

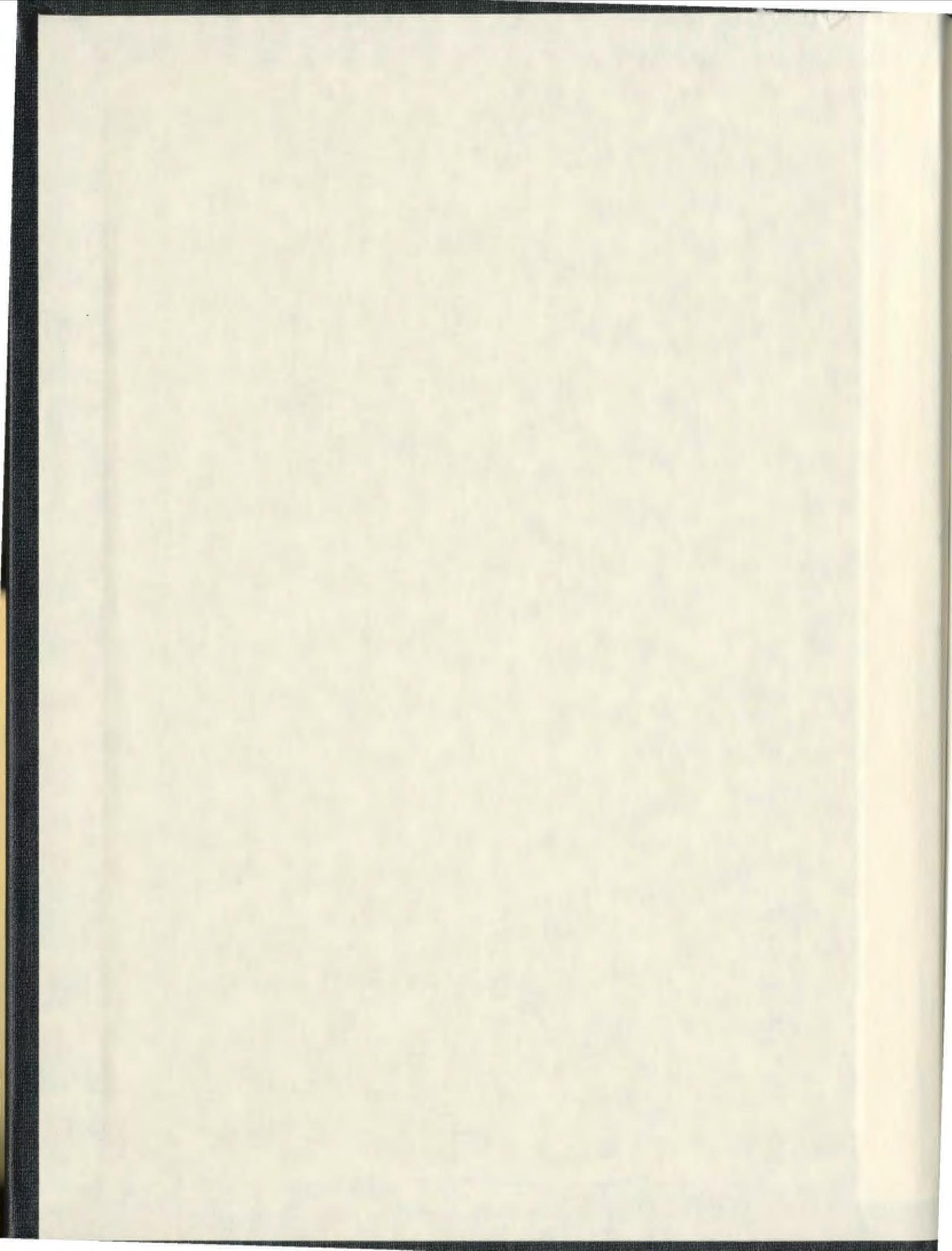
REBEL NARRATIVES:
THE IRISH GUNMAN IN FICTION AND FILM

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**Rebel Narratives:
The Irish Gunman in Fiction and Film**

by

Danine Farquharson

**A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

This project investigates the many representations of Irish gunmen in narratives, both in print and on the screen. While the Irish gunman is often perceived as a figure of romantic legend and patriotic idealism, the character – as he exists within narrative – is more accurately a figure of lost hope, doomed ambition, and imprisoned ideals.

The thesis is divided into four chapters; the first two are broadly historical and descriptive, while the second two are close readings of specific writers/filmmakers' work. Chapter one answers the question of how the gunman comes to be represented in fiction and film. The fictional representation of the gunman is part of a series of discursive practices such as mythology, eighteenth-century chapbooks, political stereotypes, theories of identity and nationalism, and the history of Fenianism and Irish Republicanism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each of these contributing factors in the make-up of the narrative gunman is examined at length. Chapter two examines the different representations of Irish gunmen characters. Beginning with romantic heroes and unromantic villains, the chapter moves on to more ambiguous characterizations, such as lost boys, gunmen on the run, and the seldom acknowledged but theoretically challenging

female gunman. Chapter three analyzes the early twentieth-century novels of Liam O'Flaherty – many of which satirize and criticize the heroicization of Irish republican rebels. Chapter four concludes the thesis by looking at the films of Irish director Neil Jordan and the ways in which his psychological probing into the minds of gunmen resist, if not rebel against, the stereotype of the romantic Irish patriot.

“Rebel Narratives: The Irish Gunman in Fiction and Film” offers a critical consideration of a character that has seldom come under inquiry, but that is nonetheless both politically contentious and frequently represented in narrative texts. More generally, the project contributes to on-going debates about identity, nationalism and cultural stereotypes by emphasizing, on the one hand, the durability of stereotypes and, on the other hand, the resistance to rigid codes of character and identity expressed in literary and cinematic texts.

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List of Abbreviations and Terms

Anglo-Irish Treaty – agreement signed on 7 January 1922, which ended the Anglo-Irish War. The treaty established the Irish Free State and partitioned to Britain what is now Northern Ireland. This is not to be confused with the Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed on 15 November 1985, between the British and Irish governments, which reasserted the principal of consent for any change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland.

Anglo-Irish War – also referred to the “Black and Tan War” or the “War of Independence.” Guerilla war fought between Irish Republicans and British forces between 1919 and 1921.

Black and Tans – mainly ex-servicemen sent over by the British as reinforcements for the RIC during the Anglo-Irish War. They were so nicknamed because of their khaki uniform and black and green belts and caps.

Dáil Éirann – the parliament located in Dublin for Éire, “Southern Ireland” or the twenty-six counties of the Republic of Ireland.

Fenians – another name for the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

Free Staters – those who supported the treaty and those who fought against the “Irregulars” during the Irish Civil War. Another name for the National Army formed after the 1922 treaty.

Gardai – police force in the Republic of Ireland. Plural form is Garda.

IRA – Irish Republican Army. Synonyms: Provisional Irish Republican Army; Provisionals; Provos (see below); PIRA. The main Republican paramilitary group. Formed in 1970 following a split within the Republican movement. Those who remained with the original organization became the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA) while the new group was called the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). Following the OIRA ceasefire of 1972 the Provisionals became known as the IRA.

IRB – Irish Republican Brotherhood, also referred to as the Fenians. Set up in 1858 as a secret, revolutionary movement, it was re-organized by Michael Collins after the 1916 Easter Rising. In effect, it became the leadership cadre of the early twentieth-century IRA.

Irish Free State – the newly independent Irish state created by the Government of Ireland Act (1920) and the Anglo-Irish Treaty between Britain and Ireland. The name remained until full sovereignty in 1937.

Irregulars – the forces opposing the 1922 treaty and in military conflict with the National Army, or “Free Staters,” during the Irish Civil War.

Loyalists – the term Loyalist strictly refers to one who is loyal to the British Crown. The term in the Northern Ireland context is used by many commentators to imply that the person gives tacit or actual support to the use of force by paramilitary groups to “defend the union” with Britain.

Nationalists – in Northern Ireland the term is used to describe those who hold a long-term wish for the reunification of Ireland. The majority of those people who are from the Catholic community are Nationalist. It should be noted that not all Nationalists support Republican groups (see also Republican).

Northern Ireland – the official name of the state created by the Government of Ireland Act (1920). Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom. The state consists of the following six of the thirty-two counties of Ireland: Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh, and Tyrone. Northern Ireland is often referred to as the “Six Counties” by Nationalists, a term to which many Unionists take exception. The counties of Northern Ireland were (and remain) part of the historical province of Ulster which consisted of nine counties (the other three being Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan). Most Unionists and some Nationalists refer to Northern Ireland as “Ulster” or the “Province”, two terms to which many Nationalists take exception.

Provos – Provisional IRA. Now the major IRA force.

Republicans – strictly the term refers to a person who supports the style of government based on a republic over a monarchy. In a Northern Ireland context the term Republican is taken to imply that the person gives tacit or actual support to the use of physical force by paramilitary groups with Republican aims. The main aim of Republicans is the establishment of a United (32-county) Ireland.

RIC – Royal Irish Constabulary. The police force in Ireland up to and during the Anglo-Irish War.

RUC – Royal Ulster Constabulary. The police force in Northern Ireland.

Ulster – a term frequently used, mostly by Unionists, to describe the state of Northern Ireland. It refers to the fact that the six counties that make up the state were, and remain, part of the province of Ulster. Nine counties make up the traditional province of Ulster. Some people, mainly Nationalists, take exception to the use of the term (see also Northern Ireland).

Unionists – in Northern Ireland the term is used to describe those who wish to see the union with Britain maintained. The majority of those people who are from the Protestant community are Unionist. It should be noted that not all Unionists support Loyalist groups (see also Loyalists).

UVF – Ulster Volunteer Force. Originally formed in 1912 to oppose Home Rule, it is now a Loyalist paramilitary group.

UDA – Ulster Defence Association. The major Loyalist paramilitary group in Northern Ireland.

Volunteers – a widely used term with various meanings throughout the twentieth century.

Prior to the Easter Rising, the Irish Volunteers were formed in part as a Nationalist response to the founding of the Ulster Volunteer Force. The IRB were a secret, behind-the-scenes group within the Volunteers. During the Easter Rising, the term was also used to distinguish those active members from the ranks of the Irish Citizen Army led by James Connolly. In the later part of the twentieth century, “Volunteer” indicates anyone in the IRA.

War of Independence – alternate term for the Anglo-Irish War.

Introduction

Pandora's Box

The woman removed the great cover of the jar with her hands and scattered the evils within and for men devised sorrowful troubles. And Hope alone remained within there in the unbreakable home under the edge of the jar and did not fly out of doors.

Hesiod, *Works and Days*

In March 2001 a four-part documentary entitled *The Irish Empire* was broadcast on History Television as part of their "Irish Week" celebrations. The promotional ad for the documentary series was a montage of images combined with a deep, resonant voice offering the following description of Ireland:

A culture built on pride
A pride fueled by adversity
An adversity shaped by memories
Memories that fashioned an empire

The images that played during this voice-over were, in order, a St. Patrick's Day parade in the United States, an immigrant ship on the open ocean, a car bomb exploding into flames, and a massive public rally with innumerable flags of the Irish Republic flying. Such is the stuff of stereotype. The evocation of enduring national pride among immigrant

communities, sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, and the rise of the “Celtic Tiger” are all common enough images in the twenty-first-century media world. And yet, the documentary itself was a work of demythologization. Concentrating on the effects of Irish emigration to Britain, Canada, Australia, and the United States, the four-hour series made a concerted effort to problematize the stoic survival stories of famine ships and ostracism in new worlds. The documentary’s interview with Australian author Thomas Keneally is but one example of the series’ demythologization process. In that conversation Keneally makes this point about the Irish in Australia:

There is probably a tendency to look upon Irish immigration as all caused by injustice: generated by famine or, following the famine, generated by eviction, lack of economic opportunity, etc. And a great deal of [Irish immigration] was. There’s no getting away from that. I think that people might *also* have found society oppressive and looked upon the New World as a chance for a freer lifestyle. (Keneally’s emphasis)

Keneally’s provocative point (that there may have been other reasons for immigration beyond the well-known economic hardship of the famine era and other time periods) remains embedded within the stereotyped images and ideas of the promotional ad. The twin impulses of tapping into emotionally powerful, stock images as well as resisting conventional wisdom are two principles at work in this thesis. The abiding concern of “Rebel Narratives” is both the durability of stereotypes, particularly ones that are connected to ideas of nationhood or national identity, and the continuous revision of and challenge to these same stereotypes. When it comes to questions of character – national or

individual, literary or historical – the process of unearthing the inner workings of identity politics is like opening up Pandora’s Box.

The “troubles” inside Pandora’s jar are godly repayment to human beings for the gift of fire they received from Prometheus, perhaps the first rebel figure of the Western literary tradition. The details of Pandora’s story (as with all the Greek myths) are tantalizing in their ambiguity. What is Hope doing in a jar of evils? If Hope is an evil, why is it stopped at the rim? Is Hope, by its very nature, delusive? These are ancient questions and there are no definitive answers. The following discussion of the character of the Irish gunman as represented in fiction and film begins with what seems to be an “unbreakable home”; but once opened, the contents of that box initiate multiple questions and infinite possibilities.

“Rebel Narratives” operates under the assumption that there are two predominant types of Irish gunmen: the romantic hero fueled by idealism and courage, and the villainous terrorist engaged in the violent destruction of law and order. Chapter one highlights some, but by no means all, of the discursive determinants of these antithetical character types. Two different sources for the characterization of Irish gunmen are discussed in chapter one. The first set of elements are other characters: heroic figures of Irish myth and folklore. The second group of factors affecting the portrayal of the Irish rebel in twentieth-century narratives is more diverse. British stereotyping of Irish people in Victorian

cartoons and in twentieth-century thriller novels, American versions of the Irish in Hollywood cinema, theories of national identity, and the history of Fenianism and the Irish Republican Army all influence, directly and indirectly, the fictional character of the Irish gunman.

The myriad elements at work in the fictional creation of the gunman are then reflected in chapter two, which attempts to outline several types of gunman characters, including and beyond the hero and the villain. This chapter can be seen as a kind of Pandora's Box: a necessarily contained catalogue. The attempt to establish categories of gunmen is integral to this thesis if only to illustrate that any attempt at categorizing something so amorphous as a character type will inevitably produce exceptions and contradictions. The number of gunmen on the run, lost boys, shadow gunmen, and female gunmen is testament to the popularity of this character; the diversity within each category is evidence of the slippery nature of character.

Chapters three and four offer illustrations of just how malleable and adaptable this figure is by examining representations of the Irish gunman in the work of novelist Liam O'Flaherty and filmmaker Neil Jordan. Both men are very much concerned with the operation of stereotype and identity. The choice of Liam O'Flaherty and Neil Jordan as focus points for these chapters requires some explanation. Firstly, O'Flaherty and Jordan are given extended consideration because both artists have more than one text in which the

gunman is a primary character. Secondly, taken together the two represent both early and later Irish literary history in the late twentieth century. Thirdly, and most importantly, both writer and filmmaker resist stereotypes of Irish gunmen, albeit in different ways.

Liam O'Flaherty has several novels with gunmen characters, four of which are dealt with in chapter three: *The Martyr*, *The Informer*, *Insurrection*, and *The Assassin*. What is notable about O'Flaherty's resistance to conventional representations of Irish gunmen is his use of satire. The four novels contain various characterizations of gunmen (none of which fits neatly into the categories established in chapter two), and all of them are misfits. O'Flaherty presents his gunmen as outsiders: outside the law, fighting on the side with only an outside chance of winning, outside the redemption of positive human relationships. Such representations are enveloped in satirical styles that combine into a scathing critique of anyone, in particular any Irish person, who unthinkingly devotes him/herself to one cause, one goal, one idea of a nation.

Neil Jordan uses a different approach to the subversion of stereotype. Three of his films, *Angel*, *The Crying Game*, and *Michael Collins*, place gunmen characters in the context of fluctuating identity politics. Jordan uses, among other cinematic techniques, visual metaphors (such as bridges, seascapes, and carnivals) to interrogate the psychology of violence and alienation. In all of Jordan's films there are characters searching for self-knowledge. There is a spirit of reconciliation and an expressed need to constantly

negotiate rigid social, racial, national, and sexual boundaries which work to confine individuality and constrain agency. His gunmen, like O'Flaherty's, do not fit comfortably into any conventional type. But unlike O'Flaherty, Jordan does not use satire as his weapon against restrictive notions of identity; rather, his films are attempts to move inside the gunman's mind and explore the darker aspects of human nature.

The choice of one novelist and one filmmaker is also important. "Rebel Narratives" is about character in narrative: about the forms and meanings constructed through stories in which the gunman figures. The combined use of novels and films to analyze stereotype in narrative is not unprecedented. Graeme Turner's *National Fictions: Literature, Film and the Construction of Australian Narrative* (1993) is an important work that addresses questions of Australian national identity as articulated through literary and cinematic texts. Turner's assertion that "there are formal and ideological patterns in Australian narratives that cut across representational forms and media" (2) is an equally applicable description of some shared characteristics of Irish fiction and film. Using both novels and films offers a fuller picture of Irish gunmen than is available by concentrating on one medium. The existence of many films that are based on novels (such as *Cal*, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, and *The Informer*) makes the combination of forms more apparent. Although the following discussion works within discrete disciplines of literary or film studies, it also attempts to show the relationship between visual and textual representations of the Irish gunman.

No thesis can hope to encompass the full range of gunmen characters and, inevitably, as with all projects of limited scope, obvious omissions have been made. Memoirs and biographies are mentioned only briefly. There are a great number of memoirs written by former gunmen, and their stories, as well as the forms in which they are told, deserve close examination. However, the study of biography/autobiography demands certain considerations that are separate from the study of fiction, and this thesis focuses on fictional representation. The fictional gunmen in plays and short stories are also not given full analysis herein. Even though some mention of plays is made (such as Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island* and O'Casey's *The Shadow of the Gunman*), it was necessary if this work were to be completed within the time limits provided to limit the discussion to particular narratives. The work of canonical Irish writers, such as Sean O'Casey, James Joyce, Frank O'Connor, and Brendan Behan does, however, preside over this work. Their influence on other Irish artists is understood. That there are so many other examples of gunmen characters than are addressed here is an indication of the possibilities of examination that this investigation can only begin to address. As Roland Barthes writes in *Mythologies*, "the universe is infinitely fertile in suggestions. Every object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state, open to appropriation by society, for there is no law, whether natural or not, which forbids talking about things" (109). If the

Irish gunman can be considered an “object,” then this thesis is but one of many possible openings into discussion and inquiry of his representation.

Chapter One

In Song, Stereotype and Strife: A Genealogy of the Irish Gunman

In Roddy Doyle's 1999 novel, *A Star Called Henry*, young Henry Smart believes he has had his fill of revolution after fighting beside James Connolly in the 1916 Easter Rising until, three years later, he hears his name in song:

*He fought like a lion with an Irishman's heart
The pride of all Gaels was young Henry Smart.* (170)

Now he is ready again to die for Ireland. His motivation for re-joining the fight for Ireland may seem shallow and superficial, but Doyle is not being entirely satiric in his propelling of Henry back into the fray of rebellion at the sound of his name in song. The power of verse to swell Henry's head is combined with the equally powerful promise of renewed friendships. Henry has survived dire poverty in the slums of Dublin essentially on his own and it is the camaraderie promised by Jack Dalton of the newly-named Irish Republican Army that makes Henry feel "warm and full" and ready to "fall dead for a version of Ireland that had little or nothing to do with the Ireland [he'd] gone out to die for the last time" (171). The song is one thing (the romanticization of Henry's heroics and a lovely boost to his ego), but the chance to *belong* is something else entirely. "Joining,"

“volunteering,” “meeting the boyos” are all indicative of Henry’s need to be part of something larger than himself, to enter a larger arena and, paradoxically, to lose himself inside a movement; a movement Henry astutely realizes is susceptible to change and flux. Henry’s identity is also in a constant state of flux or, more accurately, in a constant state of revision. On the opening page of the novel, it is revealed that Henry is named after another “little Henry,” now dead (1). He is, in his own words, a “shocking substitute for the little Henry who’d been too good for this world, the Henry God had wanted for himself” (1). Henry Smart begins life as a rewritten version of another child, and the process of rewriting and re-inventing his character continues throughout the novel. One of the versions of Henry’s character is allegorical: Henry Smart’s early years represent the early decades of the Republic of Ireland. Henry’s desires are very much a literary representation of the often contradictory gestures of a changing Irish nationalism. Further, if *A Star Called Henry* is an allegory of nation formation as emplotted through the dynamic character development of Henry Smart, then Doyle’s novel is also an expression of the fluctuating nature of identity.

Roddy Doyle’s novel and the character of Henry Smart are repositories of elements of what the following chapter will present as a genealogical study of the fictional gunman. The term “genealogy” is taken from the work of Michel Foucault, specifically his “The

Discourse on Language.”¹ Foucault writes that genealogical analysis seeks to answer “how series of discourse(s) are formed, through, in spite of, or with the aid of systems of constraint: what were the specific norms for each, and what were their conditions of appearance, growth and variation” (191). Foucault’s acknowledgment that a series of discourses can grow and vary in relation to “systems of constraint” is instrumental in understanding the development of the character of the gunman; he is a figure whose representation is undeniably varied, but the myriad representations are also formed “through, in spite of, or with the aid of” pervasive counter-narratives. This chapter is genealogical because it goes beyond the assumption of autonomous discourse to deal with historical situations in which fictional representations of the gunman are necessarily interwoven with social practices. This thesis also has “archeological” elements, another Foucaultian term by which he means a process that unearths historical systems of institutional and discursive practices (Foucault’s work on the treatment of madness and the asylum is an example of archeological analysis). Archeology, according to Foucault, is descriptive; it seeks to answer the question of *what* something is. Genealogy seeks to answer the question of *how* something is.

¹ “The Discourse on Language” is the appendix to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970). Foucault adopts the term “genealogy” from Nietzsche and uses it to distinguish a mode of inquiry different from “archeological” studies.

In other words, this chapter attempts to answer the question of how the gunman comes to be represented in fiction and film. The fictional representation of the gunman is part of a series of discursive practices; that is, a series of texts which are informed by their historical moments as well as the power relations that both “constrain the text as well as open up the possibility” of other texts (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 138). Further, this chapter will examine discourses affecting the fictional gunman, specifically in relation to those qualities Foucault describes as “appearance, growth and variation” (140). What follows is a genealogy of the gunman that emphasizes variation and revision; it is a genealogy that in no way assumes a strict causal or chronological order. Rather, the following discussion attempts to “redescribe” the gunman and, in so doing, this chapter also aims to construct a narrative history of the gunman.² It would be impossible to document every narrative constituent of a character such as the Irish gunman and, as Foucault writes, any genealogical study “operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times” (“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” 139). Part of understanding Foucault’s genealogical approach is the realization that no interpretation of discourse can either be complete or

² The term “redescribe” comes from Hayden White’s essay, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” *The Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978) and is used to describe all forms of discourse – whether they be ostensibly historical, sociological or literary – as a kind of narrative. White sees the act of story-telling (the act of providing coherence through narrative) as the irreducible form of the human experience of time (83-84).

unaffected by its own cultural conditioning. Having said that, a number of discursive elements are undeniably important to the history of the fictional gunman, and each of these will be taken up in some detail. Myths of Irish heroes such as Fionn mac Cumhaill, eighteenth-century Irish rogues, developments of Irish stereotypes from within Ireland and from outside, histories of the idea of an Irish national character, and the political realities of gunmen and IRA Volunteers, all have informative influence on the character of the Irish gunman in fiction and film. The fictional Irish gunman, as exemplified by Henry Smart, is in a constant process of changing representation and varying narrative construction.

1.1 Mythic Warrior: Fionn mac Cumhaill

As early as the fifth century, Fionn mac Cumhaill, or Finn MacCool, is mentioned as the hero of the Fenian (Fionn or Ossianic) cycle of tales. He is partly “a brave warrior and leader of men, a stalwart defender of his country against all invaders, steadfast in battle and generous in victory,” but the mythic tales also describe a “vicious, despicable brute who degenerates his heroic ideal in pointless violence leading to his destruction” (MacKillop 13-27). This character who is warrior, poet, diviner and sage leads a band of

outlaws, the Fianna, who are both connected to and outside of the tribal social world.³

With feats of strength and courage Fionn often wins the esteem of royal households but he never becomes a part of that aristocracy. The Fianna are defenders of the land and protectors of the community against invasion from outside forces.⁴ Near the end of his life when his grandson is insulted, Fionn goes to war against the High King of Tara and the story of his death is combined, in the folk tradition, with the belief that he remains alive and ready to fight for Ireland in her time of need. Thus, Fionn and the Fianna re-emerge as namesakes for the nineteenth-century Fenian movement, the secret revolutionary organization known also, and more properly, as the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

According to historian John O'Beirne Ranelagh, in 1858 James Stephens formally founded a secret society dedicated to the establishment of a democratic republic in Ireland.⁵ This society would become known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood, later to be subsumed within the IRA until well after the War of Independence. Ranelagh notes that it is John

³ See Marie-Louise Sjoestedt's "The Heroes Outside the Tribe" in her book, *Gods and Heroes of the Celts*, trans. Myles Dillon (London: Methuen, 1949): 81-91.

⁴ IRA Volunteers of the 1920s saw themselves in exactly the same way (as defenders of the realm against foreign aggressors). Peter Hart notes that they viewed themselves as "the community, the people, the nation directing violence outward against invaders, deviants and enemies" (181).

⁵ While avoiding arrest in Ireland, Stephens fled to France where he "learnt about the Carbonari, a Franco-Italian secret society dedicated to the revolutionary activity" (Ranelagh 120). Upon his return to Ireland, Stephens set up the IRB on St. Patrick's Day in 1858 – drawing upon traditions of agrarian secret societies in both Ireland and Europe.

O'Mahony (a Gaelic scholar), not Stephens, who offers up the name "Fenian" to the organization. The name is consciously taken from the legends of Fionn mac Cumhaill and his elite Fianna warriors (120-121). O'Mahony led the embryonic American contingent of the Brotherhood, but "the name under which those who worked in both halves of the movement – in America and in Ireland – was the one O'Mahony had given the American branch of the organization: the Fenians" (Kee, *The Bold Fenian Men* 14). Over sixty years later, in 1926, Eamon de Valera split the political party Sinn Féin and formed Fianna Fáil. These "Soldiers of Destiny" take their name "from the same band of heroes the Fenians had chosen" (Ranelagh 211). The political world of the Republic of Ireland resonates with the name of Fionn mac Cumhaill.⁶

If politicians and revolutionaries secure the myth of Fionn to indicate strength and the warrior spirit, then the literary world is more mercurial with its representation of this "hero." As James MacKillop argues in his survey of the literary interpretations of the legend, *Fionn mac Cumhaill: Celtic Myth in English Literature*, Fionn is an essentially ironic mythic figure; admirable and laughable aspects of the character can be seen in every

⁶ Echoes of other heroic figures register in twentieth-century fictions. For example, Cú Chulainn – the "Hound of Ulster" – is a character of heroic deeds and supernatural powers whose stories are retold by W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory, Samuel Beckett, and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill. Unlike Fionn, however, the name of Cú Chulainn is not eponymously entrenched in the political arena, perhaps because Cú Chulainn is a solitary figure. Fionn has his band of warriors and as a group they may be a more amenable myth for political parties.

literary generation (3). He never appears with singular characteristics: Yeats portrays him as a benign father in “The Wanderings of Oisín” (1889), but also as a villain in *Diarmuid and Grania* (1907). Flann O’Brien presents Fionn as an anti-hero who parodies Irish nationalists in *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939).⁷ Joyce’s word-play with the eternal return of the mythic hero in *Finnegans Wake* (1939) is perhaps the best example of how the character of Fionn is ironically presented in literature, despite or perhaps because of the character’s literal translation into the arena of political parties and revolutionary organizations.⁸ Fionn is a fitting ancestor for the character of the gunman in twentieth-century fiction and film. His status as both outlaw and hero and his propensity for violence offer great potential for narrative development. More interestingly, the varying

⁷ Unfortunately, Lady Gregory’s version of the character in *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904) avoids “most of the unseemly presentation of the hero, thus subverting the irony present in many of the Irish originals” (MacKillop 18). Gregory’s version of Fionn is sublimely wonderful: “he was a king and a seer and a poet; a Druid and a knowledgeable man; and everything he said was sweet-sounding to his people.... Of his justice it used to be said, that if his enemy and his own son had come before him to be judged, it is a fair judgement he would have given between them.... And if he was quiet in peace he was angry in battle” (*Gods* 145).

