist and faced facts. He knew the tactic of the limited objective, the deluding narcissistic folly of extremism. While he himself had to deal with the problem of unity, he dealt with it in realistic way, fully alive to the difficulties. He wished to convert our Northern fellow countrymen, and not to coerce them.⁹⁰

For Costello, Collins the political realist is presented as an exemplar of the way to achieve political objectives. These are qualities needed to steer the nation forward. The contemporary political element of Costello's speech becomes clear as he continues:

While it has been made clear that the overwhelming majority of the country had no wish to coerce a million of the North-eastern Ireland Protestants and what we will exercise towards them the virtues of

⁸⁹ *Cork Examiner*, 21 August 1972.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Christian charity and tolerance, we are entitled to demand, on our part, that equality neither they nor Britain will continue to deprive half a million Irish Catholics, now resident in the six North-eastern counties, of their just rights...The British people also have as serious responsibility. Their governments created the problem and maintained or acquiesced in the injustices. It was for political party purposes that it was resolved many years ago that the Orange card was a useful ploy for British party political purposes...They surely are under an obligation of morals and justice to make reparation to the nation that was dismembered and to the portion of its people that have suffered.⁹¹

In this speech the Collins commemoration is used to drive home a political message. Costello seeks to contextualise the military methods of Collins as belonging to another era and that history shows that Collins efforts were driven toward the advancement of diplomatic path to political achievement. The image of Collins serves as the catalyst for his points. The masculinity of Collins is used as an example of the requirements necessary to sustain a vision of political autonomy toward the advancement of the republican ideal. It represents a clash in the definition of conceivably appropriate tactics of military engagement and by implication, the perceptions of masculinity attached to those who participate in them.

A gendered milestone of sorts

1986 marked a gendered milestone in the commemoration at the site of Collins's death. 'History was made at the Michael Collins Commemoration at Béal na mBláth on Sunday 24th August 1986 when, for the first time, a woman in the person of Senator Brid Rogers was the guest speaker.'⁹² Rogers referenced the significance of the site through characteristics of masculinity that constitute 'greatness':

It is a great honour for me to come here today from Northern Ireland. It was here that Ireland suffered the tragic loss of a young man whose qualities of courage, honesty and sheer dedication, of leadership and statesmanship had singled him out as one of the great men of his time.⁹³

Rogers highlights what she sees as exemplary characteristics of leadership with qualities that fit the heroic concept. In her speech she draws reference to and speaks at

⁹¹ *Cork Examiner*, 21 August 1972.

⁹² *Irish Historical Review*, summer 1987, 'Béal na Bláth commemoration 1986' (N.L.I., Papers of Michael Collins relating to his uncle General Michael Collins MS, 40, 428/4).

⁹³ Brid Rodgers, Béalnabláth, 24 August 1986. (N.L.I., Papers of Michael Collins relating to his uncle General Michael Collins, MS 40, 429/6.) (Hereafter referred to as Rodgers, Béalnabláth)

length about the Hillsborough agreement and casts her interpretation of Collins's qualities as having the necessary attitude and attributes as exemplars of the ones needed to see this process through. She portrays the courage of Michael Collins as an exemplar of the bravery required to grasp the opportunity offered by the agreement, by implying that 'Michael Collins was himself for the Irish people a stepping stone in the quest towards their destiny of Irish unity.'⁹⁴ She concludes by suggesting that the best way to honour the memory of Collins is to grasp today's opportunities for peace.

Whether opportunistic or personally heartfelt, Rogers projects Collins's qualities of, significantly, political leadership onto contemporary events. The qualities, as such, become the focus of remembrance from which to draw the moral fibre and necessary inspiration to be used as a 'stepping stone' towards the ultimate 'destiny' of a united Ireland. She is in effect seizing upon his legacy for the political aspirations of her own S.D.L.P party – a process of subjective interpretation in the attachment of meaning to masculine characteristics that have historical political relevance.

Home of the hero

On 14 October 1990, inspired by the exertions of his nephew Liam Collins, a new site of commemoration to Michael Collins was officially opened at his birthplace in Woodfield, Clonakilty, Co. Cork. Liam Collins's aim was 'to restore Woodfield in a simple, sensitive and dignified manner and to gather together military, religious and political leaders of all persuasions in an apolitical celebration of reconciliation on the centenary of the birth of his uncle, Michael Collins.'⁹⁵ In addressing the gathering, the then President of Ireland, Patrick Hillery, made the following observations in relation to the significance of the site in terms of the Collins's legacy:

We are gathered here at his birthplace to pay tribute on the occasion of the centenary of his birth to one whose contribution to the cause of Irish Independence and to the establishment of the modern Irish State was exemplary in its generosity and selflessness.

This is where Michael Collins was born and grew to manhood. It is where his character, courage, dreams and ambitions were formed by his father and mother, family and friends. Long after he had moved from this quiet place to play a leading role in momentous and epoch-making

⁹⁴ Rogers, Béalnabláth.

⁹⁵ Helen M. Hoare, (daughter of Liam Collins), *West Cork People*, Commemorative edition 2002. My personal copy, received from Nora Owen, grand-niece of Michael Collins. All political parties were represented.

events the memory of home and family would remain with him deep and enduring affection.

In remembering him on this special occasion of the opening of his restored birthplace let us remember especially the unfailing strength of his inimitable courage and the unshakable force of that enduring loyalty which he gave to and inspired in others.⁹⁶

Hillery's opening lines places Collins's character back to its origins in the family homestead. Here was the place of influence, where his personality was formed in maturing to manhood. In essence, here he learned to be a man. The home is accorded a central role in the establishment of the credentials that defined Collins and his frequent returns over the years highlight the importance of the character that was shaped there. The strength of his courage and loyalty were forged in this place, qualities that are valued as exemplary characteristics that inspired momentous achievements in the history of Ireland. These qualities formed in this landscape should be as a source of inspiration for future generations. Woodfield is the nurturing landscape of his masculinities, a place of homage to the exemplary qualities fostered there. It is a place of belonging, of ownership, of beginning, of fostering. Crucially, stories of a hero are fixed in a landscape and remain there. Landscape as well as being an actual physical reality can also represent an imagined concept of nation. Woodfield, as well as being the actual birthplace of Collins, is symbolic of the origins of greatness. The hero begins his life on the humble landscape of rural Ireland, and retained his fond affection to the place for the rest of his short life. The personal or social experience of the individual within their own landscape realises its nationalist connection through the symbolic process of cultural identity. As Hillery suggests, 'it is surely possible for us here at the birthplace of Michael Collins to begin to live together in peace and to give our best in working together for the benefit of all.'⁹⁷ His words reflect contemporary perspectives and a personal interpretation delivered through images of masculinities.

Contemporary images of a cultural icon – an overview

As discussed in previous chapters, the publication of Tim Pat Coogan's biography coincided with the centenary celebration of Collins's birth, sparking a broadening curiosity in his life and times. To a greater extent Neil Jordan's movie gave rise to an

⁹⁶ Patrick Hillery, Copy of speech at official opening of birthplace of Michael Collins, 14 October 1990 (N.L.I.. Papers of Michael Collins relating to his uncle General Michael Collins, MS 40, 428/6)

⁹⁷ Ibid.

increased popular interest in the Collins image. Over the course of the 1990s the oratorical discourse reflect a mixture of the political and cultural. In 1991 Peter Barry used the occasion to 'lash [the] Provos and Sinn Féin for debasing Collins's ideals.'⁹⁸ He contrasted the visionary nature of Collins with what he claimed was the backward mentality of the current Sinn Féin movement, condemning their terrorist approach to politics. 'Collins had been, above all, a man of conviction who had realised the vital importance of taking decisions based on the reality of any situation no matter how difficult and uncompromising the reality was.'⁹⁹ In 1993 Liam Ó Murchú described Collins as a man of clarity of mind who adopted a realist approach to politics. He spoke of a need for unity and understanding on Northern Ireland and for movement on issues of emigration and unemployment levels, claiming that we should draw inspiration from his legacy to achieve these things.¹⁰⁰ T. Ryle Dwyer, in 1996, spoke of Collins's courage in taking up the difficult task of travelling to London to negotiate the term of settlement with Britain – a decision taken against his better judgement, but one taken for the national good. Speaking at the 75th anniversary commemoration in 1997, Collins's nephew and namesake, Michael Collins, highlighted the need to forgive and forget the horrors of the past and write an end to this sad and sorry story of internal political strife. He claimed Collins didn't belong to any political party but 'belongs to all the people of Ireland.'¹⁰¹ During the commemoration in August 2003, Dr. Pat Wallace suggested that the site should become 'a national shrine for the affirmation of an annual awareness of who we are, from where we have come and in tribute to Collins, where we would wish to go as a nation.'¹⁰²

At the time of writing, eighty-four years after his death, Michael Collins's image is one that is one that still fascinates and excites academics and the general enthusiasts alike. There is an incredible popular interest and fascination with his image and legacy. Just typing his name into an Internet search engine yields a list of reference that range from obsession to mild fascination. One such site is www.generalmichaelcollins.com. Hosted by the Collins 22 Society – with strong links to the Fine Gael party – it contains

⁹⁸ *Irish Independent*, 26 August 1991. Peter Barry was a Fine Gael (Formerly Cumann na Gael) T. D. from Cork, who held various ministerial positions over the course of his career. He retired from public politics in 1997. He also donated a collection of Michael Collins letters to the Cork city museum.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Liam Ó Murchú, 'General Michael Collins BéalnaBláth Commemoration,' 22 August 1993, (N. L. I. Papers of Michael Collins relating to his uncle General Michael Collins, MS 40, 430/1).

¹⁰¹ *Irish Independent*, 25 August 1997.

¹⁰² Pat Wallace, Michael Collins commemorative oration, BéalnaBláth, 24 August 2003, available at: http://www.generalmichaelcollins.com/Beal_na_Blath/BealnaBlath-2003.html (1 July 2006).

a mixture of Collins related material that include the Dáil debates on the treaty, photographs, essays, historic literature, speeches and photographs from recent commemorations at Béalnabláth, to name but some of the items available. The society's mission statement reads as follows:

To perpetuate the name of Michael Collins; to honour his ultimate sacrifice; to aspire to his life principles; to actively campaign for the erection by the State of his statue in the courtyard of Leinster house by 2022 (the centenary of his death); to extend the influence of Michael Collins by promotion and interest in his life, his work, his writings, and in the ethos he bequeathed to the Irish people, primarily among the youth of Ireland; to be non-denominational and non-sectarian.¹⁰³

At the remove of so many years the issue of Collins, the Christ-like martyr still permeates a deeper cultural and social perception of his contribution to the Irish state. Honouring him is akin to identifying oneself with the ethos of what he represents or is perceived to represent.

A sense of separation is crucial for understanding how people attach such significance to symbolism and iconography as a medium of remembrance. The idea of collective memory and belonging brings with it a sense of attachment to place – as in the site at Béalnabláth for instance. Through this process the development of a common discourse and implicit social practices serves to instil, in the public perception, norms and values which are reflective of the community, or values within it (or perceived values). The idea of community brings forth the idea of 'the other', creating a feeling of exclusion from the shared meaning attached to the landscape (the nation) and its implicit iconography. Bridging this link becomes a crucial feature in the recognition of remembrance. In these circumstances attaching meaning to an icon make it easier to conceptualise the self, especially when certain characteristics can be highlighted and admired – recognised as being traits of manhood worthy of laudable acclaim in the national consciousness. Michael Collins is one such icon.