⁸ The hero of legend who returns is parodied in Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*. While the novel’s title is taken from a ballad about Tim Finnegan, who dies from a fall and then is revived at his own wake by a splash of whiskey, the more ancient avatar of Finn McCool is also invoked: “Mr Finn, you’re going to be Mister Finnagain!”

manifestations that the mythic figure embodies is a wonderful example of the elasticity of his character and, indeed, his resilience.⁹

Fionn is not only germane to the characteristics of gunmen figures in literature and on the screen, he is also an example of what Enid Welsford called the “hoary problem” of the relationship between actuality and art (xii).¹⁰ Fionn’s deeds are sung by the bardic poets and his stories are rendered into the popular imagination by the artist. Those songs and stories are often taken up by political causes and used as propaganda for ideological ends. Poets, storytellers, and artists in general are then often active in presenting, parodying and parroting those political aims. This cycle, as it were, is in no way as linear as it seems: to reiterate MacKillop, Fionn appears in multiple forms in every generation and so too does the relationship between actuality and art articulate itself in both a synchronic and diachronic way. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Fionn mac Cumhaill’s legend and legacy is his ironic nature; because he is never one thing (he never

⁹ Chapter four will argue that the mythic hero does return in the characterization of Michael Collins in Neil Jordan’s historical biography, *Michael Collins*.

¹⁰ Enid Welsford’s *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* is an early investigation of a literary character: its transformations as well as its relationship to literary genre, historical period and popular imagination. This thesis shares Welsford’s constant awareness that the character of a text has a complicated relationship to the broader culture which produced that text.

embodies one attribute alone), the character has much in common with the numerous and often contradictory manifestations of the gunman.¹¹

1.2 The Irish Robin Hood

Related to Fionn mac Cumhaill is the character of the Irish rogue, a character who also has fluid attributes and changing representations. Niall Ó Ciosáin's recent article "The Irish Rogues" is a brief but informative guide to materials printed between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in Ireland and the rogue figure as he appears in chapbooks.¹²

These small, inexpensive pamphlets, sold by travelling pedlars or "chapmen," were highly

¹¹ There is a wall mural in Bushmills, County Antrim, Northern Ireland showing Finn McCool striding over the Giant's Causeway, with symbols of the UDA, 5th Battalion, Bushmills and the Giant's Causeway Protestant Boys. That Fionn is adopted as a symbolic hero by both Loyalist and Republican organizations in contemporary Northern Ireland is yet another example of the ironies of the character's representation. To see the Fionn mural, consult <<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/mccormick/photos/no415.htm#photo>>.

¹² Ó Ciosáin's article is collected in *Irish Popular Culture, 1650-1850*, ed. James S. Donnelly Jr. and Kerby A. Miller (Dublin: Irish Academy P, 1998): 78-96, and reflects a central concern for historians and literary critics in recent decades in popular culture or, as the editors define it, those forms of community life and expression which can be distinguished from elite or "high" culture. "The Irish Rogues" builds on the pioneering work of J.R.R. Adams in the area of print and the material culture through which the masses acquired literacy. See his *The Printed Word and the Common Man: Popular Culture in Ulster, 1700-1900* (Belfast: Queen's U of Belfast, Institute of Irish Studies, 1987).

popular in the mid-eighteenth century and frequently reprinted until the early nineteenth century (Adams 23-30). Ó Ciosáin writes that the books were in such demand that their circulation was “incredible” compared to other publications (79). When the rogue appears in chapbooks containing tales or ballads, he does so in one of three character types: the hero (who is gallant, witty, and judicious), the brute (who is violent and observes no social norms), and the buffoon (who is morally neutral, plays tricks on the authorities, and offers comic relief). It is the first type, the *heroic* rogue, however, who is most popular, most often reprinted and, in J.R.R. Adams’s view, the “most interesting” (79). Adams and Ó Ciosáin agree that the popularity of heroic rogues was due in no small part to the characters’ resistance to authority and the extent to which they stand outside the established order and threaten that order.¹³

Ó Ciosáin’s article concentrates on one particular chapbook, John Cosgrave’s *Genuine History of the Lives and Actions of Most Notorious Irish Highwaymen*, and one particular bandit named Redmond O’Hanlon, in order to argue that the rogue figure

¹³ Adams writes that “for the masses,” one of the main attractions of such figures was his rebellious nature whether that nature resulted in a “change to the political order, or merely [the removal] of sums of money from the well-to-do” (79-80).

becomes a concrete expression of general feelings of dispossession.¹⁴ O’Hanlon is a central, indeed indicative, rogue; he is a master of disguise, a robber of the rich – and inevitably a benefactor to the poor – and he dies as a result of betrayal (his foster-brother turns him in for money). Ó Ciosáin argues that the appeal of books such as Cosgrave’s arises from a general “feeling of dispossession among the [Irish] population at large” and that the more the populace suffers under political, social and religious restraints, the more popular such tales and figures become (92). In *The Hero in Irish Folk History*, Dáithí Ó hÓgáin agrees with Ó Ciosáin that “these groups [the Raparee bands] were symbolical of the cheated and defeated Irish civilization, the concrete expression of which was the whole-scale expropriation of the land” (179).¹⁵ If the symbolic importance of characters such as O’Hanlon is defensible, then the construction of the rogue as hero makes sense. More to the point, if one is to write a story of a character who stands for the rejection of and rebellion against the powerful status quo (with the purpose of supporting such

¹⁴ Cosgrave’s publication came out in 1776 but was frequently reprinted well into the nineteenth century (Adams 178-189). Ó Ciosáin makes note of other chapbooks featuring Irish rogues, such as Alexander Smith’s *Complete History of the lives and robberies of the most notorious highwaymen* (1713-1714) and, in the nineteenth century, James Feney’s *Life and Adventures* (1835) and William Carleton’s *The Irish Rapparee* (1862) (81-83). It is not surprising that the popularity of the chapbooks roughly coincides with the Penal Laws of 1695-1727, and the 1798 rebellion.

¹⁵ The *Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* notes that “rapparees” were eighteenth-century Irish Jacobite irregulars (the word comes from ropairi, or half-pike), and that the term became “largely synonymous with the more commonplace tory, a highwayman or bandit” (490).

rebellion), then that character had better be heroic and not buffonish. Cosgrave, for example, eliminates any brutishness from his roguish outlaws and emphasizes that O'Hanlon turns to banditry as a result of the English possession of his family lands (Ó Ciosáin 86-88). Like Fionn, the Irish rogue becomes, in part, a narrative element to be manipulated and re-invented as the author, readership, or political climate demands. Rogues may have been based on historical figures, but the fictionalization process gives the character a life of his own. The emphasis on the rogue's recourse to criminal behaviour as a result of English oppression is, however, ironic because the rogue figure has an ambiguous affiliation to the tradition of English criminal literature. It is not just Irish writers who tell of the rogue figure, and the slippery consanguinity between Irish and English presentations of the character is a precedent for other stereotypes.

In his discussion of the similarities and differences between the English and the Irish rogue figure, Ó hÓgáin writes that the *image* of the rogue or rapparee "gradually slides into that of the highwayman. The tendency to romanticize highwaymen is found in the lore of many countries, of course, but the Irish bandits derive special sympathy from the circumstances of the country under foreign law. Thus the earliest stratum of outlaws ... play a largely patriotic role" (185-186). Ó Ciosáin builds on Ó hÓgáin's thesis of sympathy for the outlaw:

the positive view of criminals, in particular the absence of brutes, becomes even more striking when we bear in mind the extent to which Irish rogues

derive from English models during a period in which the brute and the buffoon were precisely the two most powerful [English] representations of the Irish. (89)

As Ó Ciosáin implies, Cosgrave's act of hero-creation in the character of O'Hanlon captures the popular desire for such figures, but Ó Ciosáin highlights a further irony in the relationship between English and Irish rogue characters. The Irish creation of rogue literature is both influenced by and influences English models; however, these characters also contest English characterizations of Irish people. Despite having English literary relations, the Irish rogue is a figure of rebellion against the powerful and disenfranchising English presence in Ireland.¹⁶ The Irish rogue comes to embody the contestation of the social circumstances of material dispossession as well as the political control by the colonizing English; the character also stands in contrast to an English construction of what an Irish person is like, such as the "brute" and "buffoon" that Ó Ciosáin mentions. It is the rogue's rebellion against established orders (social, political and literary) that most closely resembles the activities of many imaginary and real gunmen.

¹⁶ For discussions of the English rogue, see Frank Aydelotte's *Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds* (Oxford, 1913) and David Hale's *The Body Politic: A Political Metaphor in Renaissance English Literature* (The Hague, 1971). See also Michael Long's "Constructing the Criminal in English Renaissance Rogue Literature: Transgression and Cultural Taboo," *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 54 (October 1998):1-26, for an introduction to rogue literature in England and the construction of criminal stereotypes.

1.3 Stereotyped and Caricatured Irish: *Punch* and Popular Fiction

Having briefly considered Ireland's eighteenth-century version of the roguish outlaw and how his positive representation comes to characterize discontent, it is exigent here to consider also the images and constructions of Irish people and Ireland from the outside, in particular, from Britain. That the figure of the Irish rogue stands in contrast to increasingly powerful British typifications of Irish people and Irishness raises the issue of national stereotypes and the particularly potent images such as the simian Irish drunkard, the allegorical Hibernia, the damsel in distress, and, of course, the Stage Irishman.¹⁷

Definitions of who the Irish are and what they are like are not the sole property of the Irish writer. The stereotypes of Irish people developed by British artists are just as important in understanding the genealogy of the gunman as Irish heroes or rogues. The following discussion attempts to outline the more damaging, less ironic, use of stereotype.

Generally, the word stereotype indicates something so often repeated that its meaning becomes saturated with truisms. In relation to literary character, the stereotype is

¹⁷ George Bernard Shaw's active engagement with and interrogation of both Irish and British stereotypes in *John Bull's Other Island* has produced a number of varied analyses. The play can be seen as a microcosmic example of how one text, which interrogates stereotype, has the potency to produce different interpretations. See Martin Meisel's discussion in *Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre* (1963), Declan Kiberd's "The Fall of the Stage Irishman" (*Genre* 12 [1979]), and Bernice Schrank's "Staging John Bull: British Identity and Irish Drama" (forthcoming) for three different examinations of the Shaw play and Shaw's concerns.

a preconceived and often oversimplified idea of what characteristics typify a person, community or nation. Stereotypes can be used in the literary work in a number of ways. They can be a form of shorthand (some would say narrative laziness) that depends on a general and easy recognition of certain mannerisms, language patterns or appearances to identify a character's nature. Stereotypes can also be employed in the artistic world as an easy source of comedy, satire and even ridicule. Lastly, stereotypes are often manipulated in a literary text in order to question and challenge precisely those characteristics and assumptions that put the stereotype into popular consciousness.¹⁸

As a pioneering work on nineteenth-century theatre, Martin Meisel's *Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre* defines theatrical stereotypes, and his discussion of their multi-valenced application on the stage offers a context in which to read other genres in which stereotypes appear. Meisel defines stereotypes as "figures which, however variously combined in various plots and circumstances, could be relied upon to behave in a particular

¹⁸ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "stereotype" was first used to indicate a method of printing in which solid plates or type-metal is used. The stereotype mold is able to cast stable print and to reproduce sameness. The word "stereo" originally meant solid. In *Strange Country*, Seamus Deane looks at the relationship between printers' typeface and nationalism: the Irish language "needed a national typeface in which it could be printed; further, it needed one that was cut in Ireland, not in England; and it needed one that could effectively negotiate the counterclaims of Roman and Celtic typefaces and the economic issues that these raised" (102). That the word is etymologically linked to both the process of printing and the nature of characterization allows for further extrapolation into discussions of nationhood and national identity. Deane does not, perhaps unfortunately, explicitly consider the word "stereotype" in connection to his call for an Irish national typeface.

manner and to possess certain defined moral and psychological qualities” (21). He concludes that the stereotype-as-shorthand is directly related to the history of repertory theatre companies. Repertory theatres performed a limited number of characters in part because such companies had a limited number of actors. Some classic examples of repertory characters include: the hero (usually clean shaven), the villain (dark haired and unshaven: think of that dastardly moustache), the tempestuous heroine (often fair-haired), the comic countryman, and the Stage Irishman, Frenchman, Policeman or Jew. The reliance on facial hair and hair colour as the determining external characteristic exists because hair can be easily manipulated and decisions based on hair can quicken the casting process. Meisel also notes that the stereotype of, for example, the dark-haired villain is as much a result of the fact that an actor in the company who looked that way to begin with played the part of the villain as it is the result of any playwright deliberately deciding that evil would be semiotically articulated through dark hair (18).

The Irishman, Frenchman, Policeman and/or Jew were all bit-parts in the theatre prior to the nineteenth century. They were identified with either a stage prop (a hat for example) or a linguistic peculiarity (peculiar for an English audience anyway). So the Stage Frenchman would speak with an accent that we would today associate with the cartoon character Pepé Le Pew; the Policeman would have his hat; the Jew would have an exaggerated nose; and the Irishman would most likely have both a reddened nose (from

drink) and the now notorious bull – those awkward sentence structures full of double meanings. The key to the dramatic presentation of these minor characters is exaggeration; they stand apart from the major players in an obvious way; thus, they are not only a source of comedy, but they are also quickly if not immediately recognized by the audience. Such stage stereotypes are able to travel through centuries of dramatic performance because, on the one hand, they are easy to perform (and you do not need to possess much in the way of stage properties) and, on the other hand, they are readily recognized.

That stage stereotypes are both easily articulated and quickly comprehended is why stereotypes or stock characters are then so readily translated and absorbed into non-theatrical media. In the same way that the mythic Fianna and the Irish rogues were adopted to represent political discontent, so too are Irish stereotypes articulated (indeed, propagandized) by the object of such discontent: the British. L. Perry Curtis Jr.'s *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* discusses how images of the ape-like Irishmen and Ireland-as-woman were used for political gain in Victorian England. In his preface, Curtis writes that the presentation of the Irishman, and the Irish rebel in particular, as a “ferocious hybrid of man and ape became a way of not only justifying harsh measures against the agents of aggressive nationalism and agrarian outrage but of dismissing the political aspirations underlying those acts” (xi). Further, the caricatured Irishman from the pens of *Punch* magazine-artists such as George Cruikshank and Sir John Tenniel were

selves to the anxiety Victorian England felt as a result of perceived threats to their security.¹⁹ Comedy, stereotype and satire, in this sense, operate as a kind of defense mechanism:

Nothing fed the Victorian stereotype of the wild, melancholic, violent, and feckless Irish Celt more dramatically than the economic stagnation and political and social unrest which English tourists and officials found in Ireland. Every abortive rebellion and every agrarian outrage helped to confirm the stereotype of Paddy as the ignorant and superstitious dupe of crafty leaders sworn to drive the “vile Sassenach” from the land by terrorist methods. (21)

By making the Irish laughable, even ridiculous, the cartoons help defuse British fears.

Curtis also notes that, like the rogues of earlier literature, the caricatured Irishman was almost inevitably portrayed as somehow criminal during the period when militant Irish nationalists began to make their presence and efforts felt. “The price paid by Irishmen for increasing political activity and agrarian protest was the substitution of epithets like Caliban, Frankenstein, Yahoo, and gorilla for Paddy” (Curtis 22). Tenniel’s 1870 cartoon entitled “The Irish Tempest” (Figure 1.1) is a classic example. Here, a frightened and

¹⁹ In “‘Pestilence on Their Backs, Famine in Their Stomachs’: The Racial Construction of Irishness and the Irish in Victorian Britain,” Jim MacLaughlin argues that the British sense of security was certainly threatened in the nineteenth century by Irish nationalist movements, but another threat was also felt on British soil. As a result of high migration of Irish people to England during and after the Famine, the Irish were viewed as “a form of social debasement.... a ‘contagion’ that could invade the body politic of Victorian Britain through emigration” (55).



THE IRISH "TEMPEST."

CALDAS (BOY OF THE HEATH. "THIS ISLAND'S MINE, BY SICORAX MY MOTHER,
WHICH THOU TAK'ST FROM ME."—Shakespeare.

Figure 1.1

demure Hibernia (garbed in a Grecian, full-length robe with her hair bound by a crown of flowers) cowers in the arms of a Prospero figure with a striking resemblance to Gladstone (complete with stern glance and ramrod posture). Caliban is transmogrified into the apish Paddy: one hand clenched in defiance and the other held out as if he were begging for spare change. The British are here depicted as strong, heroic, intelligent and scornful of the beastly opponent that is the Irish Fenian, whose belt is laden with guns, clubs and daggers. As Curtis extensively examines, it is not merely derogatory epithets which racialize and inferiorize the Irish. The cartoons in *Punch* also construct images of the Irish as not only violent but also sexually debauched.

A particularly dramatic example of the Irish-as-violent cartoon is Tenniel's "The Irish Frankenstein" (Figure 1.2), which appeared in *Punch* on 20 May 1882, just two weeks after the Phoenix Park murders.²⁰ Grasping a dagger dripping with blood, the

²⁰ On 6 May 1882, Lord Cavendish (Chief Secretary of Ireland) and his under-secretary Thomas Burke were gruesomely murdered with surgical knives in Dublin's Phoenix Park (Foster 406-407). Parnell offered to resign as a result of the atrocity, but his offer was refused by Gladstone. Twenty-six men were arrested, five were executed and two were given sentences of penal servitude. The murders were the work of "a recently formed" splinter group called Irish National Invincibles (Kee, *Bold Fenian Men* 87). Not the least of the consequences of this horrible incident were renewed fears of Fenian violence and the creation of the Special Irish Branch of the police force at Scotland Yard (Ranelagh 139).



THE IRISH FRANKENSTEIN.

"The beautiful and blood-stained Monster . . . yet was it not my Master to the very extent that it was my Creature? . . . Had I not breathed
into it my own spirit?" . . . (Extract from the Works of C. S. F.—G.L., M.P.)

Figure 1.2

monster-creation is wearing a dark cape and a mask.²¹ This visual reference to any and all romantic, masked avengers, Irish rogues included, is severely undermined by his ape-like face and inhuman, although potent, size. Cowering in the background is, presumably, the creator of this monster. The caption reads: “The baneful and blood-stained Monster ... yet was it not my Master to the very extent that it was my Creature? ... Had I not breathed into it my own spirit? (Extract from the Works of C.S. P-m-ll, M.P.)” So the leader of Ireland’s Home Rule campaign, Charles Stuart Parnell, is depicted as liable for and then terrified of his own “creation.” The overall effect of the image is ghoulish and had the image not been presented as a cartoon (and therefore, in the realm of comedy and mockery) it could be terrifying. Blame and responsibility for the Phoenix Park murders are laid squarely on the shoulders of Irish politicians, such as Parnell, who advocated Irish Home Rule but were unable to control agrarian revolt. In Tenniel’s hands, the violent, simian Irishman becomes equally evil and ridiculous.

²¹ The mask later becomes a metonymic marker for paramilitary involvement in Northern Ireland after 1968. Used by all paramilitary organizations, the mask – the balaclava – has the practical purpose of obscuring identity, but it has also become a sign of armed rebellion and the power to resist. See *Symbols in Northern Ireland*, ed. Anthony D. Buckley (Belfast: Queen’s U of Belfast, Institute of Irish Studies, 1998), in particular Neil Jarman’s “Painting Landscapes: The Place of Murals in the Symbolic Construction of Urban Space,” for an account and analysis of various symbols used in Northern Ireland by different community and paramilitary groups.

In the cartoon genre, violent Irishmen have a desire for something that acts as the catalyst for their revolt, and that something is Ireland. The sexual inferiority of the Irish (and by extension the sexual prowess of the British) is articulated in caricatures depicting Ireland as a damsel in distress. The representation of Ireland as a nubile Hibernia or Erin not only “helped to justify England’s imperial efforts,” but such images also construe a figurative sexual relationship in which Britain performs the masculine role of protector and saviour (Curtis 157). Curtis contends that such images sexualize Anglo-Irish relations (158).²² Curtis’s argument goes further to state that the sexualized nature in cartoon depictions of the Irish/British colonial relations is an expression of male fantasy and desire. The caricatures of Irish men as simian creates an opportunity wherein the apes are “screens onto which men projected their erotic and violent tendencies” (Curtis 171).

Although the figure of Hibernia may occasionally appear alone, she is most often triangulated between two competing versions of male desire. The triangulation of desire so evident in Tenniel’s “The Irish Tempest” is given an interesting twist in another of his cartoons titled “The Fenian-Pest” of 1866 (Figure 1.3). Here, the protector of Hibernia is really a protectress: the distinctly Roman-looking Britannia. In this image it is *sisterhood*

²² For similar arguments that read Ireland’s colonial history and political relationship with Britain as sexualized see Elizabeth Butler-Cullingford’s “Gender, Sexuality, and Englishness in Modern Irish Drama and Film” (*Gender and Sexuality* 159-186), and Bronwen Walter’s “Gendered Irishness in Britain: Changing Constructions,” *Ireland and Cultural Theory* (1999): 77-99. Both articles build on and use Curtis’s study.



Figure 1.3

that is invoked by the fearful Hibernia, as the caption reads: “O my dear sister, what *are* we to do with these troublesome people?” as if the troublesome people (the self-same simian Paddies) were a minor annoyance. Britannia replies: “Try isolation first, my dear, and then _____.” The reference to isolation is easily read as an instruction from the older, taller, more stern woman to the younger, naïve girl: shutting out the men from sex may get her some peace and quiet. The blank space in her quotation is meant to be open-ended but suggests that by withholding sex from those beastly men, the women may actually end up getting the men to do what the women want. Whatever spurious notions of feminine power Tenniel is banking on, the “protectress” situation is constant in cartoons depicting England’s deliverance of Ireland from terrorism; the images not only hint at “Erin’s ‘defloration’ by her rescuer but also by the truly dreadful prospect of intercourse between maiden and simianized dragon” (Curtis 172). It is impossible to say what Tenniel’s intentions were in the depiction of sisterly solidarity between Britannia and Hibernia; but if Erin is deflowered by her rescuer and that rescuer is another woman – no matter how androgynous that woman may be made to appear – then the male fantasy takes on another dimension, that of the titillating idea of two women being intimate.

Victorian stereotypes of Irish people hold sway long after the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Curtis notes that the Irish ape is revived by British cartoonists in 1969 when “the specifically Irish gorilla guerilla returned with a vengeance” once violence in

Northern Ireland reached a new crisis (174). In this round of national caricatures, however, Curtis points out that Ireland is no longer presented as the victimized Erin/Hibernia. The most striking example he mentions is a cartoon in which Bernadette Devlin and six other women are depicted as animalistic, simian sisters who devour the flesh of men (175). Irish women now become perverse and grotesque and, as Bronwen Walter points out, “some of the strongest ridicule and anti-Irish imagery was called forth in response to the young woman Member of Parliament, Bernadette Devlin, who was elected in 1969” (81). Walter’s point is that British cartoons depict politically active Irish women as perverse as a result of, perhaps, another threat to Englishmen’s sense of security.

There is another arena in which stereotypes of Irish people as violent and sexually debased are bountiful – the thriller novel. In “Rough Rug-Headed Kems: The Irish Gunman in the Popular Novel,” Alan Titley argues that the simian Irish stereotype is replaced with that of the villainous and evil terrorist gunman. Not only does the stereotype change, but Titley persuasively writes that the terrorist-gunman in popular spy thrillers becomes the defining characteristic of *all* Irish people: “the Irishman as a nasty brutish creature of dim wits, uncouth appearance and, more dangerously, of inexplicable mind is alive and not so well and usually dying in the modern popular thriller thrown up, in the last ten years, by the Northern Irish conflict” (Titley 17). In a comprehensive survey of thrillers written between 1970 and 1980 (mostly by British writers), Titley notes that the IRA

gunman operates as “a replacement for the Hun or the Communist agent” (25) and as such he is easily narrated and necessarily static in order for the thriller to create the dynamic, complex hero, who is often a British secret agent. According to Titley, to present the IRA gunman “in the simple coloration of diabolism and in the language of a letter to the editor removes any further obligation for investigation,” and the “question of his private complexity, his twisted and holy humanity, is never faced” (23, 31). Titley is largely dismissive of the thriller genre as “literary worthlessness,” but he is unequivocal in his assertion that the thrillers and their IRA villains are important outside the boundaries of the genre because “they make no distinction between the gunman and the rest of the routine population ... the gunman portrays the native in a more extreme form of pronouncement and posture. He is simply the latest mutation of precast Hibernatoids” (38).²³ While there may be other versions of contemporary Irish stereotypes apart from the thriller’s gunman, it becomes clear from the work of critics such as Curtis and Titley that the use of stereotype not only diminishes the possibility of difference but it also makes claims to a unified Irish national character that does not exist.

²³ It is not just the British press or novelists who equate the IRA with all Irish people. By way of introducing his best-selling study, *The I.R.A.: A History* (Niwot, CO: Roberts, Rinehart, 1994), Tim Pat Coogan writes that “to understand the IRA is to understand Ireland and the Irish” (ix). The generalization inherent in all stereotypes – and the dangers of such generalization – extends well beyond literary genre or satire.

1.4 American Cinema and the Representation of Ireland

The function of stereotype in American cinematic depictions of Ireland and Irish people is less clear-cut than the apish Paddy of Victorian cartoons or the demonic terrorist of thriller novels. The murkiness of questions of identity is never more acute than in discussions of Irish film and the criss-crossing influences of both British and American images of Ireland. In a 1999 issue of *Cineaste*, a leading American journal on the art and politics of cinema, every one of the fourteen articles devoted to Irish cinema (in both the Republic and Northern Ireland) touches on the fluid relationship between British, American and Irish film images. Such discussions are not new. A decade earlier, Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons, and John Hill analyzed representations of Ireland in their landmark book, *Cinema and Ireland* (1988). In the preface they write that the complex issue of “Irishness” runs through their considerations (xiii), and they also maintain that the considerable number of American films in the twentieth century that have chosen Ireland as either subject matter or locale “have furnished us with many of the most familiar and durable images of the ‘Irish’”(xiv). The power of film and the film industry to create, maintain and make “durable” stock images of Ireland and the Irish is not in dispute, nor is

the often complicit role of some indigenous Irish productions.²⁴ What will be highlighted here is the nature of such stock images and the not unexpected connection to images of the Irish gunman.

The growth and development of an Irish film industry has encountered impediments from a number of sources. Despite sustained film production from 1910 to 1920, post-independence Ireland did not see regular or continuous film production. Kevin Rockett's in-depth history of Irish film as an industry in *Cinema and Ireland* cites "haphazard government support" as well as near-draconian censorship laws as two reasons why indigenous Irish film production did not really begin to flourish until the late 1980s (65-69). In Rockett's view, the lack of an established film industry in Ireland until recently results from a failure of the Irish state to adequately support artists working in the cinema. Because indigenous Irish filmmakers have struggled for production and distribution of their work, Rockett argues that "popular representations of Ireland on the screen have been left to the predominantly commercial designs of American and British film companies" (xi). *Cinema and Ireland* goes on to argue that the popular representation of Ireland by American cinema can be divided into two main categories: romanticized images of the Irish landscape and images of violence.

²⁴ John Hill's chapter on "Images of Violence," for example, argues that Irish films such as Neil Jordan's *Angel* and Pat O'Connor's adaptation of the novel *Cal* do as much as American cinema to present the Irish as essentially violent. Hill's argument, particularly in relation to *Angel*, will be addressed in chapter four.

The beauty of Ireland's landscape has long been a defining characteristic in cinematic representations of Ireland. The pastoral vision of Ireland is exemplified in films such as Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* (1934), John Ford's *The Quiet Man* (1952), and more recently Ron Howard's *Far and Away* (1991). Indeed, Martin McLoone describes *The Quiet Man* as "the cinema's most famous and most enduring representation of Ireland" ("Reimagining the Nation" 30). In his lengthy consideration of *Man of Aran* and *The Quiet Man*, Luke Gibbons does not quarrel with the potency of the images in these films, nor does he hold any punches when documenting the proliferation of "wild mountain scenery, overcast skies, desolate cottages and, of course, the abrupt contrasts between sunshine and thunderstorms" as images that are not only melodramatic but also "cardboard cut-outs or stereotypes" (*Cinema and Ireland* 211). And yet Gibbons is at pains to point out that the romanticized image of the rough but beautiful Irish landscape is just as easily invoked by Irish artists as it is by Americans. Invoking the wild yet paradisaic images of rural Ireland employed in Lady Morgan's nineteenth-century novel *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), Gibbons effectively argues that "this primitivist impulse had far reaching consequences" in the artistic representation of Ireland for the next two hundred years (203). One of Gibbons's most interesting points (one which is reiterated by John Hill in his consideration of images of violence) is that while American cinema may be largely responsible for a romantic view of Ireland, American cinema by no means created such

images out of nowhere. As the following sections on ideas of national identity and Irish national character will show, cultural production in Ireland by the Irish has also invested in the representation of itself as a site of Acadian perfection.

Irish cultural production has not been without narratives of resistance. In the 1970s, for example, Irish filmmakers began to produce films which challenged the inherited stereotypes of Ireland articulated through American films. One of the prime targets was this pastoral image of Ireland and Bob Quinn's *Poitin* (1978) is exemplary of this rising challenge. Film critic Ciaran Carty reads Quinn's film as a direct de-romanticization of Flaherty's *Man of Aran* in which the lives of people in Connemara are portrayed as harsh and severe. Carty writes that "significantly the entire story is shot inland, in stoney valleys and shapeless villages, away from the prima donna sea, deliberately avoiding the standard postcard splendour" ("A West with Warts" 31). At a lecture delivered to the Canadian Association of Irish Studies in the summer of 2000, Bob Quinn said that "for years I blamed the Americans for the construction of not only images of Ireland but also for the construction of the Irish film industry. Now, I don't care who is to blame. All I care about is what Irish filmmakers are doing to change things." Locating the origin of stereotypes is, to a certain extent, a futile effort. What is more important, according to Quinn and this thesis, is what challenges are made to the stereotypes and how effective are such challenges in breaking down restrictive binaries such as violent

Irish/pastoral Irish. Whether the influence of American cinema on Ireland is a case of cultural imperialism that thwarts indigenous production, or the Irish response to American film has been the all-too-easy incorporation of Hollywood paradigms, it is accurate to speak of a cross-fertilization process at work in the production of images of Ireland on the screen.

1.5 The Idea of National Character

The generalized but often contradictory notions and images of what the Irish are, whether that be a simian rebel, a feminized nation, or a villainous terrorist, parallel divergent ways of thinking about the nation and nationalism. Just as philosophers, literary theorists and sociologists re-vitalized debates about the unitary text and the unified self from the 1960s onward, so too did political scientists, historians and social scientists in the post-World War II era return to considerations of nationalism and a cohesive national identity. The study of nationalism is ongoing and it is a rich and complex field. This very richness carries with it varying definitions of terms such as “nation” and “ethnicity” as well as varying perspectives through which to discuss the meanings and implications of those terms and ideas. For the purpose of a general overview before looking at studies of Irish

national identity, the literature on nationalism can be grouped into four broad categories: essentialist, historical-structuralist, instrumentalist, and post-structuralist approaches.

Essentialist accounts of nationalism argue that ethnicity is an enduring and natural feature of human existence. That is, a sense of “nation” is essential and innate to human nature and as such it exists outside history. Despite their acknowledgment that nationalism itself crystallized only two centuries ago with the French Revolution, essentialist thinkers argue that ethnic identity has existed for millennia and nationalism can only be understood as its modern progeny. A leading essentialist is Anthony D. Smith and he argues, in works such as *National Identity* (1991), that concerns about the nation and the state are not the sole result of eighteenth-century thinking.²⁵ Smith reaches back in time to the works of ancient Greek writers, specifically Sophocles’s *Oedipus Tyrannos*, to illustrate that questions of identity formation (personal, familial, territorial, ethnic) were both philosophical and practical concerns long before the French Revolution (*National Identity* 4-6). Smith’s main argument is that in order to understand modern nations one must take into account ethnic identities forged in previous centuries because “locating such ethnic cores tells us a good deal about the subsequent shape and character of nations – if (and

²⁵ The nation and the state are different entities and Smith sees the difference primarily in that “state” refers to the bureaucratic and public institutional workings of a political entity whereas “nation” is a far more ambiguous and complex idea: it signifies a “cultural and political bond, uniting in a single political community all who share an historic culture and homeland” (*National Identity* 14-15).

when) such nations emerge” (39). In the work of Smith and other essentialists those “ethnic cores,” despite their mutability, are the most appropriate place to begin any study of the modern nation and nationalism.²⁶

Historical-structuralists argue to the contrary. In their analyses, the best place to begin a study of the modern nation is not any essential core of ethnic identity, but rather the mechanisms of political change. In this approach, nationalism is exemplified by the French Revolution, and a great number of structuralist studies begin with eighteenth-century France. These writers focus on waves of successive nationalist movements, particularly in Europe. They explain nationalism as an epiphenomenon of the functional requirements of some social and/or political mechanism: capitalism being one such mechanism. Perhaps the most widely read and cited examples of this concentration on critical historical moments as the key to understanding modern nationalism are E.J. Hobsbawm’s *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1990) and Ernest Gellner’s *Nations and Nationalism* (1983). Both Hobsbawm and Gellner focus on the development of modern industrial economies and view modernization from the Industrial Revolution onward as the motivational force behind the political formation of national governments. They agree that the requirements of modern industry impose

²⁶ See also the work of Walker Connor in *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1994) and John A. Armstrong in *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 1982).

unilateral and standardized political and social systems. In such rigorous and comprehensive historical-structuralist theories of nationalism, economic and political goals come first and then nationalism and national identities come into being.

The instrumentalist school of thought turns around the historical-structuralist paradigm; nationalism is used as a tool or instrument to achieve other goals such as the building of economic coalitions or the strengthening of one powerful group over another. Miroslav Hroch's *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe* (1985) and John Breuilly's *Nationalism and the State* (1994) are two examples of the instrumentalist argument that social and/or political groups advance their own self-interest by channeling nationalism in a particular direction. Both Hroch and Breuilly examine how rising elites in the nineteenth century used nationalism to solidify their own power base and to dislodge the multinational empires of central Europe. Very often in the instrumentalist's argument, however, nationalism and national identity exist *a priori* and are self-evident. The ideas of national identity is rarely examined in themselves.²⁷ Instrumentalists begin with the assumption that national character is essential, and then focus more on *how* nationalism is used for political gain and less on *why* nationalism exists or the conditions of its origin.

²⁷ One exception to the case that instrumentalists do not investigate the hows and whys of nationalism is Ted Gurr's *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts* (New York: United States Institute of Peace P, 1993) which examines the challenge to existing political powers by minority movements. Gurr discusses how minority movements assert an idea of national identity that is inclusive of difference.

The final group of thinkers on nationalism and national identity are the post-structuralists who argue that all of these other theories are flawed because nationalism is an artificial construct. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991) exemplifies this line of thinking as he emphasizes the artificiality of the "nation." He writes that a nation "is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives an image of their community" (*Imagined Communities* 6). Anderson looks to several examples of such imagined communities, but his study of Indonesia and how that country created a new nation and a language in order to govern its vast, ethnically diverse archipelago is one of his most persuasive examples. *Imagined Communities* also takes into account the breakup of colonial empires as a catalyst for nationalism and Anderson's emphasis on the history of colonialism reverberates in other post-structuralist studies of the nation such as *Nation and Narration* (1990), edited by Homi Bhabha, Parth Chatterjee's *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993), and Dawa Norbu's *Culture and the Politics of Third World Nationalism* (1992). Post-structuralist writings lean toward a linguistic framework for thinking about nationalism (they often consider the rhetoric and semiotics of expressions of national identity) and therefore allow for a high degree of flexibility and variation in the

ways nations may be manifest. In this framework of flexibility, the post-structuralist view of nationalism and national identity can accommodate diverse political positions: forward thinking or backward looking, liberal or illiberal, egalitarian or racist. The post-structuralist approach is emblematic of the complexity and diversity of writing about Irish nationalism and identity in the late twentieth century.

1.6 The Idea of Irish National Character

Taken as a case-study of the mediated nature of national identity, the literature on Irish nationalism reflects the varied and often contradictory theories mentioned above. Work on Irish nationalism does, despite different theoretical approaches, share one quality: what John Hutchinson calls the undeniably vital role “played by historical scholars and artists in nation-building” (*The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* vii). Hutchinson’s work, done initially under the supervision of Anthony Smith, is concerned with understanding why schools of nationalist historians and artists arise and the types of social movements they inspire. As an economist and political scientist, Hutchinson’s work not only applies general theories of national identity to Ireland’s history, but it also represents the inter-disciplinary approach indicative of many subsequent studies of Irish cultural

nationalism. While the issues of what nationalism is and how it comes into being have been long debated in Irish cultural criticism, there is an undisputed relationship between the politics of state and nation-formation and the artistic expressions of Irish national identity. The nature of such a relationship, and by extension the very nature of Irish nationalism, is embedded within a debate frequently characterized as a battle between traditionalists and revisionists. This debate is often centered in historical studies, but in recent years it has extended to literary history and the more general discipline of cultural studies.²⁸ The traditionalists are broadly characterized as those who see the goal of an Irish Republic to be the attainment of a mythic, natural, innate political state. This state will have a clear and secure relationship to rural, Catholic and Gaelic-speaking experience. In their introduction to *Rethinking Irish History* (1998), O'Mahony and Delanty describe the traditionalist project as "unambiguously Catholic-conservative" and "an inclusive code of national

²⁸ In a recent review article, George D. Boyce claims "Now that the rather vapid and certainly boring 'revisionist' controversy has settled down ..., the practitioners of the discipline [of history] are getting down to what they do best – defining their topics, researching their subject, and placing it before their peers" (*The Irish Review* 174). The weariness of Boyce's tone suggests that the theoretical clashes over what Irish history should do was an unfortunate (and eventually meaningless) phase in the history of Irish history. Other scholars of Irish history and culture disagree. See Patrick O'Mahony and Gerard Delanty's *Rethinking Irish History: Nationalism, Identity and Ideology* (London: Macmillan, 1998) and Colin Graham and Richard Kirkland's *Ireland and Cultural Theory: The Mechanics of Authenticity* (New York: St. Martin's P, 1999) for examples of how the revisionist debate is fruitfully used as the beginning of a process whereby "new critical practices and theoretical frameworks almost inevitably challenge the orthodoxies of how Ireland is read and what is read as 'Ireland'" (Graham and Kirkland 1).

identity, emphasizing what the condition of 'being Irish' means and what the society should do to fulfill this condition" (9-11). One example of a traditionalist paradigm can be found in the work of Daniel Corkery. *The Hidden Ireland* (1924) and *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (1947) combine to give expression to the traditionalist idea that there is a native Irish identity and it is expressed through cultural traditions such as bardic poetry and the aisling, or visionary-poem, in the eighteenth century, and then by writers such as Synge in the early twentieth century. Native Irish identity is, in Corkery's mind, Catholic, Gaelic-speaking and rural. Corkery not only assumes that Irish identity exists *a priori*, but he also defines that identity very clearly; the three forces necessarily represented for a literature to be truly expressive of the Irish experience are religion, nationalism and the land. Corkery's conception of an Irish experience and the authentic literary expression of that experience would come under attack and would long remain as a target of revisionist criticism of an idealized Irish-Ireland.

The revisionists can be summarized as attempting to revise the Catholic/Gaelic/rural paradigm in order to think of Ireland differently. Revisionists denounce an exclusive Gaelic nationalism that concentrates on a mythological past, because such concentration diverts attention away from pressing problems of the present and needs of the future. Revisionists claim that a more flexible, more inclusive definition of Irishness must be employed, but they do not always offer any definition of what that

Irishness is. As O'Malony and Delanty, among others, point out, revisionism had its first emanation in the work of historians T.W. Moody and Robin Dudley Edwards in the 1930s.²⁹ Their revisionism sought to “abandon what were perceived as retrospective accounts of history.... It launched an assault on what it saw as myth-making, in particular the nationalist heroic theory of history with its central motif of ‘Ireland as victim’” (*Rethinking Irish History* 9). In both historical and literary studies, a second wave of revisionism began in the 1970s concurrent with and in partial reaction to renewed violence in Northern Ireland and the rapidly changing socio-economic position of the Republic of Ireland. Some of the most interesting and influential work done in Irish cultural criticism since the 1970s has been the study of women, gender, race and sexuality. Historians such as Margaret MacCurtain and, in particular, Margaret Ward argue strongly for “putting gender into history” (Ward 18). Often focusing on contributions made by women to political movements, the gendered historical analysis of Ward and others stresses the “interrelationships of women’s and men’s lives, using inclusive historical perspectives”

²⁹ See *Reconsiderations of Irish History and Culture*, edited by Daltún Ó Ceallaigh and *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, edited by Alan O'Day and George D. Boyce.

(22).³⁰ The inclusivity of feminist writers such as Ward is an indication that the Manichean division between traditionalist/revisionist positions no longer seems applicable.

Since the 1970s, work on Irish national identity has been variously described as “new nationalism,” “neo-revisionism,” and even “post-nationalism.” One way to illustrate the complexity of the literature on the idea of an Irish national character is to look at three contemporary thinkers and how they fit into the broader context of writings on nationalism and national identity. Three such recent contributors to the question of Irish national identity are Declan Kiberd, Richard Kearney, and Seamus Deane. All three present readings of Irish historical, literary and cinematic texts in ways that attempt not only to move past restrictive definitions of what it means to be Irish, but also to place Irish writing and artistic production in more global contexts. All three are influential thinkers, if not because of their prolific output then because their writings generate discussion, disagreement and debate.

In *Inventing Ireland* (1995), Declan Kiberd aligns his reading of canonical Irish literary texts (such as Synge’s plays, Yeats’s poetry and Joyce’s novels) with post-structuralist writers on nationalism as well as post-colonial theorists such as Edward Said,

³⁰ See also the work of Carol Coulter who advocates a post-colonial interpretation of Ireland’s economic status in *Ireland: Between the First and Third Worlds* (Dublin: Attic P, 1990). Coulter rejects the idea that nationalism and feminism are inherently oppositional in colonial situations.

Franz Fanon, and Homi Bhabha.³¹ The title of Kiberd's work is itself a gesture toward Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. While much of *Inventing Ireland* is concerned with re-reading literary texts such as John Millington Synge's plays and W.B. Yeats's poetry, there are also "interchapters" that address more theoretical issues such as national allegories and national identity. In "Fathers and Sons," for example, Kiberd discusses the fraught relationship and allegory of father and son in relation to Irish literature and the characters therein. His comments on self-created heroes such as Stephen Dedalus or Christy Mahon are deft negotiations through post-colonialism, psychoanalysis and the revolt of the child against the parent. In one sense Kiberd works against Anthony Smith's contention that the nation is the primary means by which an individual locates his/herself in the world. By asserting that it is the *family* and not the nation that operates as the single most important social institution with which the people can fully identify, Kiberd argues that "the law, the state apparatus, the civil service, and even the churches are in some sense alien" (380). Thus, it is within the family structure that rebellion occurs first; sons will rebel against fathers, and effective familial revolt "must be extended to outright [social] revolution" (380). Kiberd views outright revolution in Ireland as a form of

³¹ Kiberd's work has produced reviews and replies of both praise and rejection. See Cleary and Kreilkamp's opposing views of *Inventing Ireland* in *The Irish Literary Supplement* (Fall 1996): 19-20. See also Shaun Richards's defense of Kiberd's book in "Transcending Regressive Nostalgia: Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland*," *Études Irlandaises* (Autumn 1999): 57-66.

identifying one's nation: revolution outside the family unit is a revolution against England as colonizer and a rebellion for Irish self-determination.

Kiberd sees the family romance of Irish sons rebelling against inadequate Irish fathers as “not the usual cliché of rebellion against a tyrannical parent, but the subtler instance of a protest against a colourful but self-divided father's inability to offer any clear lead at all” (385). The father is not so much the colonizer as the colonized male father-figure. The son becomes a rebel, and often an artist too, who seeks to avoid his father's self-division:

This repudiation of the biological parent in a colonial situation takes on a revolutionary character, since it involves not just a rejection of authority but of all official versions of the past; and it proclaims a determination to reinvent not only the self but the very conditions which help to shape it. (385)

Kiberd implies, but never states outright, that the revolutions of son against father in works such as *Ulysses* and *Playboy of the Western World* can be read as national allegories. Joyce and Synge are literary sons who rebel against “official versions” of the Irish family just as their works stand in relation to historical revolts against “the very conditions” of colonialism that helped to shape them. *Inventing Ireland* thus conceptualizes Irish history and literature into “a single grand narrative of revival, revolutionary nation-building, and struggle against the ossification of earlier revolutionary ideals” (Cleary 19). Kiberd's work gestures toward both historical-structuralism (with the

claim that the process of colonization and de-colonization of Ireland are two epiphenomena of Irish nationalism), and toward post-structuralism, with the belief that the Irish nation can only be read as an invention: "If Ireland had never existed, the English would have invented it" (9). Kiberd refuses to limit his analysis with any one literary theory; indeed, he is determined to place Irish literary studies in the complex and varied field of several post-structuralist theories. *Inventing Ireland* creates a version of Ireland based on a model of hybridity that hopes to outgrow the reductive oppositions which once sustained it.³² If informed by the example of art, Kiberd's future "Ireland" will become a site of celebration: "a quilt of many patches and colours, all beautiful, all distinct, yet all connected too" (Kiberd 653).

In contrast to Kiberd's hope for a celebratory future, Seamus Deane aligns his studies of Irish history and literature with the writings of Anthony Smith and, in doing so, Deane's studies are in constant dialogue with tradition and the possibility of a mythic past.³³ Deane takes the essentialist position that this "*idea* of Ireland permits us to observe and comment upon the *fact* of Ireland" (*Celtic Revivals* 20). Deane's argument is not only that the idea of a nation is an *a priori* assumption of the totality, but also that the *idea* is a

³² Kiberd has just published *Irish Classics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001), which extends and in some cases re-visits and revises the analyses in *Inventing Ireland*.

³³ Some of Deane's work on Irish national identity is found in *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature* (1985), "Irish National Character: 1790-1900" (1987), and *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing Since 1790* (1997).

prismatic tool through which to view and “comment upon” the historical variants. Deane is expressing the same idea as Smith that the nation is a condition more readily evoked than defined. His discussion of writers and thinkers such as Matthew Arnold, Edmund Burke, Maria Edgeworth and Gerald Griffin is also in tacit agreement with Smith’s argument that intellectuals (artists, historians, philosophers, folklorists) “proposed and elaborated the concepts and language of the nation and nationalism and have, through their musings and research, given voice to wider aspirations” (*National Identity* 93). In Deane’s words: “the idea of national character is most frequently and most memorably articulated” through literary sources (“Irish National Character” 90). Deane’s incisive analyses of the Irish nationalist position works as a case in point of Smith’s assertion that national movements inevitably believe that “nations exist from time immemorial and that nationalisms must awake them from a long slumber” (*National Identity* 19-20). Both Deane and Smith emphasize that movements of cultural nationalism operate in cycles and often fluctuate with cycles of political change.³⁴

All of Deane’s work on Irish nationalism and national identity argues three basic points. It is in *Strange Country* (1997) that Deane gives the fullest account of his thinking

³⁴ Smith’s comments about fluctuating cycles of cultural and political nationalism are reflected in John Hutchinson’s work, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), specifically Hutchinson’s comments on cultural nationalism as a recurring movement (“re-emerging at times of crisis”), 40-47.

on Irish national character and its relationship to nationalist politics. His three key points bear repetition in full:

central to the nationalist position were the claims that (a) Ireland was a culturally distinct nation; (b) it had been mutilated beyond recognition by British colonialism; and (c) it could nevertheless rediscover its lost features and thereby recognize once more its true identity. In order to hold the mirror up to nature it was first necessary to hold it up to legend; the reflection would represent Irish nature in the form of its heroic national character, pursued with great energy in the cultural field, even as its *alter ego* – the commercial, the economic, the religiously conformist version of the contemporary Irish – was derided as a betrayal of that heroic face, even though it was its inescapable companion. The literature and politics of the Revival era are dominated by this apparent contrast. (53)

Deane not only summarizes the nationalist position, but he also makes it clear that there are almost always competing definitions of the nation (29-30). The “heroic face” of “Irish nature,” and how that face contrasts with “the commercial, the economic, the religiously conformist version,” is the strangeness of Ireland’s nationhood in Deane’s title. The book, too, has a strangeness in that it addresses the ambiguities of Ireland and it interrogates stereotypes of Irish character, but it also, oddly, maintains tradition as both a practice and a concept. Despite Deane’s deconstruction of modernity, he offers the “foundational moment in which it is asserted that the world has of itself a meaning that is not of the social world – that is mysterious, other, originary, whatever” (182). Deane betrays a kind of nostalgia for tradition, structure, and national character.

If Deane is critical of tradition, it is only a certain type of tradition against which he raises an attack. He is very clear, for example, in his condemnation of the various Celtic revivals. In Deane's analysis, Yeats's "particular version of eighteenth-century literary and intellectual history is manifestly absurd" (*Celtic Revivals* 29). The substance of Deane's criticism lies in what he sees as the revivalist tendency to believe in a tradition that reaches backward into Ireland's past; a tendency Deane labels a fetish of continuity. Not only are such gestures a fetishization of the past for Deane, but they are also based on misreadings and, in the case of the Ossian forgeries in 1758 and Moore's *Irish Melodies* of 1807-1834, the gestures are spurious and a "determined emasculation of the Gaelic originals" ("Irish National Character" 94-95). Further, the various definitions of Irish national character, amateurish as they may have been, were clearly a response to earlier English definitions (90) and were written "with an eye to the English audience and took many of [their] assumptions from that audience's belief about the Irish character" (98).³⁵ So if any summary of Deane's point of view on the issue of Irish national character is possible, it would be something to the effect that Irish national character is "strange" and ambiguous, but it is undeniably a result of, a reaction to, and in interaction with English definitions.

³⁵ There are other examples of Deane's urgent call to question ideas of tradition as well as identity, national character and historical destiny. "Heroic Styles" and "Remembering the Irish Future" both present his criticism of any continued investment in traditions of Irish heroism as a precursor to the unfavorable return of revivalism ("Heroic" 58, "Remembering" 81).

Deane does not share with Kiberd the rhetoric of hope for and celebration of an Ireland that is “all beautiful” (*Inventing Ireland* 653).

For Richard Kearney, a philosopher closely associated with the influential cultural journal *The Crane Bag* (1979-1985), the idea of Ireland holds an undeniable appeal, and this appeal is something he shares with Kiberd and Deane. Kearney has articulated the notion of postnationalism in his own considerations of the Irish nation in works such as “Myth and Motherland” (1985) and *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (1997). Similar to post-structuralist accounts of the nation, Kearney’s postnationalism interrogates regressive currents within nationalism while highlighting the emancipatory elements within its discourse. Kearney’s postnationalism cuts across nationalism by suggesting instead a concept of critical regionalism, a system of regions within a European grouping. His readings of Irish politics, culture and philosophy are all done within a global framework. Kearney writes that “beyond the ‘modern’ alternatives of national independence and multinational dependence lies another possibility – a post national model of interdependence” (*Postnationalist Ireland* 60). In Kearney’s analysis, Irish literature and culture in general have worked through a polarity between a form of politics which mythologizes the past and views the present in terms of a sacred tradition, and one which demythologizes tradition. Now, Irish cultural creation looks beyond the present in terms of a secular progress toward a pluralist future (“Myth and Motherland” 69). Kiberd, Deane

and Kearney all place the idea of Irish national character and identity under scrutiny, but all three also acknowledge the allure of the very ideas they are trying to work beyond. This is perhaps the most powerful paradox of identity: it is at once desirable to be able to define “identity,” but the resistance to unrelenting, inflexible definitions is equally part of that desire.

From this broad overview of writings on nationalism and Irish national identity, it becomes clear that the differences that exist in the literature are differences of perspective. Nation, Ireland and Irish identity remain objects of inquiry. The vast and engaging discussions of these discourses (or ideas, or texts, or fictions) differ in the manner in which those discourses are examined. It is not surprising, therefore, that the fictional representation of the Irish gunman – a figure of political reality and narrative creation who is dedicated to a particular idea of the Irish nation – is also subject to varying theoretical approaches. That the idea of the gunman exists is not in question; how that gunman is represented is the subject of this study.

Before moving into a typology of the gunman, it is necessary to outline the historical development of the actual Irish Republican Army: what kind of people joined during very different periods of activity; and more importantly, how the IRA view themselves in resistance to outside characterizations of their nature.

1.7 The Trouble with the Irish Republican Army

In his introduction to *The Secret Army: The IRA* (1997), historian J. Bowyer Bell writes that “If Ireland has generated a library of analysis, in most ways the secret army remains secret, beyond interviews, the methodologies of scholars, the questions and explanations ... much operational data is not just hidden, but probably hidden for good” (x). Bell’s emphasis on the secrecy of the IRA is not dismissable as a rationalization of errors of omission (indeed, *The Secret Army* covers nearly the entire twentieth century from 1916 to 1997). Rather, his comments on information being hidden and questions being unanswered are more a caveat that any study of the IRA is necessarily incomplete. Information about the IRA comes from a number of different sources with a number of different perspectives. There are the collections of oral testimony, personal memoirs, broad surveys of the organization’s development from the early century to the present, historical analyses of earlier periods, and journalistic accounts of the period from 1968 to the current peace process.³⁶ In addition, there are assessments of the IRA’s military strategy,

³⁶ *Survivors*, for example, compiles oral stories from people involved in the Irish Civil War who fought on the anti-treaty side. As told to Uinseann Mac Eoin, who knew many of the interviewees personally, the memories are conditioned by time but are nonetheless fascinating portraits of a turbulent period. More recently there is *Rebel Hearts: Journeys Within the IRA's Soul* by Kevin Toolis. Despite its rather sensational title and Toolis’s bold claim that the book will cut through some of the “propaganda fog” surrounding the violence in Northern Ireland since the late 1960s, this collection of interviews with active IRA members is of equal fascination to *Survivors*. Personal memoirs include Ernie

ideological positions and/or relationship to the larger community or the broader political history of Ireland.³⁷ Despite Bell's emphasis on the secrecy shrouding the IRA, the organization by virtue of its continued violent activity is a secret many investigators and readers are anxious to reveal.