Conclusion

Imagination separates the individual from the past, therefore the creation of a focus that can symbolise the subject of that reflective process serves to compress time in spatial

¹⁰³ 'Collins 22 society' mission statement, available at:

http://www.generalmichaelcollins.com/Conference_161004/Mission_Statement.html (1 July 2006).

meaning – an imagined place only so because it reflects the nostalgia in attaching meaning to the memory. In the case of Michael Collins this reading of the commemoration speeches highlights a core concept at the heart of subjective attachment to meaning and identity. Namely, that ‘some memories can be suppressed and others rescued from the shadows as identities shift and political trajectories into the future get redefined.’¹⁰⁴ These representations of Collins are therefore contingent on the social, cultural and political conceptualisation of how his masculine characteristics conform to the requirements and interpretation of the subjective constituents of the moment. As suggested, interpretation of meaning is open to a multiplicity of constructs, for the concept of the hero’s masculinity, commemoration represents the need to restore the psychic attachment invested in the perceived image of the icon.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, as a figure of historical focus Michael Collins’s image is not tainted by the atrocities of the executions carried out by the Free State administration during the Civil War. Quite simply, his death has seen to that. For many, historical speculation, myth or nostalgic reflection has conjured the belief that he could have finished the war in a less brutal fashion. Crucially it is the speculative nature of this suggestion that adds an important dimension to the story’s plot. It will never be known, if Collins would have taken such a course of action, but that is not the important issue when coming to assess him as an image of heroic masculinity. The power lies in the belief that he wouldn’t have allowed such a thing to occur – the influence of speculative assumption. For Collins’s historical image in both these instances, ‘social recognition of the hero, thwarted by his untimely death, is displaced into the form of symbolic acts and objects that repair and “put right” the damage done and “keep alive” the memory of his name and value.’¹⁰⁶

Therefore, on reflection of the civil war atrocities, Collins’s absence intensifies the sense of waste and sorrow that defines this period. The fact that he was ‘cut down’ during this time only serves to augment the futility of the conflict. He emerges untainted by the events that followed and therefore his death, in the midst of efforts to broker a peaceful solution to the conflict, assume a heightened significance. The Treaty

¹⁰⁴ David Harvey, *Justice, nature and the geography of difference* (Oxford, 1996), p. 306.

¹⁰⁵ Dawson, *Soldier heroes*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁶ Dawson, p. 119.

may have tainted him in the eyes of some but the killings, in particular the executions that followed, may have somehow saved that image in the long term.¹⁰⁷

In these circumstances Collins is portrayed as one of the good guys. His uncompromising commitment to political morality, in the shape of his efforts to establish a self-governing Ireland, fastens his reputation as bastion of the new administration and subsequently a cultural icon. 'The hero is the man dedicated to the creation and /or defence of reality-conforming, life-promoting values,'¹⁰⁸ in this instance the establishment of the new state. 'But the truth is that the man who creates values is the primary hero; the man who defends the creator from evil is a hero because the creator has made human life possible.'¹⁰⁹ Through its initial move to honour Collins, the state acts as upholder of the primary hero and thus conceptualises that heroism as part of its underpinning discourse and ideology. Perhaps, in commemoration, people see themselves in the capacity of defenders of that legacy.

Therefore, to stand in ceremonial remembrance of a figure associated with events related with the inception of the state is, by implication, a celebration of his masculinities understood through his association with the state's inception, viewed through the idiom that if Collins had lived things could have been different. There is a 'feel-good' factor to this nostalgic reflection, a psychic conflict between the imagined projection of these speculations and comfort in the knowledge that he could have provided the answer where others failed - comfort in speculation. It is a process characterised by the symbolism, where meaning is retrospectively applied to the significance of Collins's contribution to the political destiny of Ireland. This is not a fixed meaning but one open to a multiplicity of social, cultural political factors dictated by every generation who choose to come to the monument or monuments (or choose to remember him). For the men who went to Béalnabláth in the initial years, Collins was symbolic of their personal struggles. The occasion was important in consolidating the existence of the new state by putting the events of the preceding years behind – giving them a place of rest, so to speak. Inclusively, the ceremony and the existence of the monument serve as both a reminder and an acknowledgment of the participation of men in conflict. Remembering is an act for the living, therefore, to remember reflects

¹⁰⁷ As the war intensified following Collins's death, the Free State government introduced a policy of executing anti-Treaty prisoners.

¹⁰⁸ Andrew Burnstein, 'The philosophical foundations of heroism', available at: http://www.andrewburnstein.net/heroes/2_heroism.htm (13 April 2006)

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

the masculinities of those who do the remembering and the manner in which they choose to do so. 'Béalnabláth was also a monument to grief.'¹¹⁰ It is memory and opinion that create the heroic legacy. Beyond the political implications the commemoration ceremony and its iconic representations augment the heroic project and fasten the connotations of attachment to subjective interpretation.

The initial newspaper report lamented the loss of the icon young leader. Richard Mulcahy baptised and blessed the spiritual descent of the lifeless corpse as it descended into the national soil. His polemic, the opening chapter in the heroic narratives exalted the masculinities of its political subject. For O'Duffy in 1924, Collins represented an image of unity and consolidation for the national army. In 1932 Mulcahy extolled the political aspect of the hero's character, presenting his image in a manner that he hoped would court the attention of the extremist element within the country, presenting the political as opposed to the military element of Collins. O'Duffy's subsequent attempt to 'hijack' the Collins legacy and de Valera's repeated refusal to allow Collins official state recognition served to push the legacy into the cultural undergrowth, where it continued to survive, tended to with loving care by family members and close personal friends.¹¹¹ The bitterness that defined the civil war has taken a burdensome toll on many social and political relations throughout the course of the twentieth century. Repairing the emotional wounds of the conflict has grown less onerous with the passing of time. When Tom Barry spoke of Collins at Sam's Cross in 1965, his words projected a genuine sense of the need to let go of old bitterness. In highlighting the qualities of Collins, Barry sought reparation that would open the door to an Ireland devoid of the bitterness, with the figure of Collins as an inspiration to the new generations. By 1972 the army's presence at the site may be as much to do with fears of his image being hijacked by the provisional IRA campaigns that defined that epoch, as it was about acknowledging his contribution to the state. Costello, use the occasion to talk up Collins diplomatic and visionary qualities as exemplars of future progress. Brid Rogers presence to, was an indication of a political climate change – women in the forefront of politics and movement towards a political settlement in Northern Ireland. The 1990s through to the present has witnessed a popular resurgence of interest in Collins. His popularity speaks volumes for the attachment of meaning to the heroic

¹¹⁰ Dolan. *Civil War*, p. 68.

¹¹¹ Beaslai, Brother Johnny, other family members.

male project. Consequently, defining the hero under these circumstances is synonymous with how the living views his or her own identity. It is the significance attached to the story of the hero and his deeds that become the harbinger of conceptualisation. Through these images, Collins's masculinities were codified, interpreted and projected according to the viewpoint of the respective speakers, be they politically motivated or just a personal act of remembering someone regarded as an icon.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the socio-cultural construction of masculinities through a case study of the heroic legacies of Michael Collins. By focusing on the concept of the male heroic image, this research has revealed the way that perceptions of masculinities affect and inform such images, as well as the cultural, political, and historical conditions that shape representations of gender and meanings of male identity.

In asserting the importance of subjective experience and its influence on the public and political, this multi-disciplinary methodological approach not only illustrates the complexities of masculine identity, but develops a tangible historical framework for accessing this underdeveloped area of study.

Utilizing written historical and biographical images, filmic representation, personal correspondence, political speeches and commemorative rhetoric this treatise has considered the ways in which historical interpretation has influenced the legacy of Michael Collins.

Investigation into the gendered images of Collins projected through the written historical and biographical material reveals remarkably consistent similarities of analyses; a pattern maintained throughout the course of the twentieth century. Each source focuses on particular criteria in their framework of analyses. That is; Collins's early potential, the female guardianship of his moral well being; the extra-familial male influences which impacted his political ideologies; his move to a different country and the development of alliances and friendships, all the while maintaining a distinct Irish identity. During the War of Independence, his military capabilities are developed and reach their zenith. Following the Truce he turns from revolutionary to political broker, falls in love and is forced to choose politics over personal friendship before finally meeting a tragic death.

Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* is a populist interpretive production of truth, fact and fiction which had an enormous impact on the portrayal of Collins' historical image. In the film, Collins is conceptualised as a figure of heroic imaging. Utilizing images of military and political masculinities, the story stresses the male friendships, love,

divided personal and ethical loyalties that exemplify the character. Liam Neeson's physical presence and cinematic presentation portray Jordan's Collins as a heroic revolutionary with a divided heart who gave his life for a political ideal.

The Treaty debates reveal how Collins projected images of his own constructions of masculinity. He defined himself as a man of principle, summoning images of contemporary masculinities in order to rebuke any suggestions of traitorous behaviour and to outline his reason for signing the document.

Collins's letters to Kitty Kiernan reveal that he found it difficult to write about emotional love. The predominant emotions expressed in the correspondence revolve around annoyance, anxiety, and frustration. The letters disclose his need for Kitty's reassurance and support, as well as the emotional importance of the outlet of the letters themselves. The image that emerges from these personal communications is that of a rational, practical, and logical thinker.

Investigations into the heroic rhetoric pertaining to Collins over the course of the twentieth century provides insight into understanding how heroism and masculinities are contingent upon political expediency and personal interpretation. From Christ-like martyr and military inspiration to political exemplar, Collins's image has been ciphered, signified, and cast, depending upon the needs of the speaker. Analysing the commemoration rhetoric reveals how subjective interpretation of masculine imagery is an integral component of the gender dynamic.

Through the various approaches taken, this study has shown how investigating historical constructions of masculinities has the potential to reveal the complex and socially determined political nature of that composition. The advancement of more comprehensive understandings of Irish history has necessitated the development of a framework that explores how men have defined their identities through the evolution of social, political, economic and religious experiences, and events.

There is enormous potential for the study of masculinities in Irish history, and tracking the changing nature and development of ideas and lived experiences of masculinity over the course of the centuries in Ireland should be firmly set on the agenda of historical investigation.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Manuscript material

National Library of Ireland

Beaslai papers

Collins papers

Papers of Michael Collins relating to his uncle General Michael Collins

Newspaper supplements and cuttings, MS 40, 427/3.

Michael Collins commemoration address at BéalnaBláth, Sunday 22 August 1982, by John A. Murphy (Professor of Irish History UCC), MS 40, 429/4.

Brid Rodgers speech, Béalnabláth, 24 August, 1986, MS 40, 429/6.

Notes of interview with Sr.Margaret Mary (Formerly Una O'Connor, daughter of Batt), MS 40, 429/7.

General Michael Collins BéalnaBláth Commemoration, Sunday 22 August 1993. Oration by Liam O Murchu. MS 40, 430/1.

Brochure 'Michael Collins Memorial Centre' at Woodfield, Clonakilty, County Cork, opening day 14 oct. 1990. MS 40, 428/6.

Scrapbook of Cutting re: career of Michael Collins, MS 32, 498.

A Child's view of the bad times. Mary K. Smith, MS 27, 458.

Published personal letters

O Broin, León (ed.), *In great haste: the letters of Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan* (Dublin, 1996).

Dáil Éireann debates

Dáil Éireann, *Official Report: Debate on the Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland* (Dublin, 1922).

Audio/Visual

Jordan, Neil (dir.), *Michael Collins* (DVD, Geffen pictures, Warner home video, UK, 1998).

Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliamentary debates: Dáil Eireann, 1919-2002 (2 disc DVD, Irish Government publications, Dublin, 2002).

Newspapers

An Saorstár, 30 August 1922.

An Saorstat, 30 August 1922.

Cork Examiner, 19 April 1965.

Cork Examiner, 23 August 1924.

Cork Examiner, 24 August 1922.

Cork Examiner, 24 August 1924.

Cork Examiner, Monday 21 August 1972.

Cork Weekly Examiner and Weekly Herald, 27 August 1932.

Daily Mail, 27 February 1998.

Irish Independent, 23 August 1924.

Irish Independent, 24 August 1924.

Irish Independent, 29 August 1922.

Irish Times, 29 August 1922.

Irish Times, 30 August 1922.

Irish Times, 30 January 2000.

Irish Times 1916 Rising commemorative supplement, 28 March 2006.

Irish Times, (Weekend section), 13 May 2006.

Sunday Times, 14 January 1996

The Mirror, 7 and 11 November 1996

The People, 3 November 1996.

West Cork People, Commemorative edition, 22 August 2002.

Special category. published material.¹

Biographies

- Beaslai, Piaras, *Michael Collins and the making of a New Ireland* (2 vols., Dublin, 1926).
- Connolly, Colm, *Michael Collins* (London, 1996).
- Coogan, Tim Pat, *Michael Collins* (Dublin, 1990).
- Forester, Margery, *Michael Collins: the lost leader* (Dublin, 1989).
- Mackay, James, *Michael Collins: a life* (Edinburgh, 1996).
- Ó Broin, Leon, *Michael Collins* (Dublin, 1980).
- O'Connor, Frank, *The big fellow: Michael Collins and the Irish Revolution* (Revised ed., Dublin, 1965).
- Osborne, Chrissy, *Michael Collins: himself* (Cork, 2003).
- Talbot, Hayden, *Michael Collins' own story: told to Hayden Talbot* (London, 1923).
- Taylor, Rex, *Michael Collins* (London, 1970).