The story of the IRA, whether told through interviews with those involved or through analyses of what documentation does exist, is often presented in a personal way. A large number of commentators openly admit to and write of their own experiences with either members of the IRA or as a result of working and living in areas of intense conflict (this later personalization is most common when writers are describing or analyzing the violence in Northern Ireland since 1968). For example, J. Bowyer Bell writes of his own

O'Malley's *On Another Man's Wound* (1936), Dan Breen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (1964), and Sean O'Callaghan's *The Informer* (1998).

Bell's *The Secret Army* and Tim Pat Coogan's *The IRA: A History* are, perhaps, the best known historical surveys of the IRA. But there is also Peter Hart's *The IRA and its Enemies* (1998) and Charles Townshend's *Political Violence in Ireland* (1983), both of which focus on the revolutionary period of 1916-1923. Peter Taylor's *Provos: The IRA and Sinn Fein* (1997) and Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallie's *The Provisional IRA* (1987) both concentrate on the Northern Irish Troubles from 1968 up to the late 1990s, in the case of Taylor, and up to 1988 in the case of Bishop and Mallie.

³⁷ Several articles that appeared in *The Crane Bag* examine the IRA's military, psychological and ideological strategies (Berman, Lalor and Torode's "The Theology of the IRA" and Seamus Murphy's "'I don't support the IRA, But ...': Semantic and Psychological Ambivalence" are two examples). More recently, anthropologist Allen Feldman's *The Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body Politic and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (1991) and political/social historian Henry Patterson's *The Politics of Illusion* (1997) have been added to the expanding corpus of work on the IRA.

“Republican adventures” (x), Tim Pat Coogan introduces the American paperback edition of his *The IRA: A History* (1994) with the story of his meeting a young IRA Volunteer, and Malachi O’Doherty’s prologue to *The Trouble with Guns: Republican Strategy and the Provisional IRA* (1998) recounts a confrontation between himself and a member of the IRA in a West Belfast club. With the exception of Bell, who is an academically-trained historian, it is the journalists who inevitably have personal contact with members of the IRA as well as other paramilitary forces in Northern Ireland. There is a dividing line in literature on the IRA between those writers with experience “on the ground” and those who study the organization with some degree of distance, either because of time elapsed (they study earlier periods when the vast majority of those involved are no longer alive), or because of theoretical perspective (they are not so much interested in the people involved, but the political or social ramifications of IRA activity). Having said that, even “on the ground” writers like Peter Taylor, who has spent over thirty years covering events in Northern Ireland for the BBC, are still blocked and prevented from any possibility of

complete disclosure of information.³⁸ The personalization of IRA histories is one way of making what is otherwise an intractable organization seem knowable.

“Knowing” the IRA is a curious task: curious in the sense that as many questions arise from an investigation as are answered. Knowing the IRA is as difficult as knowing Ireland, knowing nationalism, or knowing the character of the gunman. Indeed, there is a symbiotic relationship between questions of national character and questions of the character of Irish rebels. For the purpose of this thesis, which is devoted to studying a fictional character, the IRA histories of most value are those seeking to answer the following: who joins the IRA, and why? This kind of information is indispensable to a study of the fictional gunman because, as will be illustrated by four such histories, the kinds of men who joined are very different from the cartoonish characters in *Punch* or the villainous terrorists in thriller novels. And yet, even though the historic or journalistic accounts of the IRA crack some stereotypes, others are also formulated. How the IRA has changed from its role in the Revolutionary Period to the Northern Irish Troubles is

³⁸ Censorship of journalists, paramilitaries, politicians and artists in Ireland (both North and South) is a quickly increasing field of study – if only because some of the bans on publication have been eased while others are still being challenged. Bill Rolston, a sociology lecturer at the University of Ulster, is a major contributor to this area of study. He has edited and contributed to two volumes on the media and the Troubles in Northern Ireland: *The Media and Northern Ireland* (1991) and *War and Words*, co-edited with David Miller (1996). See also Lousia Burns-Bisogn’s *Censoring Irish Nationalism: The British, Irish and American Suppression of Republican Images in Film and Television, 1909-1995* (1997).

important information in understanding why there are many different types of gunmen in fiction and film.

No literary or cinematic text to be discussed in this thesis predates the phase of Irish history known as the Revolutionary Period (from the 1916 Easter Rising to the end of the Irish Civil War, 1923). However, the roots of the IRA certainly do predate the Easter Rising. The formation of groups such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood, also known as the Fenians, is relevant to the genesis of the twentieth-century IRA. As stated earlier in this chapter, the Fenian organization was founded in the late 1850s by a group of exiles in the United States, among them John O'Mahony. What has become known as the Fenian Movement, established in collaboration with James Stephens's Irish-organized IRB, dedicated its efforts in Ireland and the US to creating and extending military organizations among Irishmen. In *The Fenian Movement in the United States*, D'Arcy notes that it is John O'Mahony who declared that "there shall be an Irish Army on the Irish hillsides ready to do battle for Irish independence and drive back from the green and sacred Isle of Erin those ruthless tyrants who have desolated our homes and driven us wandering exiles over the whole earth" (79). O'Mahony's rousing rhetoric was matched by James Stephens's enthusiastic statements, but their general military plan for guerilla warfare against British forces never came to fruition. Muddled and failed attacks on British buildings in Canada

caused splits in the movement and Stephens lost control of the IRB.³⁹ Infiltration and decimation of the Brotherhood in Ireland by informers eventually vaporized much of the organization's internal structures.

Despite its failed attempts at striking effective blows for Irish independence, there is documentary evidence that offers descriptions of the men who joined (in part because so many of the IRB were caught and arrested). Two studies that assess reasons for the rise of Fenianism in the nineteenth century disagree, however, on the question of why people joined organizations such as the IRB in Ireland and the Fenians in the US. In "Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the mid-1860s," R.V. Comerford argues that the increased leisure time of young men in urban and town settings led to a need for socialization and self-actualization: a need that membership in the IRB filled. Comerford writes that Fenianism "was providing young men with a forum for fraternal association and communal self-expression, even to the detriment of its formal conspirational objective" (244). Comerford's thesis is based on a forensic historical study; that is, he approaches the topic through journals and published recollections of men involved in the Fenian movement as well as Constabulary reports, contemporary newspaper articles on IRB activity and biographies. Toby Joyce's article, "Ireland's Trained and Marshalled

³⁹ For details on the Fenian "invasion" of Canada and other failed uprisings in the late 1860s, see Kee's *The Bold Fenian Men* (29-40) and Denieffe's *A Personal Narrative of the IRB* (270-285).

Manhood': The Fenians in the mid-1860s," takes a more sociological approach. Joyce writes that Comerford's thesis goes "some way to explaining the phenomenon of Fenianism in the 1860s" but not far enough (71). Joyce argues that in order to account for the "influx of so many men into the IRB," one must take into consideration the "masculine ethos of nineteenth-century nationalism" as practiced through the "pursuit of soldiering" (71). Where Comerford sees the Fenian movement as essentially public and social, Joyce contends that it was militaristic and closely linked to the example of the American Civil War (in which many Irishmen were serving in both armies).⁴⁰ Joyce goes on to write that organizers of the IRB consciously "drew on the nineteenth-century popular cult of 'manhood' that accompanied the growth of nationalism and the militarisation of society across Europe" (71). Joyce argues further that those men who signed up did so partly on the basis of the success of Irishmen in the American Civil War, and partly because they were "fulfilling the gender role assigned to men by the new nationalism: to become soldiers and die, if necessary, for the country" (79). In Joyce's gender analysis, it is war's challenge to character and courage, war's test of manhood that was most appealing to volunteers. The strength of Joyce's argument lies in his comparison of Irish recruitment with the

⁴⁰ For a study of Irish involvement in the American Civil War see, Paul Jones's *The Irish Brigade* (1969) or, for a more personal approach, see *My Life in the Irish Brigade: The Civil War Memoirs of Private William McCarter, 116th Pennsylvania Infantry*, ed. Kevin O'Brien (1996).

growth of Independent Rifle Companies in Britain, with the American Civil War, and with the earlier Irish example of the United Irishmen in the eighteenth century. He concludes that the Irish Fenians of the 1860s were “typical” in that the young men who joined “were spurred on by the same motives that impelled their contemporaries in Europe and America to participate in military and quasi-military activities” (79). The failure of the rebellion, in Joyce’s analysis, was due to O’Mahony and Stephens’s inability to effectively act on their own rhetoric, the fact that the promise of American assistance faded, and that the police had infiltrated the Irish organization (79).

Given the complexity of national movements and the various perspectives through which to view them, it is no surprise that Comerford and Joyce differ on how best to describe the Fenian movement. One thing they do not dispute, however, is what kinds of men joined the Fenians. Both Comerford and Joyce note that the men were young (Comerford notes that eighty-seven percent were under the age of thirty-six) and that “a significant proportion of the rank and file was sufficiently prosperous” (Comerford 241). Joyce concurs that “the vast majority were townsmen of the lower middle class: clerks, tradesmen, shopkeepers, or shopkeepers assistants” (70). The Fenians and members of the IRB were not predominantly farmers, they were not largely illiterate and they were not what one “alarmed detective visiting the Thurles area” described as riff-raff (Comerford 239). The resulting picture of the kind of young man who joined the IRB in the nineteenth

century (young, employed, educated) is very close to the picture of an Irish Volunteer in the early twentieth century, and that picture is very different from the one constructed by Britain.

Focusing on the period of 1916 to 1923, Peter Hart's *The IRA and Its Enemies* combines research of military, public, and personal documentation to offer a clear picture of who joined the IRA during the revolutionary period and what they were like while involved. Like the IRB, IRA guerrillas were "drawn almost entirely from the working and lower middle classes but disproportionately literate, skilled, and employed – more so than their fathers or neighbours – the guerrillas tended to be young men getting ahead in the world" (12). Using the West Cork Brigade as an example, Hart notes that one-third were farmers' sons and "potential inheritors" of land, one-third were practised/apprenticed tradesmen and one-third were shop assistants. Their average age was twenty-four (twelve years younger than the average Fenian), and they were unmarried and practicing Catholics. Further, "upper middle- or upper-class people almost never joined the IRA. Most of the 'professionals' in the IRA were teachers.... Few IRA men appear to have been unemployed or indigent ... nor were many casual labourers to be found" (157). Hart describes the predominant image of the IRA in the minds of Crown forces (and many Englishmen and women) as similar to that "alarmed detective" in Thurles. In the minds of the English the IRA were dirty, brutish, lacking education, a thoroughly bad lot with "no stake in the

country” (134). And, as Hart painstakingly proves, the English were wrong. The IRA characterized themselves as clean, dashing, true chums, loyal comrades and ordinary fellas. Even during the divisiveness of the Irish Civil War, the republican anti-treaty forces remained a group that saw itself as a “classless society, united by patriotism” (154). Volunteers were more or less correct in their self-assessment (163).

Another major characteristic that the IRA, during the revolutionary period, share with earlier Fenians is their youth.⁴¹ That they were the younger generation was central to their sense of identity as noble, brave, virile and “all that was chivalrous, unselfish and high spirited in the best of the young manhood of the nation” (Hart 170-171). Hart makes the point that there was more than one revolution anticipated by the IRA: a political one against the British and a generational one. “Theirs was a world (young, male, and tough) in which cliques and friendships, charged with a youthful intensity, merged with political loyalites and helped sustain a passionate devotion to the cause” (14). To a certain extent, such inclusivity helped in the creation of “the usual IRA type” in the minds of the Crown forces. Further, the exclusively male world of this youth subculture viewed their fathers as the “old fellas” who were both political and emotional outsiders (Hart 175).⁴² As part of

⁴¹ Armies the world over are largely made up of young men. The youthfulness of IRA volunteers is not unique, but it remains a defining characteristic.

⁴² In his accounting of the dual revolution (political and generational), Hart’s analysis is compatible with Kiberd’s writing on the son’s revolt against the father.

this unity of young men, the radical politicization of the group came after one joined up. Most had little or no previous contact with organized cultural revivalism and “it was the joining that was important” (Hart 206) and the politics came after. If young men joined the IRA in the early twentieth century in part for boyish fun, there was nonetheless a core of militant men (retaining membership in the IRB) who directed the guerilla attacks on British soldiers, garrisons and supply routes until 1921 when “any compromise with the republican ideal [was] unacceptable to the majority of fighting men throughout the country” (Hart 112). Politics may have initially come second in the minds of many IRA Volunteers in the Revolutionary period, but once the war against the British “hardened into a contest between gunmen” (Hart 105), the ideal of an Ireland free from British control was the clear goal of IRA gunmen.

Just as this thesis documents the many revisions that a character type such as the Irish gunman can undergo, so too does the IRA alter its identity in the 1960s. The ranks of the IRA in the early century were filled by young men rejecting the way of life of many of their families and neighbours. The IRA of the late 1960s onwards was quite different. Peter Taylor’s *Provos: The IRA and Sinn Fein* (based on his critically-acclaimed documentary mini-series) opens with the same question as Peter Hart opens his analysis: “what drove intelligent young men like Gerry McGeough, who in any normal society would have become doctors, lawyers and teachers, to take up arms and be prepared to kill

for the Provos?" (6). There is no simple answer, but the many interviews Taylor conducted over the course of thirty years in Northern Ireland seem to indicate that joining was a *reactive* gesture: reacting to violence in the streets, British army brutality – perceived or real – Protestant political domination, or disaffection with the economic and social world of Catholic Northern Ireland.⁴³ Taylor is meticulous in describing a series of events in Northern Ireland that led to the resurgence of the IRA.⁴⁴ The swelling of its ranks was a result of the combined effects of the civil rights movement, the Battle of the Bogside, the deployment of British troops in Belfast, the Ballymurphy riots, the defense of St. Matthew's church, the Lower Falls curfew, Bloody Sunday, etc. The IRA was basically dormant until events in the North offered an opportunity for resuscitation.

⁴³ In another major study of the Provos, Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallie concur with Peter Taylor's general thesis that recruits to the IRA often cite "the feeling that [they were] striking back" as a crucial motive for joining (*The Provisional IRA* 3).

⁴⁴ Taylor notes that after the Irish Civil War (1921-1922), the "IRA had been decimated" (18). After the leader of the anti-treaty forces, Eamonn de Valera, ordered the IRA to dump its weapons, the IRA was effectively non-existent. There was a disastrous blip of activity in the 1950s – the so-called "Operation Harvest" – but "the IRA had no popular base and no issue on which to arouse support; even partition had long ceased to be a rallying call to arms" (21). What was left of the IRA in the late 1950s was splitting apart due to ideological differences. Some members wanted to turn to political protest, others wanted to concentrate on socialist reform, while still others clung to the notion of armed revolt against any British presence in Ireland (23-25). In 1966, when the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising commemorative activities were underway, the IRA was, according to Taylor, perceived in Northern Ireland as simply "a part of history" (28). Bishop and Mallie agree that in 1966 the IRA "were something for the history books" (43).

The revitalization of the IRA in Northern Ireland was not just the awakening of an organization now older and wiser. The IRA of the 1960s and 1970s was different in important ways from the earlier organization. The “Dublin crowd” who were the GHQ of the previous fifty years, was replaced by younger, angrier men from the North – mostly from Belfast and Derry. As Billy McKee said to Taylor: “We weren’t so much wanting to take over the IRA as determined to break from Dublin. We realized that the Dublin crowd and the Dublin leadership were nothing more than con-men” (61). Men like McKee, who did not trust or believe in leadership out of the south, would form the core of the Provisional IRA, which remained provisional in the strictest sense of the word for only about a year. The older group, labelled the “Official” IRA, was eventually either absorbed into the Provos or evaporated.

The newly formed Provos differed from the young men of 1916 to 1923 in the following ways: they were predominantly from Northern Ireland (that is, Belfast, Derry and Tyrone) (Taylor 33); many grew up in the 1960s (a period of turbulence in Northern Ireland); and “those who fought the IRA’s ‘war’ and who came to make up the leadership of the Republican Movement were conditioned by what they saw, heard and felt” (Taylor 33-34). Part of what they saw, heard and felt was discrimination against Catholics (Taylor 38), the increasingly confusing presence of the British Army in Northern Ireland (51-53), street riots, and friends and family killed. The Provos came from urban backgrounds and

an urban lifestyle that did not differ very much from the British soldiers they would come to resent. Taylor writes that “many soldiers would have been in their late teens and early twenties, the same age and generation as their Provisional IRA enemies. Soldiers’ backgrounds, too, would have been similar, with many having been brought up in Britain’s cities on council estates that were every bit as drab and depressing as Belfast’s” (97). The Provos had more in common in terms of economic background with their British adversaries than they did with the earlier generations of IRA recruits. The closeness in age and background among British soldiers and the Provos is just one aspect of complications that colour the “Troubles” in Northern Ireland.

The process of joining the Provos was anything but clear and straightforward.

Taylor describes joining the IRA:

There were no advertisements in newspapers or recruiting posters along the Falls Road. The IRA was a secret army and admission to it was tightly controlled. Any potential Volunteer was carefully screened to make sure he or she was “sound” and not an agent working for army intelligence or the RUC’s Special Branch.... Once accepted, they were sworn in by declaring allegiance to the Irish Republic, proclaimed in 1916. Then they were trained. (71)

The declaration of allegiance to the 1916 proclamation of the Irish Republic is perhaps the most obvious link to the IRA of the Revolutionary period. That the Provos perceived themselves to be the inheritors of a tradition of armed rebellion against the British reveals more about the Provos’s outlook than about reality. But the complex situation of thirty

years of guerilla warfare in Northern Ireland makes vexed any easy equation of the IRA of the 1920s with the IRA of the 1960s. Even though some commentators note similarities between, for example, the treaty negotiations in 1921 and the peace process from 1993 onward⁴⁵ and extend such comparisons to characterize the IRA as a unified, relatively unchanging organization, the descriptions of who joined the IRA during its various periods of activity paint a different picture entirely. Indeed, from boyish rebels to tough, urban reactionaries (and now increasingly effective politicians), the character of the IRA has changed in radical ways. From the days of invading Canada to running for office in Northern Ireland, the IRA appears to be malleable, adaptive and an increasingly public organization. The face of Gerry Adams is very different from the “Irish Frankenstein” (even though Adams too is subject to political lampooning). What the history of the IRA seems to indicate is that the character of the IRA is as open to interpretation and change as the character of a nation.

⁴⁵ Tim Pat Coogan is keen to make connections between the War of Independence and the Northern Irish Troubles. For example, he writes that the peace talks in 1993-4 and the 31 August 1994 IRA ceasefire “was precisely what happened to Michael Collins and the delegation who reluctantly signed the treaty that accepted partition” (495). Other commentators on the 1994 ceasefire resist any such “precise” parallels. See D. George Boyce’s “Bigots in Bowler Hats? Unionism Since the Downing Street Declaration, 1993-5” in *Political Violence in Northern Ireland: Conflict and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Alan O’Day (1997) and *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (1996) by Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd.

1.8 Heroes?

Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallie make an interesting observation in their discussion of how the Provos differed from the old IRA of the War of Independence. They write that “the modern IRA has produced few heroes. Bobby Sands, who came closest to being one, did so not by bravery in the field against the British forces but by starving himself in prison” (2). Others would characterize Sands’s and others’ hunger strikes in the early 1980s as both “brave” and a battle against British forces,⁴⁶ but Bishop and Mallie’s general point is an interesting one. The names of the Easter Rising martyrs are well known, as are names such as Michael Collins and Dan Breen, but the era of heroes and hero worship may well be over – or, at least, fading. In *The Vanishing Hero*, Irish writer and critic Sean O’Faolain describes the end of another era: the end of the literary character of the social hero. In O’Faolain’s analysis the social hero of nineteenth-century “classical” novels is usurped by the anti-hero:

the anti-Hero is a much less tidy and comfortable concept than the social Hero since – being deprived of social sanctions and definitions – he is always trying to define himself, to find his own sanctions. He is always

⁴⁶ See Liam Clarke’s *Broadening the Battlefield: The H-Blocks and the Rise of Sinn Féin* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987) and *The Writings of Bobby Sands: A Collection of Prison Writings by H-block Hunger-Striker Bobby Sands*, in particular the introduction by “fellow republican” Gerry Adams (Dublin: Sinn Fein POW Dept., 1981) for descriptions of the H-Block hunger strikes as an extension of military strategy.

represented as groping, puzzled, cross, mocking, frustrated, isolated in his manful or blundering attempts to establish his own personal, suprasocial codes. (xxix)

In this description of the demise of one kind of hero, O’Faolain is documenting one aspect of modernist writing: the dissatisfaction with previously rigid codes of behaviour or firmly established social rules. And while he is not entirely pleased with this shift in the portrayal of heroes (he refers to pre-twentieth century fiction as “the good old days”), O’Faolain is largely correct in noting that the early years of the twentieth century was a watershed in the history of the novel – and other histories as well – in that the focal character of the classical novel all but disappears. In Irish history and Irish culture, the early twentieth century was turbulent and a time of rapid change as well as uncertainty. That heroic figures do exist in some literary and cinematic texts of this period is not surprising. However, how the representation of some-time heroic figures – largely members of the IRA – becomes increasingly complicated (even “groping, puzzled, cross, mocking, frustrated” and “isolated” as O’Faolain suggests) is the subject of the next chapter. The different types of gunman characterizations in fiction and film from 1920 to the present day are another example, indeed the cumulative examples of all the previously discussed discourses. The language of this genealogy of the gunman is dominated by the paradoxical rhetoric of change and tradition. There exists a tension between the desire for change (and the inevitability of change) and the desire to adhere or lay claim to some form of tradition.

The texts discussed so far together form a “strange” history of the gunman character who is caught between shifting ideas of “Ireland” (and Irish history) and rigid stereotypes. Indeed, the following chapter – which seeks to describe different Irish gunmen types in fiction and film – will also illustrate that what unites disparate representations of gunmen figures is a pervasive use of metaphors and images of imprisonment. The lack of freedom – both figurative and literal – in the existence of Ireland’s oft-called freedom fighters is the irony of representation to be highlighted in chapter two.

surviving sketches are of unvirtuous or foolish people (men), and their *inner* character emerges from Theophrastus's description of *external* characteristics: typical actions, ways of speech and, less frequently, physical details. For example, Theophrastus writes thus of "The Offensive Man":

The offensive man is the kind who exposes himself when he passes respectable married women on the street. At the theater he goes on clapping after everyone else has stopped, and he hisses the actors who are public favorites.... He shouts a greeting to someone he hardly knows, too, and uses the man's name in a familiar way; or he calls "Stop a minute!" to people who are obviously in a hurry. (47)

Theophrastus's description is, in the main, of behavioural characteristics and the resulting label of "Offensive" is due to offensive behaviour.³ The *Character Sketches* did not exist in isolation; they were taken up and used by dramatists such as Aristophanes to condition theatrical performances, and by political philosophers such as Plato to shape his thinking on the city-state and civic virtue (Anderson xi). One twentieth-century commentator on the history of character sketches has noted that "although there is something that goes against the grain for a modern man in the notion of 'human types', we still find it useful as we confront the complexity of humankind" (Smeed 1). Indeed, one of the appeals of Theophrastus's work is that it appears to make human nature – that thorny and ever-

³ One of the few examples of physical in addition to behavioural description is found in "The Repulsive Man": "he is apt to also have open sores on his shins or fingers ... his armpits are shaggy with hair growing far down his body, and his teeth are black and rotted" (81).

changing question – somehow manageable, objective and concrete. *Character Sketches* makes community life and human character seem organized, sensible and subject to analysis.

Moving from human nature to the study of fictional or literary character, there are many examples of analyses that assume character to be organized, sensible and subject to classification. Given such assumptions, it is not surprising that fictional characters and their study have progressed through many of the same theoretical movements and debates as, for example, the study of nationalism or the philosophy of identity and selfhood. Just as the idea of national identity has been approached from varying perspectives, so too has the study of fictional character. In brief, fictional character has so far been interpreted through the theoretical frameworks of formalism, structuralism, and post-structuralism.

Words such as “objective” and “concrete” are often associated with the formalist movement in literary studies. Originating in Moscow and St. Petersburg in the 1920s (and therefore frequently referred to as Russian Formalism), formalism primarily asserts that language can be described in a system or through rules.⁴ Formalists turned to the study of

⁴ The standard introduction to the Russian movement in formalism is Victor Erlich's *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine* (rev. 1981), and an influential formalist essay is Roman Jakobson's "Linguistics and Poetics" – included in his *Language in Literature* (1987). However, formalist methodologies are not restricted to Russian thinkers. See also Samuel Levin's *Linguistic Structures in Poetry* (1962) for an American application of formalist principles, as well as Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1915) – the progenitor of French formalism in linguistics, but a work that also profoundly influenced anthropology, folklore and literary criticism.

linguistics to formulate and elaborate models of language, plot, and larger textual structures. As Donald G. Marshall notes in his bibliography of contemporary critical theory, a “number of Russian critics steadily extended this sort of analytic technique to all the elements of literature – language, character, plot, and theme – finally conceiving the literary work as an integrated structure of subsystems” (35). The defining principle of formalist analysis is that structures exist and that proper analysis will not only divulge the elements of those structures, but will also lead to an understanding of how the structures operate within a given system.

A classic example of the formalist approach to character is Vladimir Propp’s *The Morphology of the Folktale* in which characters are understood as instruments of plot. Not unlike Theophrastus, Propp strove for an empirical study of the folktale.⁵ His study of the form (morphology) of the folktale strove for inclusivity and exactness; he asserted that “correct classification is one of the first steps in a scientific description” (*Morphology* 5). The central object of study is the “function of [the folktale’s] dramatis personae” (20). Propp’s meticulous documentation of the forms of the folktale categorizes heroes and villains in terms of their actions: it matters not who is the enemy of the hero, but rather that the hero vanquish the enemy. He is not so much concerned with what or who the hero

⁵ In a reply to criticism from Claude Levi-Strauss (that Propp was ahistorical), Propp asserted that his highest aim was the discovery of laws: that he was an “empiricist, not a philosopher” (“Structure and History” 12).

is, but what the hero *does*. Thus, Propp's work re-asserts the Aristotelian/Theophrastan view that character results in large part from action or, in the case of the folktale, plot sequence. The influence of Propp's work is seen in later assessments of narrative by structuralists such as Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov, and more recently James Phelan.

Structuralism is closely aligned to formalism; indeed, the work of Russian formalists such as Propp and Roman Jakobson influenced many structuralist thinkers. However, the differences between the two movements are subtly important. Formalists aimed to displace content, or meaning, in literary analysis and to focus instead on literary form. The formalist methodology, as seen in Propp's work, is analogous to empirical scientific research. Formalism and structuralism share a fundamental belief that literature is a complex system of analyzable forms. Structuralism, however, is much more concerned with literary function than formalism. Formalists may seek to analyze the actions of a character, but structuralists will analyze the function of such actions in the text as a whole, and in comparison to other texts. Broadly speaking, structuralists view character as existing in order to carry forward the action or to amplify a text's theme. In his earlier writings, Roland Barthes, for example, insisted that character is subordinate to plot, and that the belief that characters possess a "psychological essence" is mistaken and must be totally eschewed ("Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" 240). This may sound exactly like Propp's view of heroes in folktales. However, the key difference is that

structuralists like Barthes hold that character does not emerge as a detachable or independent element in narrative (a belief with which Propp or even Theophrastus would disagree). Rather, character dissolves into the sequence of events and really only figures as a cipher to perform narrative functions.