Selected prominent historical Michael Collins related publications

- Costello, Francis (ed.), *Michael Collins: in his own words* (Dublin, 1997).
- Doherty, Gabriel and Keogh Dermot (eds), *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish state* (Cork, 1998).
- Dwyer, T. Ryle, *Michael Collins: the man who won the war* (Cork, 1990).
- Dwyer, T. Ryle, *Michael Collins and the Treaty: his differences with de Valera* (Cork, 1982).
- Feehan, John, M., *The Shooting of Michael Collins: murder or accident?* (Cork, 1981).
- Nelson, Justin (ed.), *Michael Collins; the final days* (Dublin, 1997).
- Ryan, Meda, *The day Michael Collins was shot* (Dublin, 1989).
- Ryan, Meda, *Michael Collins and the women in his Life* (Cork, 1996).
- Towhig, Patrick, J., *The dark secret of Béalnabláth* (Ballincollig, 1991).

¹ Due to the nature of the methodological approach in chapter two the Collins biographies were regarded as both primary and secondary material.

Yeates, Padraig and Wren, Jimmy, *Michael Collins: an illustrated life* (Dublin, 1989).

Internet

Dáil Eireann, debates on the Treaty, vol. T, available at: <http://historical-debates.oireachtas.ie/en.toc.D.T.html> (15 February 2006).

Secondary Sources

Books

- Adair, John, *Inspiring leadership: learning from great leaders* (London, 2002).
- Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London, 1991).
- Atkinson, William (ed.), *Lagoon and other stories* (Oxford, 1997).
- Barry, Tom, *Guerilla days in Ireland* (Dublin, 1989).
- Barton, Ruth, *Irish national cinema* (New York, 2004).
- Baughman, William, *Uncommon sense for life and living* (Victoria, CA, 2002).
- Bland, Caroline and Cross, Máire, *Gender and politics in the age of letter-writing, 1750-2000* (Hampshire, UK, 2004), pp 3-14.
- Blom, Ida, Hagemann, Karen, and Hall, Catherine (eds), *Gendered nations: nationalism and the gender order in the long nineteenth century* (Oxford, 2000).
- Bly, Robert, *Iron John: a book about men* (New York, 1990).
- Bourke, Joanna, *An intimate history of killing: face to face killing in twentieth century warfare* (London, 1999).
- Bourke, Joanna, *Dismembering the male: men's bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (London, 1996).
- Braudy, Leo, *From chivalry to terrorism: war and the changing nature of masculinity* (New York, 2003).
- Brewster Scott, Crossman, Virginia, Becket, Fiona and Alderson, David (eds), *Ireland in proximity: history, gender and space* (London, 1999).

- Brod, Harry and Kaufman, Michael (eds), *Theorizing masculinities* (London, 1994).
- Broughton, Trev, Lynn, *Men of letters, writing lives: masculinity and literary auto/biography in the late Victorian age* (London, 1999).
- Bullock, Alan and Trombley, Stephen (eds), *The new fontana dictionary of modern thought* (London, 1991).
- Burstyn, Varda, *The rites of men: manhood politics and the culture of sport* (London, 1999).
- Callahan, Sidney, *In good conscience* (San Francisco, 1991).
- Carnes, Mark, C., *Secret ritual and manhood in Victorian America* (New York, 1989).
- Carver, Terrell, *Men in political theory* (Manchester, 2005).
- Clawson, Mary, Ann, *Constructing brotherhood: class, gender, and fraternalism* (Princeton, NJ, 1989).
- Coakley, John, and Gallagher, Michael, *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (Limerick, 1996).
- Code, Lorraine, *Rhetorical spaces: essays on gendered locations* (London, 1995).
- Cohen, Michele, *Fashioning masculinity: national identity and language in the eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1996).
- Colum, Pádraig, *Arthur Griffith* (Dublin, 1959).
- Comerford, R. V., *Inventing the nation: Ireland* (London, 2003).
- Connell, R. W., *Gender* (Cambridge, UK, 2002).
- Connell, R. W., *Masculinities* (Cambridge, UK, 1995).
- Connell, R. W., *The men and the boys* (Cambridge, UK, 2000).
- Coogan, Tim, Pat, and Morrison, George, *The Irish Civil War* (London, 1999).
- Coogan, Tim, Pat, *De Valera: long fellow, long shadow* (London, 1993).
- Coogan, Tim, Pat, *The IRA* (New York, 2002).
- Coogan, Tim, Pat, *Wherever green is worn* (London, 2001).
- Coon, Denis, *Psychology: a journey* (2nd ed., Cambridge, Mass., 2004).
- Craib, Ian, *Modern social theory* (London, 1992).

- Craik, Jennifer, *Uniforms exposed: from conformity to transgression* (Oxford, 2005).
- Crawford, June, Kippax, Susan, Onyx, Jenny, Gault, Una and Benton, Pam (eds), *Emotion and gender: constructing meaning from memory* (London, 1992).
- Cross, Tom, P, and Clark, Harris, Slover (eds), *Ancient Irish tales* (New York, 1996).
- Dadoly, Anne, Marie (ed.), *Stress control: techniques for prevention and easing stress* (Boston, 2002).
- Dalton, Charles, *With the Dublin brigade* (London, 1929).
- Darling, William, *So it looks to me* (London, 1952).
- Davidoff, Leanore and Hall, Catherine, *Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850*, (London, 1987).
- Davis, Padraig, *Arthur Griffith* (Dundalk, 1976).
- Dawson, Graham, *Soldier heroes: British Empire and the imagining of masculinities* (London, 1994).
- De Burca, Padraig and Boyle, John, F., *Free State or Republic* (Dublin, 1922).
- De Sousa, Ronald, *The rationality of emotion* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987).
- Deasy, Liam, *Brother against brother* (Cork, 1975).
- Digby, Tom, *Men doing feminism* (London, 1998).
- Dillon-Malone, Aubrey, *Michael Collins: a Neil Jordan film* (Dublin, 1996).
- Dolan, Anne, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: history and memory 1923-2000* (Cambridge, UK, 2003).
- Dubbert, Joe L., *A man's place: masculinity in transition* (New Jersey, 1979).
- Dudink, Stefan, Hagemann, Karen, and Tosh, John (eds), *Masculinities in politics and war* (Manchester, 2004).
- Dyer, Richard, *Only entertainment* (London, 2002).
- Edgar, Andrew, and Sedgwick, Peter, *Cultural theory: the key thinkers* (London, 2002).
- Figgis, Darrell, *Recollections of the Irish war* (London, 1927).
- Filene, Peter, *Him/her/self: sex roles in modern America* (London, 1974).