There are other structuralists who concentrate on character as a discrete element in narrative and apply theories of psychoanalysis and psychology (in the main the writings of Freud and Lacan) in an attempt to uncover the personality of characters, authors and readers. Lacan writes that the unconscious is structured like a language and his analysis of narration begins with language and proceeds to rediscover the discourse of the “Other” that is embedded in speech and literature.⁶ Embodying the same characteristics of Freud’s dream work, Lacan’s ideas that the production of narrative involves unconscious content is condensed as metaphor and displaced as metonymy allow literary critics to show how conscious discourse unveils unconscious meaning. Between 1945 and 1970, writes Ben Stoltzfus, “psychoanalytic critics tended to analyze characters in novels because these personae were seen as projections of the author’s psyche” (3). Similar analytical techniques were also applied to literary characters in themselves.⁷ This approach has a

⁶ Lacan’s theories of conscious and unconscious discourse are elaborated in *Écrits I* and *Écrits II*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York; London: Norton, 1977).

⁷ Classic examples of such psychoanalytic criticism are Marie Bonaparte’s study of Edgar Allen Poe, *The Life and Works of Edgar Allen Poe: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation*, foreword Sigmund Freud, trans. John Rodker (London: Imago, 1949) and Ernest Jones’s

certain allure, in the sense that critics of character such as Baruch Hochman affirm “the full congruity between the way we perceive people in literature and the way we perceive them in life” (44). The psychoanalytic approach to character shares with the structuralist approach an emphasis on behaviour or action; “the end result of most Freudian character analysis is the labelling of a trait or cluster of traits defining a character” (Knapp 6). Character, then, is associated if not assumed to be a function of realism; a character in a novel, for example, is realistic because that character represents a human being, or human characteristics. However, when realism and the values of a post-Renaissance individualism come under interrogation by post-structuralists, character is also questioned.

Post-structuralist analyses of character reflect on the ways in which character is imagined or fabricated, and such analyses frustrate the construction of character itself.⁸ Post-structuralism takes structuralism to task for its focus on general systems rather than on individual cases. A central example of post-structuralism’s decisive critique of structuralism is Jacques Derrida’s “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.” In this article, Derrida connects structuralism with a traditional Western philosophical blindness to the “structurality” of structure. Derrida’s specific criticism is of

study of *Hamlet*, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (London: Gollancz, 1949).

⁸ An example is Harold Fisch’s assertion that characters – in the same way as “subjects” or “selves” – do not exist at all other than as the product of language (“Character as Linguistic Sign” 595).

Levi-Strauss's anthropological work and the underlying assumption that both nature and culture are simply and purely themselves, and that the difference between them is self-evidently clear. Derrida counters that there are no self-evident truths; one can never examine things such as nature, culture, or a cultural text from the outside. There is no standing free of structure, Derrida argues, and because one can never transcend structure, there can never be an objective examination of structures.

Derrida's critique of structuralism extends to character in that just as nature and culture cannot be objectively analyzed, neither can character. Indeed, the post-structuralist critic will not only emphasize the constructedness of character, but will also call attention to how character is embedded within other constructions such as "reality," "identity," and "objectivity." This chapter takes into account the post-structuralist critique of realism and of character. In short, the often mimetic quality of the inhabitants of narrative must be balanced against an awareness of the constructed nature of character.

These comments are a necessary beginning because the project herein investigates what can only hesitantly be called a character type in Irish literature – the gunman. This thesis begins with perceived stereotypes, the complicated and diverse origins of which were discussed in chapter one. Indeed, the impulse behind this project is to examine stereotype, to catalogue in order to understand, and to illustrate the limitations of stereotype (a stereotype is not always completely false; it just does not allow for the

existence of individual cases or for differentiation). The interrogation of “type” is consistent with the post-structuralist critique of the notion of a unified identity. Nevertheless, such interrogation is dependent on the prior existence of types. In order to critique type, it is necessary to outline several characteristics of fictional gunmen and that is the function of this chapter.

The gunman has multiple characterizations, in multiple styles and genres. By identifying a large number of such characterizations – while acknowledging there are yet others – this chapter illustrates a lack of comparability of stereotypes within the very genres and texts that supposedly hold, create and fabricate those stereotypes. Despite their incomparability, this chapter argues that many if not all of the fictional gunmen are thematically, narratively, and often imagistically trapped or imprisoned. What works to encase or contain the gunman character varies: sometimes it is his own dogged commitment to the cause of Irish nationalism; sometimes it is the power of other characters; sometimes it is the text’s figurative language; sometimes it is narrative itself. Regardless of the means of imprisonment, the fictional gunman functions in a metanarrative paradox: on the one hand he is open to multiple representations and, on the other hand, his fate (the term is used here hesitantly) is determined, closed, restricted.

Literary categorizing is an inexhaustible and frustrating task. The following discussion recognizes that every example and every category established will have

exceptions and contradictions and that these exceptions/contradictions will inevitably lead to re-definitions and re-formulations. Yet, it would be foolish to refuse the effort just because the outcome is susceptible to further analysis. This is especially true since it is those characters who defy clear categorization that are the most interesting.

The following typology, however, begins with the obvious: the heroes and the villains. These characterizations are often limited by genre specifications or by historical period. Representations of the heroic gunman are more plentiful in the period just after Irish independence than in the late twentieth century, and representations of the villainous IRA gunman are plentiful in political thrillers set in Northern Ireland. This Manichean view does not, as already indicated, comprehend all character types of the gunman. Other gunman characterizations are less easily defined and do not easily fit one side or the other of a moral or ethical divide. By virtue of the following list, or typology, of the gunman, it becomes evident that the fictional representation of that character does in fact move well beyond the Manichean divisions between good and bad, hero and villain. The “Godfathers,” for example, who are men of rhetoric, leadership and negotiation are rarely purely good or evil, nor are the “Lost Boys” who fall under the sway of the Godfather’s power. These two types often co-exist in fictional representations of the gunmen and together suggest a strange generational, familial structure to many narratives. Even less easily delineated are the “Gunmen on the Run” because of their doubly marginal status;

they are both outside the law and outside the organization which defines them. There are also gunmen who are not men. Female “gunmen” rebel against the very characterization of masculine rebellion and even though their narrative numbers are relatively few, their representation raises new questions about the “type” and “nature” of the Irish gunman. Finally, but in many ways most importantly, the “Shadows of Gunmen” are the most interesting of all because of their ambiguity and the innovative narratives in which they exist.

2.1 Local Heroes

In 1926 *Irish Destiny* (written by Dr. Isaac Eppel and directed by George Dewhurst) opened at the Corinthian Theatre in Dublin to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the Easter Rising. The film was so popular it was held over for an additional week and it broke the house box office records (Rockett 43). Set in the 1921-22 War of Independence, the hero is Denis O’Hara, described as “a fine athlete and a daring horseman.” He is, of course, in love with the beautiful Moira and their love story is set against the struggle between the IRA and the Black and Tans. Denis is dashing as only a silent-film hero can be, and between dangerous IRA missions and escaping from a Black

and Tan prison, he also saves Moira from the evil poteen distillery owner, Beecher, a traitorous informer, and the “master” of a physically deformed dwarf.

The film has stark divisions between good and evil, heroes and villains, and Denis’s heroic salvation of the lovely Moira is a clear allegory for the larger battles raging between the British forces and the Irish rebels. That the film is titled *Irish Destiny* is an obvious indication that the story is one which was foretold and destined to occur – and nationalistic, sacrificial rhetoric is abundant. In a prison camp scene, the men are described as “unbroken in spirit” as they plan their escape; one dying volunteer says “if I could only live to fight” while his comrade weeps over him with “There lies a brave and unselfish hero, he sacrificed everything for Ireland.” During the actual escape, one prisoner darts across a field with at least ten biplanes chasing him – a fabulous visual image of Britain’s superior manpower and machinery and the mythic Irishman’s ability to thwart them. Even against such odds, the Irish are destined to win.

Meanwhile, back at the distillery – which produces the whiskey that rots men’s minds and bodies like Beecher is rotten (he tries to rape Moira) – Denis rushes to save the girl just as a fire starts (a fire that parallels fires burning in Cork and Dublin). The final title expresses the wish that peace will come to “all mankind” but in Ireland, of course, the negotiations which ended the War of Independence led to the Irish Civil War. Viewing the film over seventy years after its original audiences, *Irish Destiny* may easily be seen as

subtly undercutting nationalistic rhetoric. Original viewers would be only just recovering from the Irish Civil War, and would be all too aware of the violence leading to violence equation. But audience awareness of any questions the film may pose about violence or nationalism does not appear to be the case at all; as Kevin Rockett points out, “It is noticeable that the general tendency was to concentrate on the military events of the War of Independence and to ignore the more painful political differences of the Treaty and its bloody aftermath” (42). Equally noticeable is that heroism is located in the persons of young, handsome, Irish men and their romanticized struggle for independence.

Rockett further points out that the screening of *Irish Destiny* was combined with public forums on the future of film production in Ireland (43). At such forums arguments were made not only for the advantages of filming in Ireland, but also for the need to counter anti-Irish propaganda in America. *Irish Destiny* was propagandistic in more than one sense: it presented the recent Irish war to its own citizens in the unproblematic context of heroic struggles; it offered a counter-narrative to Sean O’Casey’s *The Plough and the Stars* (which erupted in controversy the previous February); and it was used to argue for the development of tourism (Rockett 44). *Irish Destiny* is a film produced at a time when Ireland was in a process of recovery and redefinition. The War of Independence and the Civil War took its toll on the young country’s emotional, economic, and social

resources. The newly formed Irish Free State was attempting to stabilize its political and economic structures.

Denis O'Hara's role is clearly more than that of a narrative protagonist; he is an instrument of propaganda, economic development and political stabilization. Interestingly, his type of representation as romantic hero does not continue uninhibited. Two views of the Irish rebel hero emerge and compete in the twentieth century. O'Hara's character stands in contrast to counter-narratives of nation formation such as O'Casey's Dublin trilogy and O'Flaherty's early novels. And yet there are direct descendants of O'Hara in popular fiction.⁹ The Irish hero of rebellion becomes increasingly complex in Irish literature and film after the turbulent 1920s.

Take, for example, the 1936 film *The Dawn*. While the film ends with an IRA victory over the Black and Tans, the political story takes a backseat (or operates as a subtext) to a family narrative that is dominated by secrecy, mistrust and suspicion. The opening title states "There is one sin which Irishmen will never forgive – Treachery to the Motherland," thus introducing the story of the Malone family, cursed by an ancestor's

⁹ Novels with distinctly heroic Irish rebels are often written by non-Irish writers. Conor Larkin in Leon Uris's *Trinity* and Patrick in Morgan Llewellyn's *1916* share Denis O'Hara's courage and determination. Iris Murdoch, who was born in Dublin but lived all her adult life in England, has created her own version of the Irish rebel hero in Patrick Dumay of *The Red and the Green*. All three of these novels place their heroic sagas either during the Easter Rising or, as in the case of *Trinity*, in the decades leading up to the 1916 rebellion. The Irish rebel gunman-as-hero, whether in popular fiction or not, is scarce in fictions dealing with the period of the Anglo-Irish War and after.

supposed betrayal of a neighbour because they did not get along. The time moves forward fifty years to 1916 when the younger Brian Malone, namesake of the informer, is told the story of his family's dark stain by his grandmother: an aged woman who is the keeper of family histories and the purveyor of stories. A few years after this, Brian is expelled from an IRA cell because he is deemed "untrustworthy," and so the grandfather's curse is seen to have tangible effects in successive generations. Brian is then set at odds with his brother in a scene which anticipates the Civil War: one sibling is a voice of force and violence, the other a voice of negotiation. Out of bitterness, Brian joins the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and his lover scorns him as a traitor. In a scene of emotional dislocation, she burns his letters.

Most of the film's action from this point on is told through a series of *Irish Times* headlines (detailing skirmishes between the Tans and the IRA) and visually powerful pantomimes. One such pantomime shows Black and Tan activities. Darkened silhouettes "act out" nastiness with guns, rifles and flames. The violence is thus distanced from an audience's sense of reality; the figures are anonymous; their faces are dark. In another pantomime, a figure of an RIC officer is shown passing information to the IRA (insinuating that the RIC man is actually Brian Malone who "betrays" the RIC after witnessing Black and Tan violence). In this scene, the darkness depicts the secrecy, the unknowability of who is working for which side. In the light, Brian learns of a major Tan raid, and goes to

his father intending that the two of them warn the IRA. Brian gets embroiled in another fight with his brother Billy, who actually pulls a gun on his own father and sibling in an attempt to stop their actions. The split inside the family is the second scene of foreshadowing of the upcoming Civil War.

Unbeknownst to Brian, brother Billy is the secret agent working for the IRA, and the IRA have already planned a pre-emptive strike against the Tan raid. Brian and his father's efforts to aid the IRA are regarded in these circumstances as counter-productive. The IRA are successful, but Billy is killed in the crossfire, and in an attempt to prevent his family from destroying the IRA's plans. The military success for the rebels has a mixed effect on the Malone family: they lose a son but their name is cleared of the past stain. They are reintegrated into the community through Billy's blood sacrifice. The irony is that Billy was not working to clear the family name, he was working for the nationalist cause: but his death, his martyrdom, has the bittersweet result of wiping the family's slate clean.

The Dawn is a film that heroicizes the actions of the IRA during the Black and Tan war and depicts the ability of violence (on behalf of the "right" side) to regenerate a family's good name. Interestingly, Kevin Rockett notes that the film "suppresses any social tensions which might appear between the Irish themselves" (64). Rockett is concerned with how class difference is elided in the film, and his point is exactly correct, but the tension inside the Malone family is clear and, in the end, deadly. The inability of the

brothers to be able to speak openly and honestly, their inability to recognize that they are really “on the same side” results in a death (of the son) as well as a rebirth (of the family name). This ending could be read as redemptive and positive.¹⁰ I would argue, however, that the atmosphere of darkness and secrecy, so carefully contrasted with pastoral scenes of natural beauty and bucolic happiness, is one which imbues the film with a sense of dread and even despair. Compared to *Irish Destiny*, which has none of *The Dawn*’s darkness, the presentation of Ireland’s heroes of revolution is becoming increasingly complex.

The positive, heroic presentation of the War of Independence in *Irish Destiny* and the more nuanced version in *The Dawn* is, as Rockett notes, part of a movement to establish an Irish film industry. The creation of national narratives with clearly defined heroes is not merely an articulation of history from a certain nationalistic perspective, it is also a wilful equation of cinematic development and its economic spinoffs with a heroic Irish past. Kevin Rockett’s argument is that constructing an Irish story went hand in hand with constructing an Irish film industry, and both goals required narratives that affirmed Irish bravery and heroism. His quotation of Maud Gonne MacBride’s review of *The Dawn* in *An Phoblacht* is well placed in his argument for the symbiotic relationship between

¹⁰ A reviewer in the 1936 *Leader* writes that *The Dawn* offers “too pleasant a picture of guerilla war in Ireland ... They loll in beautiful wooded glades or on rocky crags overlooking a picturesque winding road. The sun is beating down on them as they sing and joke with each other, while waiting for the lorries of the Tans to come round the bend to death” (qtd. in Rockett 63).

national symbolism and economic growth. Basing her argument on an analogy with American films (an analogy discussed in chapter one), Gonne MacBride writes:

there are thrills, breathless enough to satisfy the taste and craving of many to forget the monotony of dull and uneventful lives, which have been the success of so many Wild West and of the gangster films.

It establishes not the possibility but the certainty that Ireland will be able to compete in film production with Hollywood or any of the great film industries of the world, and that while we shall always enjoy the artistic work of other nations, the work of our own artists is equally great. (qtd. in Rockett 66)

A decade after the Irish Civil War, Gonne MacBride describes audience tastes as craving excitement and adventure. Her comparison of the Irish film with gangster and wild west American movies is in no way odd; American films were popular in Ireland and so too were War of Independence films. Irish audiences didn't seem to have any problem divorcing the close historical reality with the heroic versions presented to them on screen. "*The Dawn's* popularity may be linked to the radical nationalist polemic it articulated: 'the fight must go on', a direct statement to the audience declares towards the end" (Rockett 63). The movie theatre and its action heroes come to replace the more complicated, painful reality of war and internal strife. However, the Irish film industry did not take off in the way so many hoped for in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Rockett 66), and *The Dawn's* story-line stops short of the next stage in Irish nation-building, the Civil War.

It is not that surprising that heroic figures such as Denis O'Hara and Billy Malone fade significantly from Irish literature and film soon after the 1930s. The nascent Irish film

industry dies out, Ireland's government insulates itself from international politics, and the era of the anti-hero, as Sean O'Faolain defines it, begins and continues to this day. The characterization of the gunman and the IRA extends along the line of complexity, moral questioning and political criticism indicated in the works of O'Casey, Joyce and O'Flaherty. Even though heroes re-emerge in later twentieth-century fictions (the inevitable return of the hero will be discussed in chapter four), it is the more complex and villainous gunman who dominates the narrative construction of the IRA from the middle of the twentieth century onward.

2.2 Men in Black

Villains are often more intriguing than heroes. There are two studies that examine the IRA villain in fiction: Alan Titley's "Rough-Headed Kerns: The Irish Gunman in the Popular Novel" and Bill Rolston's "Mothers, Whores and Villains: Images of Women in Novels of the Northern Ireland Conflict." Both were written in the 1980s and both focus on political thrillers (what Titley labels "popular fiction") set in Northern Ireland. Writing in 1980, Titley argues that, with very few exceptions, there exists a stock Irish character in political thrillers, and that character is the savage, brutish, ruthless, animalistic IRA

gunman (25) who is “a univocal collective symbol of [British] fear and abhorrence” (31). In 1989, Bill Rolston¹¹ notes that the villains of the same political thrillers are invariably violent republicans who “are there to excite and titillate us, not least because in moral terms they are beyond the pale” (43). When it comes to the IRA gunman in both novels and films, there is little doubt that villains are most plentiful in the political thrillers dealing with the “troubles” in Northern Ireland between 1968 and the present. However, even the restrictive genre of political thrillers¹² (restrictive in the sense that such narratives depend on a degree of stock characterizations and plots) allows for more than one type of IRA villain. Rolston notes that among the IRA characters in thrillers, the villains can be divided into psychopaths, professionals, and godfathers (41). In contrast, Alan Titley argues that gunmen as villains are really all the same, and are so on dubious grounds.

According to Titley, the political thriller set in Northern Ireland and written almost exclusively by non-Irish writers invests so heavily in the stock IRA gunman as inhuman, irrational, and violence-obsessed that the narratives culminate in a late-twentieth-century derivation of much older stereotypes applied to all Irish people (30-31). The characterization of the IRA gunman in thrillers “deliberately fudges the difference between

¹¹ Rolston’s article is mainly concerned with female characters in political thrillers set in and about Northern Ireland but does devote several pages to the men in these women’s lives.

¹² For an extended analysis of the thriller’s characters and plots, see Jerry Palmer’s *Thrillers: Genesis and Structure of a Popular Genre* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).

the guerrilla in the street and the common man on his tractor or amongst his files” (32).

The gunman’s inevitable

freckles, red hair, slatternly dress and rotting teeth could be added from other sources to reveal the composite Irishman of the 20th century. Observers of this caricature’s evolution should note that he has lost the prognathous jaw and the receding forehead in less than a hundred years – a record stride up the tree of ascent. (33)

Whether a simple replacement of the “Hun or the Communist agent” or an expression of xenophobic disdain for colonized peoples, the IRA gunmen as depicted in popular thrillers are, in Alan Titley’s opinion, a dangerous and despicable representation in which “the general readership can comfortably give assent” (23) to “the latest mutation of precast Hibernatoids” (38).

There is little evidence to contradict Titley’s argument for the simple reason that bad guys have to be bad, especially in genres that dictate characterization to the extent of the heroes and villains in political thrillers. Titley’s concern that the evil gunman has come to be synonymous with Irishmen is valid, and the following discussion of IRA villains is not an attempt to relieve that anxiety. Rather, by first working through examples of what Rolston would call “psychopaths” and “professionals” in novels and films (some easily categorized as thrillers, others not), and then examining the more complex character of the “godfather,” the villainous gunman is presented as more varied than Titley would have it. But variation in villainy does not necessarily eliminate the overwhelming lack of IRA

heroes since the current “Troubles” in Northern Ireland exploded in 1968. As noted earlier, the romantic IRA hero is hard to find in the later half of the twentieth century; Titley writes that “there is no real popular literature of patriotic military justification” in Ireland (22), and his villainous counterpart has become more interesting, more varied, more complex. That there are more IRA villains than heroes is evidence enough to support Titley’s claim that the violent republican gunman has in no small way come to typify all Irish people. However, in those novels and films that are not so easily categorized as thrillers, the characterization of the IRA “bad guy” is permitted more flexibility and ambiguity; and in the characters of the godfathers such moral and personal ambiguity is best exemplified.

Bill Rolston’s three types of IRA villain (the psychopath, the professional, the godfather) is therefore a sound place to begin investigating the IRA bad guy. It must be noted, however, that before the troubles in Northern Ireland, there is at least one example of an IRA villain who embodies all three of Rolston’s types. Sean Lenihan in Rearden Conner’s 1933 novel *Shake Hands With the Devil* (set during the War of Independence) can be seen as the progenitor of the IRA villain in political thrillers forty and fifty years later. Lenihan has many of the characteristics of the psychopath, the professional, and the godfather and the translation of the novel into a film in 1959 contributes to the growing mass of IRA gunmen in fiction and film.

Shake Hands With the Devil is Rearden Conner's first novel¹³ and details the reluctant involvement in the IRA of a young medical student named Kerry Sutton (Kerry O'Shea in the film). Concerned with the impenetrability of evil and the difficulty in recognizing the devil when he shows up, the novel opens with an epigraph from an Irish folk tale:

"Never shake hands with the devil until you meet him!" he advised his companion-on-the-road.

"Paddy," replied the stranger, "*I am the devil!*" [1]

Like the unfortunate traveller in the folktale, Kerry Sutton is unable to distinguish clearly the good guys from the bad, and only too late decides that it is his IRA commander Sean Lenihan who is evil. (It is too late in the sense that Kerry not only loses his life at the end of the novel, but he also loses any psychological stability he may have maintained during his involvement in the IRA.) The variety of "types" of men in the IRA that Kerry encounters constantly challenges his assumptions about the organization. He is, for example, quite surprised that the men at a rural hideout are so different from the tough, fellow medical students/IRA Volunteers he knew in Dublin. The rural men "had open faces and fine physique. They belonged to the land. They looked to Kerry like decent, upright,

¹³ Conner was born in 1907 in Cork and emigrated to London in 1941. He worked as a broadcaster for the BBC, RTE and South African broadcasting. In his autobiography, *A Plain Tale from the Bogs*, he writes that *Shake Hands With the Devil* was not intended to "shield the brutalities nor the courage of the men on either side" of the Black and Tan Wars in Ireland between 1920 and 1921 (237).

peasant lads” (51-52). But there are still other types of men involved in the IRA beyond the peasant lads and tough urban students: “there were many also who had the cause deeply at heart. Young men, and middle-aged men who were imbued with the zeal and fervour of martyrs” (16). In addition to creating a vast ensemble of characters, Conner also layers his narrative descriptions with references to ghosts and ghostliness in order to emphasize the impenetrability of evil. The IRA men are certainly tangible figures, but their natures are as opaque to Kerry Sutton as a ghostly apparition. Out of this myriad of characters, it is Lenihan who most interests Kerry Sutton at first, and later repels him, and who receives the greatest amount of narrative description.

Lenihan’s signature characteristic is his coldness. His eyes “were the cold dead eyes of a corpse. His voice was soft, precise, and at times icy” (54). One of his men comments that his “heart is a lump of ice, and his soul is made of the grey frozen mist that one sees hanging around hill-tops when the sky is like blue glass” (78). Such iciness parallels Rolston’s description of the IRA professional in political thrillers (41), but emotionless behaviour is also a quality of Rolston’s godfather: “he [the godfather] has no qualms about ordering others to kill” (42). Like the thriller’s godfather figure, Lenihan is often cruel and is always severely disciplined and tough in his commands and dealings with his men. While commanding a certain degree of respect and admiration, Lenihan’s men are equally aware and perhaps more fearful of his intense rage and fanatical wrath: “in his

frenzy of rage, he machine gunned his enemies even as they lay sprawled in death on the earthen blood-stained road.... To all intents and purposes he became indifferent to the fate of his men” (126-127). Such “frenzy” is, in Rolton’s estimation, the quintessential characteristic of IRA psychopaths who are to the man “volatile, unpredicable and vicious” (43). Lenihan’s cold intellect is at first admired by the young Kerry, but it is this unpredictable fury that eventually turns Kerry’s loyalties away from the erratic leader.

The novel was made into a film in 1959, and the most intriguing character in both texts is not so much the young Kerry Sutton/O’Shea as is his antagonist, the IRA commander Sean Lenihan, played by James Cagney.¹⁴ Not unexpectedly, the film version of *Shake Hands With the Devil* condenses several of the novel’s characters into the one role of Lenihan – and the casting of Jimmy Cagney is telling. To have Cagney play this role is to bring his reputation and screen image as a “tough guy” into the Irish story. James L. Neibaur includes Cagney’s film career in his book, *Tough Guy: The American Movie Macho*, and comments that while many of Cagney’s film roles are easily categorized as tough guys, he was also able to bring a tenderness and a kind of madness into his

¹⁴ Directed by Michael Anderson with a script adapted by Marian Thompson, Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts, *Shake Hands With the Devil* was one of the first feature-length films to be produced out of the new Ardmore Studios in Ireland. As part of the more expansionist policies of Sean Lemass, Ardmore represented Lemass’s emphasis on employment and export as well as a willingness to engage in international economic investments. *Shake Hands With the Devil* was a landmark international production in the history of the Irish film industry as British and American as well as Irish funds and personnel were involved in its making (Rockett, *Cinema and Ireland* 98-103).

portrayals (59-60). Prolific film critic Andrew Sarris is more blunt in his summary of Cagney's career: "And how do we remember him most vividly? As the sociopathic gangster in *Public Enemy* ... and the psychopathic gangster in *White Heat*" (393). While both critics of Cagney's career agree that his filmography does not necessarily represent the potential he had as a character actor, the screen image of Cagney in the 1930s and 40s is clearly a peculiar mixture of the tough but tender rough guy. In 1959, when Anderson's *Shake Hands With the Devil* is released, a Cagney with none of the subtlety or contradictions of his previous performances appears as Sean Lenihan. Sarris writes that Lenihan is a "weird sadist" and that Cagney's involvement in the film "was a completely unmotivated oddity in his career" (395).

In both the novel and the film, Sean Lenihan is cruel towards women, but particularly toward the prostitutes who provide "comfort" for the IRA men in their hideout. The novel makes it clear that Lenihan's hatred for one such prostitute, Kitty Brady, is due to his jealousy over her shared affections. Kitty remarks that he's "a jealous man ... he's afeard of any ye small boys'd be makin' love to me when his back be turned" (129) and there is a long description of their earlier affair, before Lenihan volunteered (187-192). In the film, however, Lenihan is "weirdly sadistic," and as John Hill notes, the violence of the Black and Tan War is equated if not elided by the "sexual violence and psycho-pathology" of Lenihan's character (167). Lenihan is a villainous character beyond

redemption as his coldness, coupled with bursts of potentially dangerous fury, is visually and metaphorically linked to the devil of the title.

Rearden Conner's novel is littered with references to the devil and they are applied to just about everyone from the Black and Tans, to the IRA, to Kitty Brady, to Lenihan. However, at the end of the story when Kerry rejects Lenihan's view of the world and his plans to kill a female hostage, Lenihan is – in Kerry's eyes – an undeniable devil: "He's a demon, that man! I tell you, he's the very devil in the flesh" (296). But the novel, in its consistent questioning of good and evil, refuses to characterize Lenihan as the only devil. Kerry's method of stopping Lenihan is not as the film portrays it (a duel to the death between the two men on a sublime, rocky precipice over-looking a turbulent Irish sea), but rather by Kerry turning informer and letting the Black and Tans know where Lenihan can be found. In the novel, Kerry goes mad when the lovely female hostage (with whom he has fallen in love) is killed in retaliation for the death of a republican prisoner on hunger strike.¹⁵ He, and not Lenihan, is the character to erupt into a violent rage. While trying to get away to the barracks and inform on Lenihan, Kerry shoots more than one IRA man with a look "of pure evil" in his eyes (291). While the film ends with Kerry tossing his revolver into the ocean in repudiation of all the violence that has gone before, the novel allows no such neat endings. There is a bloody, gory ambush of Lenihan and the IRA men

¹⁵ In the film, the beautiful love interest of Kerry (played by Dana Wynter) is saved by Kerry's heroic efforts and his successful shooting of Lenihan.

in the hideout, and once Lenihan is riddled with bullets, the Black and Tans turn their violent enthusiasm on Kerry; their distaste for an informer rivals the IRA's. They tie Kerry to a land mine which explodes just moments after this description of Kerry's final thoughts:

How often had he read in novels of the hero being bound like this and then being released at the last minute. How often had he watched the cowboy hero in a Western horse-opera being bound and left to die, only to be released by his best girl, or even his horse, just when he was sinking into a coma. However, there was no girl nor horse here to release him. (302)

Rearden Conner's novel mocks the heroic patterns of other novels and (American) films by, if even for a short time, matching the madness of Kerry to that of Lenihan. The cinematic version, however, maintains a moral order (the good survive and the bad die) with the killing of the sadistic, crazed, murderous Lenihan by a young man who realizes, just in the nick of time, who is evil and who is good. Even though the novel expresses moral ambiguity and the difficulty in seeing the devil, even when he accompanies you on the road, there is no doubt that the Lenihan of both texts is a consummate villain. His character will be distilled into more one-dimensional figures through the next fifty years.

Lenihan's coldness and efficiency is reiterated in characters such as the professional bomber/prison IRA leader John McAndrew in *In the Name of the Father*. Lenihan's capacity for violent rages is seen time and again in more contemporary, psychopathic IRA

villains¹⁶ such as Sean Miller in *Patriot Games* and Harry in *The Boxer*. Lenihan's confused relationship with Kerry and his effective command over his men is echoed in other godfather IRA figures such as Skeffington in *Cal*, Joe Hamill in *The Boxer*, and Leonard, the Loyalist leader in *Nothing Personal*. What all of these villains have in common is either their inability to maintain healthy, loving relationships (Lenihan is incapable of having a loving relationship with Kitty, Sean Miller embarks on a rampage of revenge after his brother is killed) or their function within stories as the barrier to healthy relationships. McAndrew in *In the Name of the Father* comes between Gerry Conlon and his natural father and Skeffington attempts to pull Cal away from his father's pacifism. They are the antagonists to love, whether that love be romantic and sexual or familial.

By far the most interesting villainous characters are godfathers, or modern Irish chieftains. These are men of rhetoric and talk who try (often unsuccessfully) to control the other bad guys and who seldom act as killers themselves. Dan Gallagher in O'Flaherty's novel, *The Informer* (1925), is a classic example, but Joe Hamill in Jim Sheridan's 1997 film, *The Boxer*, also fits into this description as does Skeffington in Bernard McLaverty's

¹⁶ Rolston defines the republican psychopath as "volatile, unpredictable and vicious, ... there is also a behavioural connection to sexuality, though not in this instance repressed. Their sexual urges, like their character overall, are violent and hedonistic" (43). The psychopath fits so well into thrillers because he is irrational, and as a threat to general law and order he is easily cast as the evil to be extinguished.

novel, *Cal* (and in the 1984 film version). The godfather character is interesting because he has the potential for self-questioning and self-doubt that other villains do not.

In O'Flaherty's *The Informer*, Dan Gallagher is clearly positioned as a ring-leader, a commander and a dangerous man. He is intelligent, cold, cruel, a leader of men and controller of men's fates; he is handsome and charismatic, but he also inspires fear. Gypo Nolan, the informer, is afraid of Gallagher's eyes that are "so cold and blue and mysterious" (59). Dan Gallagher believes himself to be pure intellect, and his mission is his work, but he is never able to articulate clearly what that mission is: "It is an outcome of the new consciousness that I am discovering. But I haven't worked that out fully yet. It's only embryonic" (73).¹⁷ He is contemplative, and he questions and struggles with his own ideas; but Gallagher is an unclear man. His hapless articulation of who he is and what his goals are appears slightly ridiculous next to Gypo's physical power. All the same, Gallagher triumphs in the end of the novel by hunting down Nolan the informer, but Nolan alone achieves a semblance of forgiveness and grace. However confused his theories may be, in Gallagher's domination of other men O'Flaherty has created one of the earliest godfather gunmen. Gallagher's ambiguity in terms of good and evil, protagonist and antagonist is replicated in some later versions of the godfather.

¹⁷ The character of Dan Gallagher is given sustained attention in chapter three.

A more contemporary example of the godfather gunman, and one who occupies an enigmatic position in terms of the “good guys” and the “bad guys,” is IRA leader Joe Hamill in *The Boxer*. The 1997 film from the writing/directing partnership of Jim Sheridan and Terry George is ostensibly about Danny Flynn (played by Daniel Day Lewis): an ex-IRA man and ex-boxer who attempts to re-integrate himself into a life outside prison and outside the IRA. Joe Hamill is not only the leader of the IRA in Danny’s Belfast district, but he is also the father of Danny’s former girlfriend and current love interest. The main plot is concerned with the several, complicated barriers to Danny’s finding happiness. The boxing ring becomes a visual metaphor for both his fight to break free of previous associations with the IRA, and the forces that work to contain him. Hamill is the subject of a sub-plot that articulates a similar condition of battling to get out of one situation and the constraints imposed on such an attempt. Hamill is involved in a tense and fragile peace negotiation that is threatened by the radically violent and unpredictable actions of Harry, one of his own men.

In a particularly telling scene, Hamill is having dinner with his daughter and grandson and is interrupted by the news that Harry has been responsible for gunshots in the area. Hamill is caught between concluding a vital discussion with his daughter (about her involvement with Danny Flynn) and dealing with the threat to peace that arises from the hard-line ranks of his IRA subordinates. His roles as father, surrogate father to his

grandson, commander, and negotiator all clash. His mediation of political conflicts interfere with any possibility of domestic harmony. Hamill is against his daughter's relationship with Flynn and is, for most of the film, a barrier to romantic love. Hamill is also against any IRA violence that could threaten his work in negotiating peace. *The Boxer* is a film that articulates the conflict between personal and political desires and godfather Joe Hamill is one of several characters who fights for balance. He is only partially successful: the only way to keep the political peace is to have Harry killed; the only way to keep the domestic peace is to accept his daughter's love for Flynn. The conflicted position that Hamill finds himself in, however, is not representative of all godfather gunmen; this gunman category contains several deviations. Many godfathers are manifestly menacing.

Bernard McLaverty's 1983 novel *Cal* contains two IRA characters: one is a callous thug (Crilly) and the other an effeminate but threatening godfather, Skeffington.¹⁸ Many critics have noted that the film is concerned with the devastating power of violence,¹⁹ and that Cal is a victim trapped by his own guilt. What Cal feels guilty about is his involvement in the IRA murder of a Northern Ireland police officer and Cal's eventual

¹⁸ *Cal* was made into a film of the same title in 1984, directed by Irish-born Pat O'Connor and starring John Lynch as the eponymous character.

¹⁹ Alexander Walker writes that the key theme of the novel and film is the effect of terrorism on the community with the added pathos of a father and son torn apart by the violence in Northern Ireland, both by the IRA and by more local, Protestant bullies who attack Cal on the street and call him "Fenian bastard" ("Shadow of a Gunman: *Cal*" 11). See also John Hill's chapter "Images of Violence" in *Cinema and Ireland* (1987).

sexual affair with the officer's widow. Crilly is a schoolfriend of Cal's and Cal becomes involved in the operation through his influence. John Hill reads the character of Skeffington as "all too familiar. He is puritanical (e.g., a teetotaler), sexually repressed (e.g., complaining of Crilly's use of the word 'fucking') and fanatical (e.g., given to quoting Pearse)" (182). Hill also notes that Skeffington's characteristics clearly echo Sean Lenihan in *Shake Hands With the Devil* as puritanical schoolteacher and that this type of IRA man was familiar enough to be satirized in Brendan Behan's *The Hostage* in 1958 ("Images of Violence" 192). Indeed, Skeffington also fits into Rolston's description of the godfather type as he is clearly not a gunman, but an intellectual who "manipulates thugs like Crilly into doing his dirty work for him" (Watt, "The Politics of Bernard McLaverty's *Cal*" 143). Hill reads Skeffington as typical fanatic and Watt reads him as godfather, but neither reading points out the contrast established between Cal's natural father and Skeffington. Shamie works in an abattoir (the stench of which makes Cal physically ill) and Skeffington orchestrates murder and mayhem. Both men have weaknesses: Shamie has a nervous breakdown after their house is burned, and Skeffington is hampered in his activities because of his own failing father. If Cal is a victim, he is so in part because he is caught between his father's surrender to the forces of conflict in Northern Ireland (Shamie refuses to fight back, he is exhausted by the Troubles), and the distasteful options offered by Skeffington. Cal does reject his father, allowing himself to fall under Skeffington and

Crilly's influence, but he later regrets his involvement in IRA schemes. At the end of the novel he wishes for someone "to beat him to within an inch of his life" in punishment for his crimes (*Cal* 154). Skeffington and Crilly represent a dead end for young men like Cal, but his other options, such as his father's world of the butcher trade, are no more appealing. He rejects both because he doesn't have the stomach for either one. In this way he shares many characteristics with the lost boys who are characters very often connected to and done harm by godfather gunmen.

2.3 The Lost Boys

As discussed in chapter one, the ranks of the IRA have been filled with young men who join for various reasons. Peter Hart describes the early twentieth-century IRA recruit as "young, male, and tough," who joins an organization characterized by "cliques and friendships" and "charged with a youthful intensity" (14). In his coverage of the IRA in Northern Ireland from the mid-1960s to the 1990s, Peter Taylor highlights the youthfulness of recruits and the reactive nature of their decision to join the IRA. They joined because they wanted to strike back at British army brutality, Protestant political domination, or disaffection with the economic and social world of Catholic Northern

Ireland. The artistic representation of young gunmen offers a different picture. This category of lost boys is necessary because of the number of novels and films that present vulnerable, impressionable, and often immature recruits in the IRA or earlier revolutionary groups. What connects these lost boys is an undetermined sense of their own identity, and their protean character translates into a longing for order and a desire to be part of something larger than themselves. The three lost boys to be discussed here (Bartly Madden in *Insurrection*, Tod in *The Wrong Man*, and Gerry Conlon in the film *In the Name of the Father*), share a detrimental lack of direction that becomes fatal for two of them and a cause for imprisonment of the third.²⁰

In 1950, Liam O’Flaherty published *Insurrection*, one of his last novels. Coming after a break from writing of almost twenty years, *Insurrection* provides a quintessential lost boy in the character of Bartly Madden. Madden is the protagonist in this historical fiction of the 1916 Easter Rising as he is drawn into the fighting and onto the side of the Irish rebels. Early in the first chapter, Bartly Madden is described as young, penniless, and feeling as though he has nowhere to go and nothing to do. Then, he hears the voice of

²⁰ There is a telling moment in Benedict Kiely’s novel, *Proxopera*, in which the protagonist (Mr. Binchey, a retired school teacher held captive and then forced to deliver an IRA car bomb) recognizes a young, masked IRA gunman. He is able to ascertain the youth’s identity because of his feet: they are exactly like the boy’s father’s. Mr. Binchey thinks that the young man is behaving “as in the best or worst gangster films except that the hoodlums talk and act cool and this fellow seems to be nervous” (13). It is the boy’s nervousness that Mr. Binchey first notices.

Patrick Pearse proclaiming the Irish Republic. A tabula rasa, Madden is subsequently inscribed as a soldier of the Irish rebel army who is infected by rhetoric, gestures of bravery and an ambiguously narrated “dark rapture.”

Madden is introduced very early in the novel, and he is significantly “in the depths of gloom” on an otherwise bright spring day (6). It is as if his mood foreshadows the rising to come. His gloom derives from the fact that he has just been robbed of all the money he earned while working in Liverpool. Madden had got drunk in a “slum tavern while waiting for the train” and was stripped of all possessions (6). Consequently, he is lost, confused, and angry. He dreads returning home where his empty pockets would receive the scorn of the whole parish. Financially vulnerable and feeling too ashamed to return home, Madden is approached on the Dublin streets by British recruiting officers. “He just cursed them under his breath and went sombrely on his way” (7). The narrator comments that “in spite of his desperate plight, war and the wearing of a soldier’s uniform were still an anathema to his peasant soul, that yearned only for a plot of ground on which to mate and breed his kind in peace” (7). Madden rejects the offer of a place in the English army, but when he sees Irish rebels marching down the street, he is drawn to them, “sensing that their dark rapture had its origin in a tragedy similar to his own” (11). This ambiguous “dark rapture” is part of what captivates Madden, and that rapture takes corporeal form in the brief

appearance of Patrick Pearse, standing on the steps of the General Post Office and declaring the Republic of Ireland:

At that moment, Madden threw his head forward and stared in *rapture* at the poet's face.... For the first time in his life, his mind had conceived an abstract idea that lit the fire of *passion* in his soul. (28-29, emphasis mine)

In typical O'Flaherty style (which will be explored at length in chapter three), the scene is melodramatic and narrated in a somewhat overblown manner. Nonetheless, Madden is enraptured by Pearse's words: words that evoke both maternal love and geographic nostalgia. The intensity of Madden's rapture is re-emphasized by the despair Madden suffers when Pearse leaves. When the poet ceases to speak, Madden's exaltation turns to unbearable loneliness. Using a favourite analogy, O'Flaherty soon propels young Madden into the fray like "a rabbit that stands hypnotised by a weasel's deadly stare, an attraction that was stronger than his inherited fear held him motionless ... His abject fear changed at once into frenzied joy" (37). Madden's desire to recapture the rapturous feeling leads him to unthinking or irrational reactions to what is going on around him. He is susceptible to suggestion and persuasion, and these two characteristics are common aspects of the lost boy.

Not all lost boys are quite as impressionable as Madden, but they are all vulnerable, albeit for different reasons. Despite different personal circumstances, the lost boys join the association of Irish rebels (either in the Irish Citizen Army in 1916 or the Provos in the

1970s and 1980s) in response to a need and a desire to belong, to have order or meaning to an otherwise unordered universe. Other characteristics of the lost boys are their youth and their vulnerability. As such, they are susceptible to the influence of determined, passionate men who offer some answer to the many questions plaguing the lost boys. Indeed, all the gunmen who are lost boys find or are found by older figures who serve as mentors or advisors.²¹

Danny Morrison's novel *The Wrong Man* provides a good, clear example of this acolyte/mentor relationship. The mentor, father-figure is Raymond Massey. En route to an IRA meeting, Raymond comes across a gang of skinheads beating up two men, and he steps in to even the odds. There are too many of the skinheads, and Raymond declares defeat and tries to get the two injured victims into his car. Once inside, however, Raymond goes after the gang "roaring like an animal" (38). Only when thrown bricks shatter his windshield can one of the injured youths convince Raymond to get them to a hospital (38).

²¹ Kiberd's analysis of father/son relationships in early twentieth-century canonical Irish texts is an interesting point of comparison to the godfather/lost boy connection. While Kiberd argues for a literary paradigm in which the son rebels against the father, many of the lost boys are searching for adequate father figures. Kiberd's prototype is only applied to a few texts, but in the context of this thesis there are several variations. Even two mainstream Hollywood films, *Patriot Games* and *The Devil's Own*, tinker with the vexed relationships between fathers and sons. In *The Devil's Own*, the fatherly character played by Harrison Ford welcomes an Irish youth (Brad Pitt) into his home only to feel deeply betrayed when that boy turns out to be a gun-runner for the IRA. *Patriot Games* pits an American FBI agent (played by Harrison Ford) against an extremist Irish terrorist, and Ford's character cannot help but feel some paternal concern for his youthful antagonist.

One of the two boys Raymond has rescued is Tod, the lost boy in the novel.²² The scene shows Raymond as the first into the fray in defense of the underdog, yet too easily moved to unnecessary violence and revenge. At the hospital, Raymond tells Tod that he is in the IRA and that he is going back to get the skinheads: “They’re not going to fuck the IRA about. They’re not going to fuck ordinary people about” (39). Tod is thrilled by the promise of retributive violence and agrees to follow Raymond, “relishing the idea of being on the side of the IRA” (40).

Raymond makes good on his promise to Tod and their subsequent night of violence and vigilante justice is pivotal to both their lives. Tod is both “excited and afraid” as he watches Raymond perform his self-imposed role as street judge and jury. As Raymond and Tod hunt down the gang members and mercilessly punish them, Raymond is described with the conflicting images of a savage animal and a proud warrior, a mixture appropriate to Tod’s feelings of fear and excitement: “Raymond rose like some sea monster coming up for air, except his face was that of a warrior and the sewer rod was raised high above his head like a broadsword.... He galloped after him but his prey had disappeared into the back garden” (40–41). Just like Bartly Madden, Tod experiences a

²² As rescuer, Massey is, in many ways, a throwback to the heroes of films such as *Irish Destiny*. He is unquestionably loyal to the cause, his men admire him, he is inventive in his missions, and he is as passionate about his beliefs as he is violent in his actions. That Morrison’s character shares a name with famous film star Raymond Massey (who had the lead roles in more than sixty films, including two separate performances as Abraham Lincoln) is likely no coincidence.

powerful emotional response to the actions of an Irish rebel. He is “euphoric” at Raymond’s thrashing of the thugs, and he decides to join the IRA. Both Madden and Tod are intoxicated by the thought of taking control, of being the “strong one.” Raymond sees a younger version of himself in Tod’s enthusiasm: “that same eager expression he once had when he begged a man now dead to get him into the IRA” (42). Raymond tells Tod that the IRA isn’t very glamorous (as if Tod would believe such an assessment at this point), and that “it’ll ruin your life. It ends up owning you” (43). This is all ironic foreshadowing. Tod does join, the IRA does ruin his life, but it also ruins Raymond’s. Raymond has adopted the “wrong” man as a surrogate IRA son. In the end, Tod betrays the organization and with it, Raymond.

Before that betrayal, however, Morrison’s novel takes on a new dimension. What has begun as a political melodrama now morphs into a family saga. Raymond is a father figure to the young Tod, and their relationship is articulated within the context of the women they love, marriage, childbirth, separation, and death. The narrative context is lifted from an accounting of bourgeois banality by the fact that Raymond and Tod are in the IRA, but the narrative structure remains familiar. Raymond is a workaholic, and the recurring conflict between him and his wife, Róisín, is that he is too devoted to his “job.” Because of his IRA activities he even forgets their anniversary (131). Raymond’s flaws as

a husband are not perceived by Tod who, for most of the story, sees Raymond as a role-model.

Tod is an insecure youth who tries to emulate a man with whom he will never compare. Tod attempts to address his physical inadequacies at “work” (Tod is asthmatic and very ashamed of it) and as a man through infidelity. His adultery is intended to confirm his masculinity. Such behaviour is the stock and trade of soap opera. However, by embedding this conventional narrative in the context of the Troubles, Morrison constructs a metafiction of conflict and confusion: the narrative of the IRA depends on its conflict with Britain, and this conflict informs and invades the personal stories of every volunteer. This invasion of the private narrative by the public or the political, or the inability of the personal story to survive when placed against political agendas, is part of Morrison’s theme.

As the title may suggest, *The Wrong Man* is also concerned with questions of (mistaken) identity and ethics. Tod’s narrative position as protagonist and as informer complicates this representation of a lost boy. Morrison does not dwell on the reasons for Tod turning informer. Rather, he waits until the end of the novel to offer some clues, but they are just that, clues. The reasons are not clear. Tod joins the IRA after witnessing Raymond’s valiant beating of the gang of skinheads. Once inside the IRA, Tod becomes more confident in himself and more arrogant. Morrison makes a point of distinguishing

Tod from Raymond in Tod's responses to certain situations and in his relative inexperience:

Raymond was part of the darkness, melded into the jungle feel of the deserted dark streets, understood the wildnight sounds threading the atmosphere. A rat went scurrying into a hedge and somewhere distant a dog howled.

Tod, on the other hand, was aware of souls hanging in the air like dew, witnessing all, and he shivered. This was the first time he was going to take part in killing someone and he was aware of its importance, how profound an act it was. (55)

Portraying Raymond as part of the "jungle" and the "wildnight" reinforces the previous images of him as an animalistic but proud warrior. Tod, in comparison, is hesitant and brooding. He fears being watched by ghostly presences, and that his actions may have nether-world witnesses. Tod lives in constant fear of discovery, and his troubled mind after an extra-marital affair is indistinguishable from his guilty conscience for other acts (informing on his comrades). After Tina, an IRA comrade, discovers one of his illicit liaisons, Tod is stricken:

The risk of discovery was always greatest in the immediate aftermath of infidelity, should a loyal friend or relative of Sal's witness it and inform on him. He was less vulnerable with the passage of time: one's confidence increased, one could brush memory aside, brush aside the credibility of the informer and rewrite the past, sometimes with a conviction that was startling. (164)

In this passage, Tod is worried about his wife discovering his affair, but the repetition of the words "inform" and "informer" is hard to ignore. The irony is that Tod is concerned

about someone informing on him, when his own loyalty to the IRA is put into question from the first page. Tod, the unfaithful husband, is equated with Tod, the unfaithful comrade.

When Tod is later bedridden with an asthma attack, he is frustrated at the signs of his physical weakness. This period of illness gives Tod time to consider the choices he has made and the first indications of his doubt about the IRA are revealed:

Then he had become emotionally embroiled in the political conflict; then, through Raymond Massey, came involvement in the IRA and his discovery that being so close to death, with its heightened sense of mortality and delusive sense of immortality, being so close to death in the inflicting and surviving, had accentuated his lust for life.... We've all been wasting our time.... Give yourself a shake, Tod, he said to himself. *This* has never been you. (166-167)

Tod's desire to join the IRA is partly because of his feelings of sexual and physical inadequacy. But whatever his reasons, they are not the political ones that prompt and sustain Raymond's involvement. Morrison's conflation of Tod's infidelity to his wife with his infidelity to the IRA is a crucial link. In the case of Raymond, the IRA is akin to a mistress, a point made explicit by Róisín, who thinks to herself that Raymond's "devotion and loyalty meant that the damned IRA might as well have been another woman" (61). Raymond's involvement in the IRA is written in terms of "devotion and loyalty," but Tod's role is narrated in more nuanced terms.

Tod articulates his involvement in the IRA with the language of “discovery,” “lust for life” and delusion. However, in the last moments of his life and the final pages of the novel, Tod’s betrayal is explained as if it were done out of jealous pique:

He remembered how distant he found IRA Volunteers in his own district years before. They had been aloof, proud, arrogant. You couldn’t understand their jokes; although, later, when he became involved he joined fully in, and enjoyed, the banter. As Bobby made his way past the post office and the hairdressers, Tod observed with increasing resentment the growing distance between them. He observed Bobby’s firm pace as if it was part of some secret, particular pattern from which he was now permanently excluded. In his new state he became convinced of just how correct his initial opinion of republicans had been, except now they swaggered even more. (197)

Thus, Tod informs not out of some political agenda, nor moral conscience, but because he despises and longs for what he sees as a pride and manliness in the IRA. The macho swagger evades him even after he joins. It is his own self-hatred, his own feelings of inadequacy that cause him to lash out at his own icons of manhood. Tod’s biggest flaw is that these icons fail him because he is unable to see them as exactly that: icons of his own desires and not human beings with very human failings. Tod is so vulnerable and insecure that when he begins to worship Raymond, it is as if that idolization is doomed to turn back on them both. Because Tod is so young and so lost when he joins, Morrison implies a certain inevitability in Tod’s betrayal of that which he wished to be a salvation: both the man and the organization can never live up to Tod’s expectations nor can they ever satisfy his desires. Tod’s rejection of the values held by the older authority figures in the IRA is

like any adolescent rebellion against a parent. However, the fact that the authority against which Tod betrays/rebels is the IRA results not in maturity or some coming of age, but in death.²³ Albeit in very different circumstances, both Barty Madden and Tod die, and their “endings” seem inevitable.

But the final lost boy to be considered does not die, perhaps because he is a character not solely under fictional construction. Unlike the vast majority of texts considered in this thesis, *In the Name of the Father* (1993), directed by Jim Sheridan and co-written by Sheridan and Terry George, is based on the true story of suspected terrorist Gerry Conlon. Imprisoned along with his father and other family and friends for the Guildford bombing,²⁴ Conlon was convicted on evidence from coerced confessions. It took fifteen years to overturn the convictions. Like many films that are both based on real life events and address controversial issues, *In the Name of the Father* received much criticism for manipulation of “historical fact,” and was accused of being a propaganda film for the

²³ Tod is German for “death.”

²⁴ On 5 October two bombs exploded in pubs in Guildford: the Horse and Groom and the Seven Stars. Five people were killed, and many more injured, including four army recruits. Part of the “British campaign,” the bombings attempted to strike at economic, military, political and judicial targets, but they were also aimed at re-engaging the attention of the British public onto the situation in Northern Ireland. Bishop and Mallie note that bombing “Britain had failed to move British public opinion in the way the IRA had hoped for” (*The Provisional IRA* 205-206).

IRA in Northern Ireland.²⁵ Despite its basis in historical and personal reality, *In the Name of the Father* is a dramatization and, as so many critics saw as evidence of its failings, the film takes artistic licence with much of the material. The character of Gerry Conlon and all the others in the film can be read as characters in a dramatic recreation of events that are to this day under contestation. When the historical facts are in dispute, it is not unreasonable to approach and include the characters in the film in a consideration of fictional representations. There is no doubt about the narrative form of the film; the storyline is constructed and manipulated to place the judicial account in the context of a father and son story that has archetypal elements.²⁶ For the purposes of this discussion of the lost boy, the two characters of most interest are Gerry Conlon (played by Daniel Day Lewis)

²⁵ Robert Kee, while praising the film's emotive power, writes that it is also a "farrago of rubbish" (*The Sunday Times* 3), and Peter Millar outlines what he views as "deliberate distortions of fact" in his article "The Camera that Lies." Other critics such as David Pallister who worked with Gerry Conlon on his book, takes a more balanced view by noting the "heated fraction debate" but not by avoiding critical scrutiny on the film ("In the Name of the Father" 52). The story is a powerful and contested one; no filmic treatment would have escaped such criticisms. The criticisms do, however, point out some important questions about how to deal cinematically with political events in which parties involved are still in conflict, and the level of responsibility the filmmakers should or should not shoulder in their creative process.

²⁶ Terry George and Jim Sheridan have collaborated on three films that involve familial paradigms. *Some Mother's Son* (1996), for example, is as much about mothers and sons as it is about IRA hunger strikers in Northern Ireland. In a joint interview with *Premiere* magazine, Sheridan said about *In the Name of the Father* that "I was looking to make a film about a good father." Terry George also commented that "Jim always gets back to basic family relationships, these primal issues. I go for the political story and the structure of it. It's an archetypal combination y'know" (89).

and John McAndrew (played by Don Baker), the “real” IRA man he encounters in prison and who, for a short time, becomes a godfather in more than one way to the wayward Gerry.