- Forester, Roy, *Modern Ireland* (London, 1989).
- Gehring, Wes, D. (ed.), *Handbook of American film genres* (New York, 1988)
- Goldberg, Herb, *The hazards of being male: surviving the myth of masculine privilege* (New York, 2000).
- Goldring, Maurice, *Faith of our fathers* (Dublin, 1982).
- Goldstein, Joshua, S., *War and gender: how gender shapes the war system and vice versa* (Cambridge, UK, 2001).
- Goleman, Daniel, *Emotional intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ* (London, 1996).
- Golway, Terry, *For the cause of liberty: a thousand years of Irelands heroes* (NY, 2000).
- Grove, Elliot, *Riverdance Writers' Lab* (Oxford, 2004).
- Harvey, David, *Justice, nature and the geography of difference* (Oxford, 1996).
- Hawking, Stephen, *A brief history of time* (London, 1997).
- Hearn, Jeff, *Men in the public eye: the construction and deconstruction of public men and public patriarchies* (London, 1992).
- Herzog, Tobey, C., *Vietnam War stories: innocence lost* (New York, 1992).
- Heyward, Andrew, *Political ideologies: an introduction* (London, 1992).
- Hobsbawn, E. J., *Nations and nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, UK, 2000).
- Hoppen, K. Theodore, *Conflict and conformity* (London, 1999).
- Jeffords, Susan, *The remasculinization of America: gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1989).
- Jordan, Neil, *Michael Collins: film diary and screenplay* (London, 1996).
- Keogh, Dermot, *Twentieth century Ireland* (Dublin, 1994).
- Kiberd, Declan, *Inventing Ireland :literature of the modern nation* (London, 1996).
- Kimmell, Michael, *Against the tide: pro-feminist men in the United States, 1776-1990* (Boston, 1992).
- Kimmel, Michael, *Manhood in America: a cultural history* (New York, 1996).
- Kimmel, Michael, *The history of men: essays on the history of American and British masculinities* (New York, 2005).

- Kramer, Roderick, M., and Messick, David, M., (eds), *The psychology of leadership: new perspectives and research* (New Jersey, 2005).
- Lane, Christopher, *The burden of intimacy: psychoanalysis and Victorian masculinity* (Chicago, 1999).
- Lankford, Siobhan, *The hope and the sadness* (Dublin, 1980).
- Lapsley, Robert and Westlake, Michael, *Film theory: an introduction* (Manchester, 1988).
- Levenson, Leah and Natterstad, Jerry, H., *Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington: Irish feminist* (Syracuse, 1986).
- Lloyd, Genevieve, *The man of reason: 'male' and 'female' in western philosophy* (London, 1995).
- Logan, Mawuena, Kossi, *Narrating Africa: George Henty and the fiction of empire* (New York, 1999).
- Longford, The Earl of, and O'Neill, Thomas, P., *Eamon de Valera* (London, 1974).
- Lynch, Diarmuid, *The IRB and 1916 Insurrection* (Cork, 1957).
- Lyons, F. S. L., *Ireland since the famine* (London, 1985).
- Macardle, Dorothy, *The Irish republic* (Dublin, 1965).
- MacEoin, Uinseann, *Survivors* (Dublin, 1980).
- MacMurray, John, *Reason and emotion* (London, 1961).
- Mangan, J.A. and Walvin, James, (eds), *Manliness and morality: middle class masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York, 1987).
- Martin, Terry and Doka, Kenneth, J., *Men don't cry...women do: transcending gender stereotypes of grief* (Philadelphia, 2000).
- McClelland, J. S., *A history of western political thought* (London, 1996).
- McCoole, Sinéad, *Guns and chiffon: women revolutionaries and Kilmainham goal* (Dublin, 1997).
- McGarry, Fearghal, *Eoin O'Duffy: a self made hero* (Oxford, 2005).
- Mondry, Henrietta, *Pure, strong and sexless* (New York, 2005).
- Morrow, John, *History of political thought: a thematic introduction* (London, 1998).

- Mosse, George, L, *Nationalism and sexuality* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1985).
- Mosse, George, L, *The image of man* (Oxford, 1996).
- Neale, Steve, *Genre and Hollywood* (London, 2000).
- Neeson, Eoin, *The civil war in Ireland: 1921-23* (Cork, 1966).
- O'Connor, Batt, *With Michael Collins in the fight for Irish Independence* (London, 1929).
- O'Donoghue, Florence, *No other law: the story of Liam Lynch and the Irish Republican Army, 1916-1923* (Dublin, 1954).
- O'Mahony, Patrick and Delanty, Gerard, *Rethinking Irish history* (Basingstoke, UK, 2001).
- Ong, Walter, J., *Orality and literacy: the technologizing of the word* (London, 1995).
- Pearse, Padraig, *Political writings and speeches* (Dublin, 1962).
- Phillips, Kay and Rejai, Mostafa (eds), *World military leaders: a collective and comparative analysis* (Westport, CT., 1996).
- Powdermaker, Hortense, *Hollywood, the dream factory: an anthropologist looks at the movie-makers* (Boston, 1950).
- Prince, Stephen, *Classic film violence: designing and regulating brutality in Hollywood cinema, 1930-1968* (London, 2003).
- Rapping, Elayne, *The movie of the week: private stories/public events* (London, 1992).
- Richard Dyer, *Only entertainment* (London, 2002).
- Roberts, Graham, and Wallis, Heather, *Introducing film* (London, 2001).
- Rockett, Emer, and Rockett, Kevin, *Neil Jordan: exploring boundaries* (Dublin, 2003).
- Rotundo, E. Anthony, *American manhood: transformations in masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993).
- Seale, Clive (ed.), *Researching society and culture* (London, 2000).
- Shweder, Richard, A. and Le Vine, Robert (eds), *Culture theory: essays on mind, self and emotion* (Cambridge, UK, 1990).
- Stearn, Peter, *Be a Man! Males in modern society* (New York, 1979).

- Strongman, K. T., *The psychology of emotion* (New York, 1996).
- Tasker, Yvonne, *Spectacular bodies: gender, genre and the action cinema* (New York, 1993).
- Toplin, Robert, Brent, *History by Hollywood: the use and abuse of the American past* (Chicago, 1996).
- Tosh, John, *A man's place: masculinity and the middle-class home in Victorian England* (London, 1999)
- Twitchell, James, B., *Preposterous violence: fables of aggression in modern culture* (Oxford, 1989).
- Vivian, Bradford, *Being made strange: rhetoric beyond representation* (New York, 2004).
- Vorderer, Peter, and Zillmann, Dolf (eds), *Media entertainment: the psychology of its appeal* (New Jersey, 2000).
- Walton, Douglas, *The place of emotion in argument* (Philadelphia, 1992).
- Whitehead, Stephen M., and Barrett, Frank J. (eds), *The masculinities reader* (Cambridge, UK, 2001).
- Whitehead, Stephen, M., *Men and masculinities* (Cambridge, UK, 2002).
- Yeats, William, Butler, *Yeats' poems*, (Dublin, 1989).
- York, Neil, Longley, *Fiction as fact: the horse soldiers and popular memory* (Kent, Ohio, 2001).
- Younger, Carlton, *Ireland's civil war* (London, 1968).

Journals and Articles

- Anderson, Debra, K., 'A Psychodynamic analysis of discourse theory: understanding the influence of emotions, regression and change' in *Administrative Theory and Praxis*, xxiii, no.1 (summer, 2002), pp 18-24.
- Benton, Sarah, 'Women disarmed: the militarisation of politics in Ireland, 1913-23' in *Feminist Review, The Irish Issue: The British Question*, no. 50 (Summer, 1995), pp 148-72.
- Bligh, Michelle, C. and Meindl, James, R., 'The cultural ecology of leadership: an analysis of popular leadership books' in Roderick M. Kramer and

- David M. Messick (eds), *The psychology of leadership: new perspectives and research* (New Jersey, 2005), pp 11-52.
- Boon, Kevin, Alexander, 'Heroes, metanarratives, and the paradox of masculinity in contemporary western culture' in *The Journal of men's studies*, xiii, no. 3 (Spring, 2005), pp 301-12.
- Bourke, Joanna, 'The ideal man: Irish masculinity and the home, 1880-1914' in Marilyn Cohen and Nancy Curtin (eds), *Reclaiming gender: transgressive identities in Modern Ireland* (1999), pp 93-106.
- Bourke, Joanna, 'Fear and anxiety: writing about emotion in Modern History' in *History Workshop Journal*, lx, no. 1, (Spring 2003), pp 111-33.
- Bushway, Bob, 'The obligation of remembrance or the remembrance of obligation: society and the memory of World War' in John Bourne, Peter Liddle and Ian Whitehead (eds), *The Great War, 1914-1945: who won? Who lost? Vol. 2* (London, 2001), pp 493-513.
- Coakley, John, 'The foundations of statehood' in John Coakley and Michael Gallagher (eds), *Politics in the Republic of Ireland* (Limerick, 1996), pp 1-25.
- Doherty, Gabriel and Keogh, Dermot, "'Sorrow but no despair – the road is marked': the politics of funerals in post-1916 Ireland' in Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh (eds), *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish state*, (Cork, 1998), pp 186-201.
- Eley, Geoff, 'Culture, nation and gender' in Ida Bloom, Karen Hageman and Catherine Hall (eds), *Gendered nations: nationalism and gender order in the long nineteenth century* (Oxford, 2000), pp 27-40.
- Gibbons, Luke, 'Engendering the state: narrative, allegory and Michael Collins' in *Éire-Ireland*, xxxi, nos. 3-4, (Fall-Winter, 1996), pp 261-9.
- Gibbons, Luke, 'Framing history: Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins*' in *History Ireland*, (Spring, 1997), pp 47-52.
- Gray, Jeffrey A., and Porter, Roy, 'Emotion' in Alan Bullock and Stephen Trombley (eds), *The new Fontana dictionary of modern thought* (London, 1991), pp 266-8.

- Hagemann, Karen, 'German heroes: the cult of the death for the fatherland in nineteenth-century Germany' in Stefan Dudink, et al., *Masculinities in Politics and War* (Manchester, 2004), pp 116-34.
- Hogg, Michael, A., 'Social identity and leadership' in Kramer, Roderick, M., and Messick, David, M., (eds), *The Psychology of leadership: new perspectives and research* (New Jersey, 2005), pp 53-80.
- Keig, Larry and Sprau, Ryan, 'I saw it in the movies: suggestions for incorporating film and experiential learning in the college history survey course' in *College Student Journal*, xxxv, no. 1, (March, 2001), pp 99-102.
- Kerfoot, Deborah, 'The organization of intimacy: managerialism, masculinity and the masculine subject' in Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (eds), *The masculinities reader* (Cambridge, 2001), pp 233-52.
- Klapp, Orrin, E., 'The creation of popular heroes' in *The American Journal of Sociology* lvi, no., 2., (September, 1948), pp 135-41.
- Lee, J., J., 'The challenge of a Collins biography' in Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh (eds), *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish State* (Cork, 1998), pp 22-39.
- Martin, Julia, 'As big as the world: imagination, kindness, and our little boys' in Mark Allister (ed.), *New perspectives on masculinity and nature* (London, 2004), pp 124-39.
- McInerney, Colm, 'Michael Collins and the organisation of Irish intelligence, 1917-21' in *The History Review*, xiv (2003), pp 34-45.
- Moran-Farrell, Seán, 'Images, icons and the practice of Irish history' in Lawrence W. McBride (ed.), *Images, icons and the Irish nationalist imagination* (Dublin, 1999), pp 166-76.
- Morgan, David, H., J., 'Theatre of war: combat, the military, and masculinities' in Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (eds), *Theorising masculinities* (London, 1994), pp 165-80.