In the Name of the Father could have had the same title as Danny Morrison’s novel *The Wrong Man*. Mistaken identity is established in one of the film’s opening scenes and the concern with true and false identity (as well as guilt and innocence) will be amplified in the main story-line. Belfast in the early 1970s is the setting, and the scene is one of chaos in an urban war zone. The Falls Road area is embroiled in a riot after Gerry Conlon and a friend are mistaken by British troops for gunmen. While Gerry and his friend almost gleefully race from the British (they have grins on their faces), the IRA men stand on roof tops and observe and then move in the opposite direction of Gerry to hide guns and weapons.²⁷ Gerry is young, mocking, defiant, reckless (he dances with jeering insolence in front of riot-gearred troops); the IRA men are older, bearded, grey-haired, confident and determined. Thus the difference between the unfortunate Gerry and the group to which he is assumed to belong is established.

Indeed, the IRA grab Gerry from the fray of the riot and pull him into a side alley; they have done this before. Gerry is a petty thief, and it is Gerry’s father Giuseppe (played by Pete Postlewaite) who urgently steps in to negotiate for his son’s safety. The IRA are

²⁷ That Gerry and the IRA move in opposite directions is a visual indication that the young man and the organization are not on the same path.

the street police; they try to control petty crime and they do so with threats of physical violence. They know the difference between immature boys like Gerry and possible volunteers for their organization. Unlike the British in the film, the IRA can distinguish their allies from the indifferent. The scene is clear in its separation of Gerry from the IRA, and it establishes the ease with which British forces can misread situations and for those situations to result in violence.

After Giuseppe successfully convinces the IRA that Gerry won't be any more trouble, the conflict moves into a domestic, and familiar, context: the father wants the son to clean himself up and get a job. The son feels his father and his family amount to nothing, and that he is misunderstood. This conflict between father and son is vital contextual background for their next encounter with the IRA. In prison, Gerry encounters the man responsible for the bombing of the Guildford pub and the relationship between Gerry and John McAndrew can be read in terms of a lost boy's encounter with a godfather and surrogate father.

While in prison, Gerry and his father watch the entrance of John McAndrew and overhear a comment by one of the rasta inmates: "He looks like the real thing." Indeed, McAndrew has confessed to the Guildford bombing, but the British police officers do nothing about his statement: "You've got the wrong people," McAndrew says. Armed with an impenetrable, indeed typically icy, glare, McAndrew stands up against the British

inmates on his first day inside in order to prevent the continuing intimidation of Gerry and his father. McAndrew's act of defiance is intoxicating to Gerry. The act and Gerry's response are reminiscent of the way Raymond's strength and defiance exhilarates Tod and the fictionalized Pearse enraptures Bartly Madden. Like Tod and Bartly Madden, Gerry is thrilled to see anyone not only resist the powers that be (both official guards and the unofficial power structure in the prison) but also to see someone act out. Gerry has been dismayed at his father's acquiescence to authority and his seeming acceptance of an unjustified incarceration. Like Tod in *The Wrong Man*, Gerry responds to action, specifically action aimed against the forces that have both literally and figuratively entrapped and imprisoned Gerry and his family.

In a parallel scene to the earlier sequence in the film when Gerry joins the street riot in Belfast, McAndrew's resistance to the British inmates leads to a prison riot. Gerry throws the force of his frustration in with the IRA man who stands in such stark contrast to Giuseppe, whom Gerry views as being "a victim all [his] life." Unlike Gerry who has been smoking dope with the Caribbean inmates,²⁸ McAndrew is older, clean cut and organized. He knows the prison system and knows how to manipulate the inmates. He uses intimidation and persuasion ("violence is all they understand," McAndrew comments

²⁸ In a wonderful scene, Gerry and the Rastafarian men drop acid that has been spread on pieces of a puzzle. The puzzle colourfully paints a map of the world in terms of the British Empire.

to Gerry at one point), in order to launch a campaign for better conditions. This campaign is done in the name of Giuseppe, whose health is failing and who has earned a degree of distanced respect from both inmates and guards. Giuseppe clearly refuses McAndrew's offer of assistance and resists the campaign for improved conditions in his name. Gerry is now caught between his own father's wishes and the drive to action as embodied by McAndrew.

That Gerry has no way out at this point in the film is visually presented in a scene in which McAndrew tries to indoctrinate Gerry into the IRA's ideology of resistance to the British presence in Northern Ireland. They are walking outside in the prison yard; they walk in circles on a painted pathway. The scene is shot through the wire fence surrounding the yard and so the visual image is not only of legal imprisonment, but also of the confinement that McAndrew's rhetoric invokes. He speaks of the prison as "an extension of the British system"; indeed it is in McAndrew's view the physical manifestation of colonial practice. Gerry is swayed, until a crucial moment in McAndrew's campaign of terror in the prison.

McAndrew has planned the murder of a prison guard during the screening of a film, which is the rather obviously ironic choice of *The Godfather*. The murderous attack occurs at the moment in the film when Al Pacino's character achieves a level of mutual understanding with Marlon Brando's Godfather. Brando is both natural father and Mafia

godfather to Pacino's character and Coppola's film is, among other things, concerned with a son's reconciliation with the dual roles his father performs. Gerry, however, must choose which "father" to follow. The guard's murder is cruel. He is set on fire, and McAndrew's cohorts prevent anyone from coming to the guard's aid. Unlike the father and son in *The Godfather*, Gerry does not seek further connection with McAndrew. Rather, he turns away from McAndrew's calculatingly cruel tactics and rejects such forms of "bravery." These short scenes in the prison are pivotal moments in the film's family narrative: Gerry flirts with the attractive power of violent action, but is eventually repulsed by the cruelty necessary to implement such plans. Because of his disillusionment with McAndrew, Gerry returns to his father's side and they combine their efforts in an attempt to seek justice within the British legal system.

This father/son reunion is the centre-stone of the film's personal story: the political narrative is not nearly so clearly resolved. Sheridan and George's film in no way presents the IRA as heroic, romantic or pure. Rather, the representation of various IRA men, in particular McAndrew, is one of a calculating, ideologically rigid, emotionally detached, determined organization. It is true that the film strongly indicts the British system (troops in Northern Ireland, police inspectors in England, injustice in the court and from lawyers, judges and media), but both the British and the IRA are set up as the Scylla and Charybdis between which Gerry is caught. Gerry is a lost boy until the moment he turns his back on

the tactics of the IRA, and until he learns to recognize what the film highlights as the strength of his father's nonviolent forms of protest.²⁹

In the Name of the Father validates the kind of courage personified in Giuseppe Conlon: a slowly determined pacifistic belief in doing things within the system. Other narrative representations of the lost boy are not so lucky, or so smart, as to recognize the kind of virtue personified in Giuseppe Conlon. For Tod and Bartly Madden, the only way out of the IRA is death. Even though Gerry never really joins the IRA, his story is still visually presented in imagery of entrapment. Had Tod or Bartly tried to get out of the IRA, they may have ended up like one of the next gunmen characters: on the run.

²⁹ In a similar narrative pattern, Cal is a lost boy caught between two paternal forces – his own father who is physically and mentally beaten down by Northern Ireland's inequities, and Skeffington. That Cal chooses neither man and instead rushes into the arms of what is undeniably a maternal presence, Marcella, is interesting but no less Oedipal. He has literally slain Marcella's husband and takes the dead man's place as sexual partner to the older woman (he even wears the dead man's clothes). Cal's story is one that moves toward self-understanding for the protagonist. Even though he is arrested at the end of both the novel and the film, Cal does come to an epiphanic clarity regarding his own sense of guilt.

2.4 No Way Out: Gunmen on the Run

There is an interesting irony in the representation of gunmen on the run. In both *Odd Man Out* and *House of Splendid Isolation*, the gunmen are primarily escaping or hiding from the forces of law and order. The narratives in which they exist, however, are overwhelmingly concerned with the encounters the gunman has with people: the connections, both failed and successful, he makes with those he meets along the way. The narratives in which gunmen on the run are located are overwhelmingly about being found.

Soon after the end of World War II, British director Carol Reed released *Odd Man Out* (1947) starring a very young James Mason. Embracing the classical unities of time, place and action, the film portrays a gunman on the run. The protagonist, Johnny, is a tragic figure, trapped from the outset by circumstance and fateful decisions. Johnny had been sentenced to seventeen years in prison for gunrunning but has escaped early in his sentence. While he states early in the film that he is disillusioned with violence and has trouble adjusting to the “outside” world, he has never really left the IRA. One of his comrades tells Kitty (the unoriginally named, token, tea-bringing love interest) that “as long as Johnny lives he’ll belong to the organization.” This belief that one can never leave the IRA, or its earlier manifestations, is common: Nora Clitheroe of O’Casey’s *The Plough and the Stars* can never really come to terms with the fact that her husband Jack has never

and will never leave “the cause,” and Jude tells Fergus in *The Crying Game* that “you’re never out.”³⁰ But Johnny is somehow an “odd man out.”

Johnny insists on going on a robbery mission, partly to prove he is still a capable operative and partly because he knows of nothing else other than prison and the IRA. He is stunned by the sunlight coming out of the offices (as if he is not used to the natural sun or the outdoors), he is shot, and he kills a man in the process of trying to escape. The getaway car takes off and Johnny has to run, thus becoming the odd man of the mission, now out on his own. Now the focus of a major manhunt, Johnny quickly becomes a local hero to the young boys of the streets who play at being “johnny.” As a man who has spent little of his adult life outside a jail cell, his gunshot wound and his general unease outside the prison routine, cause him to hallucinate and relive the nightmares of his confinement. But that confinement is not merely the prison gates; he also recalls his commitment to the cause and that pledge is equated with the restricted life of an inmate. Johnny is not only “out” of prison, but he is also now “out” of the protective circle of the IRA. They have no

³⁰ Interestingly, Peter Taylor notes in his book on the IRA from the 1960s to the present, that “Volunteers were always free to leave. When, for example, IRA prisoners came out of gaol, there was no pressure on them to return to the ‘war’.... Whether they returned to the ranks was entirely a personal decision. To force young men and women into the IRA or to compel them to stay against their will was not only inimical to the intense comradeship that bound the Republican Movement together but was considered counterproductive and dangerous. An unwilling Volunteer was a dangerous Volunteer” (70-71).

idea where he has gone. In a way, he is being hunted by the police as well as by the IRA and the young, love-struck Kitty.

Shot in black and white with distinctive *film noir* flair,³¹ *Odd Man Out* contains expressionistic scenes of the IRA boys in back alleys with lamp light glistening off the brick walls, or Johnny finding cover, ironically, in an abandoned bomb shelter. As John Hill notes, Reed's style is one which carries meanings "of pre-ordained fate and determinism" (152). What seems to be determined is not only that Johnny will die in the end, but also that his cause is dying. The opening shot of the film is an aerial view of Belfast with crawlers stating that the story "is not concerned with the struggle between the law and an illegal organization, but only the conflict in the hearts of the people when they become unexpectedly involved." Describing the IRA as an "illegal organization" is accurate, but it also presents that organization as bad guys. Despite the opening crawlers' promise, the film does not dwell on the "bad guy" IRA. Rather, it focuses almost entirely on how certain people react to finding Johnny. The gunman on the run, in this case, is clearly objectified. Unlike Fergus, on the run from Jude in *The Crying Game*, who is in a constant state of trying to figure out who he is and who undergoes a journey toward self-awareness,

³¹ Reed's most famous film is *The Third Man* (made two years after *Odd Man Out*), but British film critic Laurence Miller considers *Odd Man Out* as a pivotal moment in the cinematic history of *film noir* ("Evidence for a British Film Noir Cycle" 159).

Johnny quickly becomes an object of compassion, fear, suspicion, and even sublime beauty.

Odd Man Out details four encounters between “the people” and Johnny, and each encounter is a portrait of different reactions to his invasion of their lives. Two middle-aged women think his wound is the result of being hit by a streetcar and they bring him into their home for care. Once they notice the bullet wound, however, and one of the husbands demands they get rid of Johnny, the two women are torn between the instinct to help a hurt being and their fear of getting involved with the police. They compromise, giving him a cloak to hide his bloody clothes and a good swig of liquor so he will appear to be a staggering drunk. On the street, a couple of British soldiers buy into the drunk act (the implication being that they expect all Irishmen to be drunk) and put Johnny into a cab. The cabbie knows who Johnny is and says to him: “I’m not for you, I’m not against you but I can’t afford to get mixed up in this.” Out of fear, the cabbie dumps Johnny near the train tracks.

Meanwhile, Kitty is harassed by the police to reveal Johnny’s location, and she runs to the parish priest for help. An old, eccentric man is there with the priest, and he has a bird in a cage. The metaphor is clear: “Johnny may have escaped from one prison but only to find himself in another – the dark and confining spaces in the city” (Hill 153). I would add that Johnny has been imprisoned ever since his involvement in the “illegal

organization” and it is his role in the IRA that confines him as well as his identity and how others behave toward him.

The next group of average people to encounter Johnny are bartenders in a pub. During all of these scenes, Johnny says nearly nothing. He is in a state of semi-consciousness, moans and groans a lot and has horrifying visions. His lack of speech helps to strip him of any clear characterization. The bartenders treat him with suspicion but also treachery. They hide him in an enclosed booth – another visual image of entrapment – but they also give away his location to an artist who has been informed by the man with a bird that Johnny is in the bar. The artist has the most interesting reaction to the fugitive. Lukey, a painter, sees Johnny as an object worthy of aesthetic consideration and artistic rendering. He is attracted to the violent beauty of the man as well as the danger of hiding him from the authorities and his comrades. The lure of Johnny for Lukey is not only the danger and violence that Johnny represents, but also the fact that he is running, trying to escape. Johnny is struggling not to be caught and the artist is attempting to “catch” him, to capture his essence on the canvas. One can extrapolate from Lukey’s desire to frame the fugitive gunman in the painting to the filmmakers who also attempt to “capture” something on film. The claim of the opening scene is that the community of Belfast is the subject of the film, but this is achieved only through imprisoning the character of Johnny in a deterministic, fated narrative.

The film ends with Johnny being taken away by the bird-man to Kitty, who is the only character to assume complete responsibility for Johnny. She is so devoted to him that when the two of them are surrounded by the police, she fires at them knowing that both she and her love object will die. Unlike *The Informer* and even *The Crying Game* which offer redemption and tempered hope in their conclusions, *Odd Man Out* ends with a stark statement that the community has no room for men like Johnny. He has no place, and the organization that he represents has no clear support other than from a few hero-worshipping women who are as doomed as their objects of desire. Reed's presentation of the gunman as near-perfect object, studied through a number of different perspectives, is a highly original portrayal of the gunman figure. Despite being one among several fictional gunmen on the run, Reed's treatment makes Johnny unique: there are arguably no other narrative interpretations of the IRA gunman like *Odd Man Out*.

However, there have certainly been other gunmen on the run. The gunman on the run is related to the lost boy because the fugitive gunman can also be read as lost. Separated from the organization they joined or that gave their lives purpose and meaning, they wander or run for their lives. Perhaps the most recent example is the young McGreevy in Edna O'Brien's 1994 novel *House of Splendid Isolation*. McGreevy's life in O'Brien's novel can be read as one possible outcome of the narratives of Cal or Fergus. In

running, he finds a different kind of companionship, a kind of love. But McGreevy is as doomed as Johnny to the fate that joining the IRA seems to dictate.

House of Splendid Isolation opens by invoking the power of history: “It seeps into the soil, the subsoil. Like rain, or hail, or snow, or blood.... The earth so old and haunted, so hungry and replete. It talks. Things past and things yet to be. Battles, more battles, bloodshed, soft mornings, the saunter of beasts and their young” (3). These words are the musings of an ambiguous narrative voice, but it is probably Josie O’Meara – who ends up being both captive to and protectress of a gunman on the run. The juxtaposition of “bloodshed” and “soft mornings” establishes a series of seeming opposites thrown into conflict in the novel: an old woman and a young man, truths and fictions, memory and history.

There are several narrative echoes from *Odd Man Out* in the early pages of *House of Splendid Isolation*, beyond the images of marginalization that both titles conjure.

O’Brien introduces IRA man McGreevy and the various people he encounters on his journey from the North to the South of Ireland in his escape from the authorities just as Carol Reed’s film depicts different community reactions to the wounded Johnny.

McGreevy is aided by a farmer – despite the wife’s pitiless anger at the fugitive’s invasion of her home. The story of his escape is watched on the television by a Garda and his family: the young son, Caimin, “remembering a hero from his schoolbook” compares the

gunman to Cúchulainn (12-13). The Garda officer, who will hunt the gunman through the novel, offers McGreevy a certain amount of credit for eluding the law and refers to him as a “pimpnel.” McGreevy meets a contact who responds to McGreevy’s claim that “I’m going to fuck away off someday and chuck this” with the threat – so often articulated – that “We’d find you” (20). And a young girl takes the gunman toward Limerick in her van out of fear and intimidation. Like Reed’s film, O’Brien offers a number of different responses to McGreevy, but unlike *Odd Man Out*, which never allows the character of Johnny any depth, O’Brien quickly focuses her novel on the developing relationship between Josie O’Meara and McGreevy. It is a relationship between an isolated, lonely, neurotic, and near-suicidal woman in her abandoned home and a gunman on the run.

All of the encounters in the first part of the novel are integrated into the stories of Josie and McGreevy in what has become a signature style of O’Brien’s – from collections of short stories to her novels, Edna O’Brien frequently offers narratives that show unexpected connections between people’s lives and the past and the present. The argument between the farmer and his wife, for example, is echoed in a memory Josie has of her husband demanding they assist one of their farm hands in his hiding of guns for the IRA. The wives are defensive and don’t want trouble, the husbands are determined to offer assistance. Josie’s husband’s determination, and his “resurrecting every bit of Fenian feeling that he ever had” (57) results in his being shot. Once again, she is in a situation in

which she has no choice but to tolerate a fugitive. She thinks of “the dark threads of history looping back and forth and catching her and people like her in their grip, like snares” (58), and the image of entrapment once more finds voice in a text about the gunman.³² But at this still early moment in the novel, it is the people who the gunman encounters and who are inevitably implicated in his activity who are imprisoned and helpless. In the case of Johnny, he was the one trapped, caged and destined to die.

McGreevy’s decision to hide out in Josie’s deteriorating home changes both of their lives. Josie, previously so lonely that she contemplates suicide, finds herself developing strategies for dealing with her invader and tapping into energy reserves she thought long gone:

She who had been too weak to hobble down the stairs a few days before was now dragging the brown chest of drawers across the floor ... she believed she had at least shown some spunk. (71)

It is not only energy and spunkiness that Josie feels in herself with the arrival of McGreevy, but “swarms of memory” also invade her previously stalwart resistance to remembering her troubled past with James. The memories “are back now with a vengeance, the chains of history, the restless dead and the restless living, with scores to

³² *House of Splendid Isolation* contains several thematic connections to Julia O’Faolain’s novel *No Country for Young Men* (1980), not the least of which is the potentially damaging influence of the past. In *No Country*, the character Julia (who is aging and alone like Josie O’Meara) remarks that “the past can kill” (9). Both novels contain gunmen from the past who return to haunt those living in the present, and both focus on female characters who are damaged by the violence of men.

settle” (78). McGreevy, like so many of the shadow gunmen to be discussed in the next section, is a kind of catalyst for change and awareness. His presence, almost predictable in this narrative defined by inevitable returns, is the embodiment of the restless dead of Josie’s life as well as the present incarnation of the restless living. Such are the chains of history which dictate all the lives in the novel: the repetition of patterns with no escape is the novel’s primary theme.

For McGreevy, who is described and defined in a vast array of metaphors (Josie thinks of him as an impudent pup, the Gardai describe him as savage, brutal, psychotic, the two women who hide the gunman think of him as the romantic patriot), is humanized – at least in terms of the narrative descriptions of him – through his discussions with Josie. She offers him various gifts (a letter of her uncle’s from 1921 when he too was a gunman on the run, and her husband’s collection of fishing tackle) which open up their conversations: “everything happens then” (99). They often speak of ghosts, the ones supposedly haunting the house and the ones haunting both of their lives and it is the sharing of their grief, their guilt, their reluctance to retrieve the past that creates the bond between them.

This is not to say that their relationship is a kind of sweet, melancholic meeting. Josie taunts McGreevy constantly in an attempt to have some kind of control over him. She calls him the “brave soldier” with sarcasm (87), and refers to his guns as “your babies” (120) while challenging his courage to ever kill her. The “splendidness” of the isolation is

the narrative space and the fleeting narrative moments in which these two people, so different and opposed in age, class, and gender, can talk. At first hesitatingly, Josie and McGreevy share thoughts about death, politics, life, mistakes, regrets, and they connect with each other. The cruel irony is, of course, that these moments, and this splendid space is doomed to be invaded again, this time by the forces of law and order in pursuit of McGreevy. Even more cruel, it would seem, is that Josie dies in the crossfire of the attempted capture just as her husband died years ago trying to protect another man. Josie wants to save McGreevy because she has come to know the complexity of his life. He is no stereotype, no construction of propaganda: "His life has many chapters to it and many evolutions" and because of this complexity he "must be taken alive" (221). The violence of his life destroys the "isolation" that Josie has built around her, but that invasion allows her to remember the value of life's many evolutions and this realization then leads to her own death. It seems a bittersweet commentary on the nature of human connections and relationships, but it is also a brutal commentary on the other characters who never attempt to see beyond the stereotypes, who are never granted the splendid space and time to find out or discover the complexities of others or themselves.

2.5 Other Outsiders: Women in the IRA

What happens, then, when a woman picks up the weapon of the IRA? She is peculiar in the sense of strange or odd. Women as active members in the IRA are few and far between in the fictional representations of Irish rebellion and republicanism. This rarity is not unexpected for the obvious reason that the IRA is a military organization (whether deemed an army or a band of terrorists) and as such it is no different from any other military organization: overwhelmingly male. So, the interesting question about fictional women in the IRA is not so much why aren't there more of them, but how are they, the ones who do exist in novels and films, portrayed? Further, how does the fictional representation of women in the IRA compare to fictional representations of Irish women in general?

Díóg O'Connell offers a succinct description of how Irish women are generally and abundantly portrayed on the screen. In "Women on the Verge," O'Connell writes: "representations of Irish women in cinema generally reinforce traditional stereotypes ... passive sufferer and/or love-torn sweet-heart" (23). But the roles of victim and lover are not the only stereotypes of Irish women in literature and film. There is also the ever-so-common image of Mother Ireland, the "allegorical identification of Ireland with a woman variously personified as Shan Van Vocht, Kathleen Ní Houlihan, or Mother Eire" (Butler-

Cullingford, "Thinking of Her" 1). Indeed, as Richard Kearney argues in "Myth and Motherland," Irish motherhood embodies a tripartite expression of foundational Irish myths: "the mother church of the Catholic revival; the motherland of the nationalist revival; the mother-tongue of the Gaelic revival" (74-75). Focusing on Pearse and the 1916 Easter Rising, Kearney summarizes a key, and now mythic, relationship between sons and "martyrs sacrificing themselves for the sake of the Eternal Mother" (75). The mythic idealization of Irish womanhood is, in Kearney's analysis, related to the "social stereotype of the Irish woman as pure virgin or equally pure son-obsessed mother" (76). To summarize, the stereotypes of Irish women in literature and film are mythic mothers, passive virgins/victims, or the type of sweetheart perhaps best portrayed by Maureen O'Hara in *The Quiet Man*: she may be red-haired and feisty, but she still succumbs to the masculine strength of John Wayne.³³ In the logic of such character types, the female IRA Volunteer – with few exceptions – is unnatural, dangerous, and she is pushed to the periphery of the organization. The following discussion will look briefly at five female

³³ In "Women and the Image," Sarah Edge places these stereotypes of Irish women in the broader context of representations of women in contemporary mainstream cinema. She argues that Irish films in the early 1990s parallel "the concerns surrounding masculine and feminine identities which we are currently also seeing within mainstream Hollywood productions" (37). One of Edge's arguments is that the representation of women in Irish film poses the same questions and problems for feminist analysis as the representation of women in any film.

characters who are actively involved in the IRA: some live; some die; others are imprisoned. All are outsiders.

Chronologically, the first is Kitty Mellett in Liam O'Flaherty's 1928 novel *The Assassin*. In a Dostoevskian plot,³⁴ *The Assassin* is a psychological portrait of a man planning a political assassination for no apparent reason.³⁵ The tortured soul of protagonist and assassin of the title, Michael McDara, is the main subject of the novel and Kitty Mellett is one of several people he employs to assist him. She is described as "strong and masculine" with a "magnificent body, cold, grey eyes, severe lips" and a look that was both "tantalizing and aggravating" (24). She and McDara had once been in love and "it was his romantic, juvenile love for her that first made him a revolutionary" (24). This brief introduction of Kitty is revealing in a number of ways: any physical beauty has a double effect on the male protagonist, both tantalizing, or seductive, and aggravating, or annoying; there is a coldness to her as her limbs are compared to "marble" (24) and McDara says that "she's steel" (76); she is also "masculine" in appearance; and her

³⁴ For the narrative and thematic correspondences between O'Flaherty and Dostoevsky, see Zneimer's *The Literary Vision of Liam O'Flaherty*, 80-85.

³⁵ As critics have noted, the publication of O'Flaherty's novel – one year after the unsolved assassination of Kevin O'Higgins, Minister for Justice in the Irish Free State, in June 1927 – is either "an attempt to make literary capital out of the event" (Sheeran 281) or "an attempt to answer the questions that always arise when a political leader is struck down by an assassin's bullet: Why did he do it? What motivates men like that?" (Zneimer 80).

connection with McDara begins at university – she is educated – and she is, because of his “juvenile love” for her, responsible for his involvement in the “guerrilla wars.”

The qualities of having a disturbing beauty, a coldness and a masculinity, an education, as well as a responsibility for others’ involvement in republican activities are all qualities that echo in later portrayals of IRA women. In addition, Kitty comes to represent the force of the IRA for McDara, both the appeal and the repulsion he feels. He has left the organization, but he sees that leaving as an escape “from her influence” (26). Now that he is outcast, on the run from an organization that no longer trusts him, he still needs Kitty to assist him with his plan. His love/hate relationship with the IRA, and symbiotically with Kitty, has placed him in a position where he feels that only by acting on his own can he continue to wage the war the official organization has failed, in McDara’s opinion, to win. As one O’Flaherty critic has noted, Kitty is different from McDara because for “her the assassination has meaning ... the assassination vindicates her dedication” (Zneimer 81). In a state of near-ecstasy, Kitty thinks to herself: “It is a holy act, a holy act ... The dead cry out for vengeance. Ireland in chains” (*The Assassin* 79). Such clichéd thoughts are delivered with typical O’Flaherty irony; indeed, the portrayal of Kitty and the other revolutionaries McDara recruits have been described as “savagely ironical” (Sheeran 286).

What is ironic about Kitty’s thoughts is that hers are not McDara’s motives. He has no intelligible reasons, and the woman who echoes the words of Pearse is manipulated

and used by the amoral, non-idealistic assassin.³⁶ Further, there is an unexpected twist in having a female character utter the words more often associated with male figures of rebellion. It is as though O'Flaherty seeks to satirize the republican ethos of martyrdom and sacrifice by having a woman speak the cliché. Kitty and McDara both survive the assassination, and the novel ends with McDara contemplating suicide en route to England where he is to meet up with Kitty. In the end, McDara's spiritual torment is the centre of the novel but the representation of the coldly beautiful, at times masculine, and highly effective assistant Kitty establishes an early paradigm for the depiction of women in the IRA. However, the "savagely ironical" tone in which Kitty is narrated anticipates the misogynistic characterization of many women in the IRA.