- Morgan, Eileen, 'Ireland's lost action hero: *Michael Collins*, a secret history of Irish masculinity' in *New Hibernia Review*, ii, no. 1 (spring, 1998), pp 26-42.
- Moriarty, Catherine, 'Private grief and public remembrance: British First World War memorials' in Martin Evans, and Ken Lunn, (eds), *War and memory in the twentieth century* (Oxford, 1997), pp 139-42.
- Neale, Steve, 'Questions of genre' in *Screen*, xxxi, no. 1 (Spring, 1990), pp 45-66.
- Ó Conghaile, Pól, 'A cut above the rest: by golly, Ireland's film censor is human after all' in *Irish American Post*, i, no. 10 (March, 2001), pp 58-76.
- O'Toole, Fintan, 'The Organiser' in *New Republic*, ccxxxiv, no. 9 (13 March 2006), pp 34-6.
- O'Toole, Fintan, *The Irish Times 1916 Rising commemorative supplement*, 28 March 2006.
- Parpora, Douglas, V., 'Personal heroes, religion, and transcendental metanarratives' in *Sociological Forum*, ii, no., 2 (1996), pp 209-29.
- Regan, John, 'Looking at Mick again: demilitarising Michael Collins' in *History Ireland*, iii, no. 3 (Autumn, 1995), pp 17-27.
- Roper, Michael, 'Splitting in unsent letters: writing as a social practice and a psychological activity' in *Social History*, xxvi, no.3 (October, 2001), pp 318-39.
- Roper, Michael, 'Maternal relations: moral manliness and emotional survival in letters home during the First World War' in Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (eds), *Masculinities in politics and war* (Manchester, 2004), pp 295-315.
- Roper, Michael, 'Between manliness and masculinity: the "war generation" and the psychology of fear in Britain, 1914-1950' in *Journal of British Studies*, xlv, no. 2 (April, 2005), pp 342-363.
- Roper, Michael, 'Slipping out of view: subjectivity and emotion in gender history' in *History Workshop Journal*, lix, no. 1 (Spring, 2005), pp 57-72.

- Rosenwein, Barbara, H., 'Worrying about emotions in history' in *The American Historical Review*, cvii, no. 3 (June, 2002), pp 821-45.
- Ryder, Sean, 'Gender and discourse of "Young Ireland" cultural nationalism' in Timothy Foley, Lionel Pilkington and Elizabeth Tilley (eds), *Gender and colonialism* (Galway, 1995), pp 210-21.
- Sandweiss, Martha A., 'Picturing Indians: Curtis in context' in Edward Sheriff Curtis (ed.), *The Plains Indian photographs of Edward S. Curtis* (Nebraska, 2001), pp 13-38.
- Smiler, Andrew P., 'Thirty years after the discovery of gender: psychological concepts and measures of masculinity' in *Sex roles: a journal of research*, i, nos. 1-2 (January, 2004), pp 15-26.
- Sobchack, Vivian, C., 'The violent dance: a personal memoir of death in the movies' in Stephen Prince (ed.), *Screening Violence* (New Jersey, 2003), pp 110-124.
- Stanton, Annette, L., Parsa, Anita and Austenfeld, Jennifer, L., 'The adaptive potential of coping through emotional approach' in C. R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez (eds), *Handbook of positive psychology* (Oxford, 2002), pp 76-96.
- Thomas, Laurence, Mordekhai, 'Feminist ambiguity in heterosexual lives: reflection on Andrea Dworkin' in Tom Digby (ed.), *Men doing feminism* (London, 1998), pp 325-36.
- Tosh, John, 'Hegemonic masculinity and the history of gender' in Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (eds), *Masculinities in Politics and War* (Manchester, 2004), pp 41-58.
- Wickberg, Daniel, 'Heterosexual white male: some recent Inversions in American cultural history' in *The Journal of American History*, xcii, no 2 (June, 2005), pp 102-24.
- Wilson, Steve, R., and Mankowski, Eric, S., 'Beyond the drum: an exploratory study of group processes in a mythopoetic men's group' in Edward Read Barton (ed.), *Mythopoetic perspectives of men's healing work: an anthology for therapists and others* (Westport, CT., 2000), pp 78-96.

Woolley, Stephen, 'When is a film not a film? When British journalists don't see it, says the producer of Michael Collins' in *New Statesman*, cxxv, no. 4309 (11 August, 1996), pp 38-9.

Young, Peter, 'Michael Collins, a military leader' in Gabriel Doherty and Dermot Keogh (eds), *Michael Collins and the making of the Irish State* (Cork, 1998), pp 81-91.

Internet

Burnstein, Andrew, 'The philosophical foundations of heroism', available at:
http://www.andrewbernstein.net/heroes/2_heroism.htm (13 April 2006).

Catsoulis, Jeannette 'Slouching toward Belfast', available at:
<http://www.reverseshot.com/legacy/winter06/jordan/michaelcollins1.html>
(17 September 2006).

Collins 22 society mission statement, available at:
http://www.generalmichaelcollins.com/Conference_161004/Mission_Statement.html (1 July 2006).

De Concini, Barbara, 'Seduction by visual image' in *Spotlight on Teaching*, vol. vi, no. 1, May 1998, available at:
<http://aarweb.org/Publications/spotlight/previous/6-1/06-01-04sedu.asp>.
(17 June 2006).

Howell, Richard, P., 'PC history and film', available at: www.h-net.org/~film/archives/threads/polcor/pc3.html (12 June 2006).

Merivirta, Raita, 'Like Cain and Able', *Wider Screen*, 1/2005, available at:
www.widerscreen.fi/2005/1/like_cain_and_abel.htm (16 June 2006).

Morris, Ewan 'The good soldier: Neil Jordan's Michael Collins', available at:
www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr1199/emfr8b.htm (20 June 2006).

Visible Knowledge Project and Georgetown University, 'History matters', available at:
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/letters/model1.html> (16 July 2006).

Wallace, Pat, Michael Collins commemorative oration, Béalnabláth, 24 August
2003, available at:
[http://www.generalmichaelcollins.com/Beal_na_Blath/BealnaBlath-
2003.html](http://www.generalmichaelcollins.com/Beal_na_Blath/BealnaBlath-2003.html) (1 July 2006).