Sixty years after O'Flaherty's *The Assassin*, Bill Rolston will write that when IRA women are characters in political thrillers their "violence is always at the emotional level," their zeal is "matched by easy switches in allegiance" and that "the problems of women's unreliability" are iterated in their going "over the edge" (52-54). No longer effective in their administration to and assistance of male counterparts, Rolston asserts that women in the IRA (as depicted in the political thriller genre) have rejected the misogynistic demand that they fulfill a biological imperative to become mothers and in doing so they "become

³⁶ O'Flaherty's criticism and ironic treatment of the IRA is dealt with at length in chapter three.

capable of the most horrific violence” (44). Rolston is highly critical of the logic of the political thriller set in Northern Ireland and/or concerned with the Troubles:

If the novels are to be believed, then, the division between men and women in relation to violence is not only biological, but almost metaphysical. Men come to represent violence and women peace with all the force of a Greek myth. The only proper, acceptable, natural role for a woman is that of mother. (45)

Thus, a woman’s involvement in the IRA is *de facto* repudiation of her supposed biological and metaphysical role. The character who best fits Rolston’s description of fictional women in the IRA is Jude in Neil Jordan’s 1992 film *The Crying Game*.³⁷

Jude is a chameleon-like character whose attitude changes with her wardrobe. In the opening of the film she is dressed in a sexual manner to lure a British soldier into an IRA trap, and she ably performs the role of seductress. At the IRA’s hide-out, she serves tea and is dressed in shapeless clothing. Despite her more “natural” look, Jude displays a capacity for violence when she pistol-whips the hostage. When the film shifts location to London and Jude is now hunting down a gunman on the run, she changes her appearance once again: she says she needs a “tougher look.” While these costume changes could be read as examples of those “easy switches” Rolston notes, Jude is actually closer to the villainous IRA professional (or psychopath) in her cold, hard dedication to the “cause.” She pursues Fergus with an undeniable sexual energy, but her primary reason for the hunt

³⁷ Chapter four includes an extended analysis of Jude’s character.

is to ensure that Fergus “keep the faith.” Jude is killer bitch, femme fatale and vicious terrorist.

Another example of an IRA woman that Rolston cites and one that is worth looking at in some detail is the character of Isabella Lynam in Eugene McCabe’s 1976 novella *Victims*. The story is of an IRA hostage-taking in Northern Ireland in an attempt to have republican prisoners released from jail in return for the hostages. The team pulled together for the job includes: Isabella, reluctant and confused at her being ordered into active service; Leonard, an older IRA Volunteer who chests his cards with the best of them; the volatile, verbally-abusive Gallagher; and twin brothers whom Rolston derisively labels “the republican Tweedledum and Tweedledee” (49). Isabella is described mostly through the eyes of Leonard, a rather nondescript character himself who struggles to maintain order among a group of highly contrary personalities. When Leonard first meets Isabella at an assigned place, she is “a smallish madonna, composed, with cool all-seeing eyes, her face set in a medieval mould” (*Victims* 96). The requisite cold eyes notwithstanding, reference to a “medieval mould” is odd. Combined with “madonna” the image could allude to any *pietas*, but it certainly sets Isabella apart from the men in the unit.

The virgin mother becomes an ironic description when, very soon after their meeting, Leonard recalls that not only was Isabella sexually involved with Burke, a highly placed IRA commander, but that she also had an abortion:

Her mind, he thought again, a clenched fist against pity, maidenhood, motherhood, or anything denoting feminine softness. She had climbed fast and high, in a movement dominated by power-hungry men, unafraid of violence and now unsure of her motives. Some felt she secretly despised them and the cause. (100)

Isabella is a source of suspicion for Leonard (Gallagher is downright paranoid that she is a spy) and the men's suspicion is articulated in terms of her not having any of that "feminine softness." She is not only successful in the male-dominated world of the IRA, but she does so with a "clenched fist," a phrase used by Leonard to describe her mind as closed off to pity.

Rolston makes much of a brief episode in the novel that describes Isabella's motives for joining the IRA. He writes that "her involvement derives from a need to strike back at her father. Out of place and out of her depth, she is filled with a constant sense of doom.... Bella's hang-ups are ultimately sexual – she seeks to punish her father by joining the IRA and then craves the attention and love of the father substitute [Leonard]" (53).

While Rolston is correct in describing Isabella's motives, he does not mention her abortion or how that decision has brought her into a precarious situation within the organization.

Both Isabella and Leonard suspect that Burke has sent her on this mission (which is likely

to fail and all realize this) as revenge for her aborting their child. Indeed, the suspicions of her being an informer are thought to be a cover-up for Burke's deeper resentments. In the logic of the story, Isabella repudiates her role as woman by joining the IRA, and her abortion is an extreme action (particularly given the strong anti-abortion climate in Ireland). It is also an action that is never explained or rationalized from Isabella's perspective.

Why McCabe includes it in her characterization is not clear. The rejection of potential motherhood could have established Isabella as even less feminine and more masculine than her involvement in the IRA; however, Isabella is the only member of the hostage-taking unit that shows any compassion or desire for understanding of the captives. In the scenes where she attempts to calm the women and connect with them on a personal level, Isabella endangers the mission and herself, but she is also acting in the most humane way. It would appear that McCabe's title, *Victims*, is meant to apply to each and every character in some way and that Isabella is victimized on more than one level. She is the victim of gossip and suspicion, the victim of her own fears and doubts, the victim of a restrictive society that unnecessarily constrains women's roles, and the victim of a situation over which she has no control. At the end of the story, after the failure of the hostage/prisoner exchange scheme, she and the twin brothers are taken away to an

unstated but implied fate of imprisonment and likely torture. Far from being a villain, Isabella is sacrificed in the process of negotiation.

There are two examples of women in IRA narratives that resist the stereotypes outlined by Rolston. One is Tina Owen in Danny Morrison's *The Wrong Man* and the other is Miss O'Shea in Roddy Doyle's *A Star Called Henry*. Tina is nothing like the female IRA villains described by Rolston and neither is Miss O'Shea. They are neither villains nor antagonists, but they are secondary characters. Tina is both an effective member of the IRA unit and aligned with the other women in the novel (mostly IRA wives and mothers). Tina is comfortable, indeed prominent, in the women's world of the IRA. She is loquacious and she obviously shares the confidence of other women. The establishment of Tina as "one of the girls" is then set beside her efficiency in the men's world of the IRA. In one scene Raymond's unit is on a mission, and Tina is an active participant with none of the questioning or hesitation that plagues Isabella in *Victims*. Tina jokes about the necessity of wearing high-heeled shoes as part of her disguise (she mockingly says to another Volunteer: "notice these are not for running in" [98]), and she is a critical element in the plan to transport bomb-making materials. Her gun is hidden up her skirt, but there is none of the sexual mania that defines Jude's character in *The Crying Game*. Tina's fate by the novel's end is to be imprisoned, but unlike Isabella, there is no indication that Tina's incarceration is a result of her feminine unreliability or men's distrust

of her presence. Rather, Tina suffers the same fate as a number of IRA men in *The Wrong Man*. While a relatively minor character, Tina Owen is a female IRA character who is not unstable, untrustworthy or unappreciated. There are no violent outbursts, no emotional breakdowns, no switches of allegiance, no sexual motivations. Tina does not “tremble with rage, shake with anger, get carried away in emotion” (Rolston 50). She is the least stereotypical IRA gun(man).

Miss O’Shea, a schoolteacher-turned-gun-toting-rebel, does not tremble with rage or shake with anger, but she is viewed with suspicion by the leaders of the IRA. She is deemed untrustworthy, however, not because she is a woman, but because her actions in the countryside are radical compared to the organization’s plans. One IRA commander labels her a “holy terror” (317) because her actions (burning buildings, intimidating the public) are, in his view, counter-productive to the IRA’s schemes. Even Miss O’Shea’s husband (the Henry of the title) claims to have no control over her. He says on more than one occasion that “she’s her own woman”; indeed, she never changes her name nor the appellation “Miss.” A comparison to Kitty Mellett might have been fruitful, except that Miss O’Shea is never described as masculine and there is no indication, however subtle, that she is psychologically unstable. She is simply more radical in her politics and in her actions than the IRA to which she swears allegiance. Miss O’Shea is too rebellious even for them. As such, her life is in danger because she poses a threat to the IRA as much as to

the British forces in Ireland. At the end of the novel, Miss O'Shea is neither dead nor imprisoned; the determination of her fate, however, will have to wait until Roddy Doyle produces the next two volumes of his historical Irish trilogy.

2.6 Lurking and Lingering: Ghostly Presences and Shadow Gunmen

The vast majority of gunmen/women who populate novels and short stories have a narrative corporeality: Bernard MacLaverty's lost boy Cal, or Fergus, the gunman on the run in *The Crying Game*, the revenge-obsessed, extreme Republican terrorist bad guy in *Patriot Games*, and Liam O'Flaherty's revolutionary-turned-informer. All these characters walk, talk, interact, create all sorts of conflicts – and almost to the man they die or end up in prison. The shadow gunmen are not so material and three examples, Elizabeth Bowen's novel *The Last September*, Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* and Jennifer Johnston's *Shadows on our Skin*, illustrate that the gunman who is but a shadow, or a ghost-like presence, has a greater effect than the "real" gunmen on other characters, and the narrative as a whole, because he is intangible and therefore a more open and ambiguous site of both meaning and interpretive power. This phantom gunman variously signifies an individual's

rebellion against the forces that confine him/her, a secret that has the potential to divide families, a catalyst for change and maturation, and an agent for violence and destruction.³⁸

The “big daddy” of this character is, of course, Sean O’Casey. In his 1923 play *The Shadow of a Gunman* there are really two shadows. The first is Davoren, who willingly adopts the persona of a rebel gunman because all his neighbours believe him to be one, and because that false persona guarantees him a romantic relationship with Minnie, who is enraptured by the thought of a gunman on the run living in her tenement building. There is also Maguire, who runs into Davoren’s room, leaves a mysterious bag and then runs out. Maguire is the real revolutionary. His remnant parcel is full of bombs, and is what causes

³⁸ There are other shadow gunmen and one notable example is the ghostly presences in John McGahern’s short story “Korea” – made into a film by Cathal Black in 1995. In both versions the struggle of a son for independence from a father haunted by nightmares of his past is told against the historical background of the Irish Civil War and the Korean War. It is a story wherein the confrontation between generations is articulated through violence. The son, Eamon finally stands up for himself by taking possession of his father’s antique gun; a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood is thus facilitated by Eamon’s handling of a gun. The gun is the vehicle for Eamon’s defiance of the father – he uses a symbol of the past to manoeuvre a position in the future. As Eamon’s voice-over in the film explains, the son has effectively “murdered” all his father had in terms of memory. The murder is of a haunting past that hung over both father and son. But it is important to note that it is the symbol of violence that ends the oppressive tenure the past (a past of violent upheaval) held over these men. For Joe, the gun was a literal killer, for the next generation the gun becomes a figurative murderer of the Oedipal father. As one critic of the film notes, “The subject matter on display reads like a catalogue of our fixations: the 1950s, the relationship between father and son, the legacy of the Civil War, rural melancholy, frustrated love” (Barry 35). The shadow in “Korea” is metaphysical: the haunting power of the past (that is, Joe’s violent past as a rebel gunman) is inherently that from which Eamon must break away.

the British troops to raid the building, arrest Minnie (who believes she is protecting Davoren from certain capture), and cause the crossfire in which she is shot. O'Casey's irony here is brutal – what the actual gunman leaves behind, the trace of his presence or his shadow, is a catalyst for violent death. The fake gunman, the man who takes on the “shadow” of being a rebel, also contributes to the death of an innocent. It is, in different ways, the shadow of the gunman that is the object of O'Casey's criticism. In the context of the entire play, the shadow is not only the false persona and the traces of a presence but it is also the incorporeal, romantic mythology that envelops the rebels and is so heartily believed by the tenement dwellers, such as Minnie – to her fatal detriment.

Published six years after O'Casey's play, Elizabeth Bowen's 1929 novel *The Last September* is both a comedy of manners that satirizes the dying Anglo-Irish Protestant gentry and a novel about the maturation of its teenage protagonist Lois Farquar, who struggles against the suffocating social world of her privileged family. A gunman makes a ghostly appearance early in the novel as Lois is walking in the large gardens of her uncle's big house. Lois and this trench-coat-clad gunman never speak, but the event is significant in the context of her increasing awakening. Lois senses his presence as he walks by her – almost within reach of her tentative arms. She hears his coat rustle against the laurel bushes and she can see his “powerful profile” (42). And yet Lois says nothing. She lets the gunman slip by her and thinks that he could be a murderer, he “seemed so inspired” (43).

In Lois's mind, inspiration is equated with violence; or, only someone who is inspired could be a murderer.

The entire scene is loaded with sexual imagery: the leaves breathe and lick at her bare arms, grey patches of shadow slip up her dress and grope at her body. Indeed, this erotic encounter is a metaphoric sexual awakening for Lois – she goes on to become engaged to a British soldier garrisoned in the nearby town. But Bowen, like O'Casey, invests her shadowy gunmen with multiple ironies and textual meanings. Lois's fiancé is ambushed and shot dead by an IRA flying column later in the novel. The same force that awakens her sexual energies then slays her real life lover.

Bowen writes another sequence with a gunman, but this time he is not a shadow although he is hiding in an abandoned building close to her home. In this scene, Lois and her friend Marda stumble upon a sleeping gunman at the ruins, he awakens, and he warns them away. He accidentally shoots Marda in the hand in an ironic reversal of the incorporeal gunman of the earlier scene. Both times, however, Lois decides to keep the encounter secret: the first time because she wants something to call her own, and she wants to keep the moment private but alive. She thinks that "she had surprised life at a significant angle in the shrubberies" and that telling would only make it "sterile" (43). The second time the gunman remains in the dark because the women agree that "no one would ever understand" (47).

Both encounters are part of Lois's advancement toward adulthood. Lois's confrontation with the external reality of ambushes, hidden guns, and hiding gunmen signifies her process of growing up. In a way, the IRA gunmen and their violence free Lois from her family and her heritage, both of which she finds stultifying. Lois is seduced by the force of the mythic and political underworld and the danger she finds there is one that literally assassinates romance. Lois's revolt against her aunt and uncle is thus set against the potent Irish nationalist revolt. These dangerous encounters become, for Lois, private talismans of her developing sense of identity. Her only "intense" moments are those with the gunmen, and the meetings serve as a kind of catalyst for breaking free. Having said that, in the second encounter, when Marda is shot, Bowen treats the incident with a certain degree of scorn, not for the gunman but for the two tittering girls who behave with an undeniable ignorance of the larger political turmoil that informs their lives. Marda bears her wound with a kind of pride – secretly, but pridefully nonetheless – and Bowen is clear that this second gunman encounter is another example of the inability of the Anglo-Irish to deal with the "violent realness" (206) and the finite if not doomed existence of their class. The gunmen in *The Last September* are important because they are vital factors in the bildungsroman, but also because they remain secret shadows in the dark.

Seamus Deane employs a similar characterization of a gunman in his 1996 novel *Reading in the Dark*. As the title implies, *Reading in the Dark* is an intensely self-

conscious novel not only about modes of reading and understanding, but of reading and understanding in the dark and of dark subjects. Traditionally, knowledge is articulated in metaphors of light and illumination; this title prepares the reader for an incomplete narrative of ambiguous readings in inadequate light. Such self-consciousness is immediately reflected in the novel's epitaph from the song "She Moved Through the Fair." It refers to a sorrow that "never was said" and thus the darkness of the title seems to signify a secret, an untold kind of history that causes sorrow. The novel opens in 1945 Derry, as the young first-person narrator encounters a ghost on the stairs of his home. His mother warns him away from it (she sees it too) but the narrator is enthralled. He is curious, enticed by the unknown, and naïve as to the consequences of uncovering secrets. In an interview with Nicholas Patterson, Deane remarked that "one of the things that is central to this story is secrets. I think the problem of a society where so much is forbidden, so much has to be kept secret for political reasons is that when a secret is revealed it has this strange ability to alter the world" ("Different Strokes" 6).

The central mystery in both the novel and the narrator's young life is introduced very early. He is listening to his father and uncles tell stories while they repair a broken boiler. The older men speak of Eddie and how he, like the ghost on the stairs, disappeared: "They were great events they returned to over and over, like the night of the big shoot-out at the distillery between the IRA and the police, when Uncle Eddie disappeared" (8). The

uncles do not know where Eddie ended up, or even if he is still alive. But a significant factor in this scene is that the father will not talk of the incident, will not engage in the story-telling process, and this recalcitrance frustrates the narrator and only serves to fuel his burning curiosity. Eddie is thus established as the thing to be known: he becomes the text to be read in the dark, the secret to be discovered, the ghost to be exorcized.

Eddie is an absent landmark – like the burned out distillery – to be filled in by the narrator. It is at his grandfather's side, in a deathbed-style confession, that the narrator finally gets some first-hand information about Eddie. The grandfather is an interesting character; he is established as the one who can set things straight; he is the gatekeeper of the secrets. He clears up an old story about the heretical great-uncle Constantine and whether or not the old man asked for Last Sacraments before he died (he didn't), and he tells the young man that Eddie had been executed as an informer. But the story is not as simple as that. Eddie had been set up, and the grandfather was the one who ordered the execution on the basis of misinformation. The narrator has grown into a young man and the passing down of the family secret is connected to his maturation. Not only is he in the role of confessor, but he is also entrusted with the information that uncle Eddie was supposedly an informer. This information has haunted his family for more than two generations, and the narrator now bears the responsibility of knowing more than his father, who believes in Eddie's treachery. Significantly, this scene takes place during a night of

bonfires and Protestant marching. The night commemorates the burning of Lundy³⁹ and the distinctive sound of Orangemen's drums echo outside the grandfather's bedroom.

In contrast to this ominous atmosphere of the dying man's revelation, the father then tells his version of events to the better informed son. It is raining (the water acts as a kind of balm to the Orangemen's fires), and they are in a Catholic Church, a place and institution denounced by the grandfather. The father's story, not surprisingly, is full of shame and guilt but it also offers a picture of the man Eddie *was*, as opposed to the mystery he became. The father characterizes his brother as wild and untamed. The narrator then imagines Eddie to be like a cowboy, a rebel of the wild west: "I could see Eddie, plain as day, on horseback, one arm raised, the horse leaping with its head down, like a rodeo animal" (139). The romance of this image is quickly shattered when the narrator's mother is finally allowed an entrance into this predominantly male-centred story. Unfortunately, the mother has suffered a nervous breakdown, under the weight of years of guilt, and really only speaks in riddles. Her absolute desolation, which is never completely articulated, is the result of years of hiding and keeping secrets. The novel implies that the

³⁹ "Lundy, I knew," says the youthful narrator, "would soon be burning in effigy from the stone pillar above the city walls, on the hill opposite. The pillar was topped by a statue of Governor Walker, the defender of the city in the siege of 1689; Lundy, the traitor, swung always on the hero's pillar, a hanged giant, exploding into flames to the roll of drums from the massed bands below" (131).

narrator must now bear the burden of complex “truths” and their potentially devastating effects.

The secret of Eddie’s death and his condemnation as an informer is linked with the secret and confusing process of growing up. The IRA gunman becomes a metaphor for maturation, for the growth of understanding and of learning about family, sex and religion. Life remains a riddle and the narrator begins to adopt his mother’s rhetorical style: “My mother’s father had my father’s brother killed” (193). The eventual death of the father and the silencing of the mother as a result of a stroke coincide with the beginning of the troubles in the late 1960s. The novel ends with the violence of 1968 as it began with the violence of 1921. It is no longer possible to disentangle family feuds, hauntings, and buried terrors from a wider politics that blights and shrivels individual lives. The figure of the ghostly gunman is not so much a person or character as a narrative device: a grail legend to be recovered for the narrator’s rite of passage into adulthood. Eddie is always elusive and always at a distance. He is never to be fully understood and the more the narrator learns about him the less he seems to understand. Eddie is a shadow, a story to be read and understood, but he is also a secret haunting. Above all else, the search for Eddie is

symbolic of growing up, but maturity does not necessarily lead to clarity. All one grows up to know, in *Reading in the Dark*, is that truth and meaning are unstable.⁴⁰

Like Deane, Jennifer Johnston's novel *Shadows on Our Skin* is set in Northern Ireland and informed by the on-going violence there. Also like Deane, Johnston begins her novel with an epitaph from a song, but instead of a traditional song, she uses lyrics from a contemporary Celtic rock piece called "Time to Kill." The song is from an album called *The Tain* and is a musical interpretation of Ireland's epic saga "The Cattle Raid of Cooley." This epic poem describes the conflict between the forces of Ulster and Connacht for possession of a prize bull. Johnston's reaching back into Ulster's "heroic" and mythic time, with a contemporary twist, is but one gesture towards the past which is emblematic of the novel's theme.

Shadows on Our Skin shows how the past affects the present characters' lives – in particular how young Joe, the protagonist in what is another bildungsroman, learns to deal with both a father's imaginary and romantic past involvement with the republican movement and an older brother's current flirtations with the provisional IRA. The past is both a shadow cast over the young boy by his supposedly heroic father and the past

⁴⁰ Deane's novel about the uncertainty of knowledge and meaning coincides with many of his more theoretical writings. Like the idea of "Ireland" or the character of a nation, Eddie and the process of growing up are more readily evoked than defined. The complex webs of imagery and references through which Deane narrates *Reading in the Dark* reflect his characterization of national character as a "strange country," more elusive than tangible.

historical events in Northern Ireland that have led to broken windows and midnight raids in Joe's neighbourhood. The shadow of the title is figuratively the shadow of the past (that nightmare from which Stephen Dedalus tries to awake), and it is the literal marks on skin, or bruises and wounds. Johnston turns the heroic saga of *The Tain* against itself – the lyrics of the song are a recurring motif – with the beating of Kathleen by the “heroes” of Irish nationalism.

Kathleen is a Catholic teacher who befriends young Joe and who offers him shelter from his abusive father and increasingly unstable and dangerous brother. She is also engaged to a British soldier and asks Joe to keep her secret. During a horrible argument with his brother (who is becoming more and more like the father), Joe betrays Kathleen's secret thinking that the information will wound the brother and give Joe the upper hand. Instead, the information leads to Kathleen's beating and exile from the city. Her bruises are the shadows on her skin and they create another haunting for Joe as the instigator of her “punishment.” In the last pages of the novel, as Joe watches the battered Kathleen leave her apartment, he thinks to himself that “it was the shadows that did it. The shadows that are so fearful.” He cannot bring himself to acknowledge his role in her pain, nor can he acknowledge that her shadows will require both physical and emotional healing.

In all three of these novels the shadowy gunman, whether a faceless presence in the narrative, a ghost from a family's past, or the often debilitating and destructive force of

history and memory, functions as a component in the protagonist's difficult journey toward maturity. The IRA gunman is a stark, dangerous, violent reality (despite his non-material presence) that must be at the very least acknowledged and incorporated into the protagonist's increasing self-awareness. One of the most interesting aspects of these texts that characterize the gunman as a shadowy or ghostly presence is that while the men may be phantoms, their guns are tangible. Marda is actually shot, and guns are buried on the grounds of Lois's home, the narrator in *Reading in the Dark* and Joe in *Shadows on Our Skin* both find guns in their homes and endure the terror of having to get rid of them. It is as though the rebels may be subject to mystification; they can be narratively transformed into metaphor, symbol or even allegory; but none of these writers allows such critical distance when it comes to the rebels' weapons. In all three texts, the cold, metallic, deadly reality destroys any possibility of the story resting in a narrative luxury of romance, melodrama, or satire. Like O'Casey's bag of bombs that sits on the stage through the course of the play, and that leads directly to the shooting in the street, the gun never disappears, never becomes silenced, and never sinks into the shadows.

Despite the lethal tangibility of the shadow gunman's weapon, his ambiguity is indicative of an inherent quality in each of the categories outlined in this chapter. While the existence of stereotypes is undeniable (heroes, villains, neurotic women), each of the categories discussed contain internal variations and rebellions. The previous discussion

has, on the one hand, established a typology of the gunman but, on the other hand, it has also acknowledged those characters who push the envelope of the categories in which they have been placed. Such is the nature of categorizing gestures and, as stated earlier, the most interesting characters are often those who do not fit neatly into discrete groups. The next two chapters will therefore focus on the work of two artists whose novels and films consistently question the validity of stereotype and repeatedly produce alternative versions of the Irish gunman.

Chapter Three

Voluptuaries, Acolytes, and Ideologues: The Gunmen in Liam O'Flaherty's Novels

The gunmen who populate Liam O'Flaherty's novels, specifically *The Informer* (1925), *The Assassin* (1928), *The Martyr* (1933), and *Insurrection* (1950), are not metaphysical hauntings or phantom presences symbolizing the burdens of history and memory. They are flesh and bone characters and they are flawed. Some are cold and unfeeling, others are lost and alienated, still more are passionate but deluded. Few members in O'Flaherty's gallery of gunmen fit neatly into the categories outlined in the previous chapter. Dan Gallagher in *The Informer* may have some "godfather" qualities and Barty Madden is clearly a "lost boy," but the remaining gunmen do not belong to the somewhat artificial groupings previously noted. Thus, they are misfits in more than one sense; O'Flaherty presents all of them as outsiders in some way (outside the law, fighting for a cause with only an outside chance of winning, outside the redemption of positive human relationships), and as examples of gunmen in the history of Irish fiction they are outside the obvious types. O'Flaherty's gunmen rebel against British tyranny; they fight against each other; they resist the social roles expected of them. Further, O'Flaherty presents these rebels with his own form of resistance: satire.

This chapter will highlight O’Flaherty’s use of satire in the representation of what he describes in *Shame the Devil* as “petty Irish nationalists, with a carped outlook on life” (21). A discussion of the critical response to O’Flaherty’s gunman novels is a necessary introduction because these novels are granted marginal status compared to his short stories set in the Aran Islands or his novels about the Irish peasantry such as *Land* and *Famine*. In many ways, this chapter is a recuperative gesture; it will argue that the gunman novels can be fruitfully read as satirical (although the force of O’Flaherty’s satire does vary). To that end, the critical history is followed by a reading of O’Flaherty’s *A Tourist’s Guide to Ireland* (1929). This short publication establishes O’Flaherty’s talent for satire as well as one of his key targets: the Irish patriot. Analysis of the gunmen in O’Flaherty’s novels then begins with his Irish Civil War novel, *The Martyr*, because it is the fullest example of both O’Flaherty’s satirical style and the scope of his characterization. The other gunmen in *The Informer*, *The Assassin*, and *Insurrection* are brought into dialogue with and comparison to the key figures in *The Martyr*. In order to facilitate this comparison, new categories of gunman characters, specific to O’Flaherty’s novels, need to be established. However, just as the categories outlined in chapter two are inevitably inadequate to the task of incorporating all gunmen, so too will the organization of O’Flaherty’s types be necessarily provisional. Nevertheless, by reading O’Flaherty’s gunmen within the categories of

voluptuary, acolyte, and ideologue, it is possible to view his novels in the context of identity politics and stereotypes.

3.1 The Critical History

Liam O’Flaherty is no darling of the literary community, whether that community consists of other writers, reviewers or academic critics.¹ He had a troubled relationship with his co-writers, friends, and compatriots and he often expressed scorn for the culture of publishing.² While his craft and talent as a short story writer go largely unchallenged, his novels have produced mixed reactions over the last seventy years and have periodically provoked violent rejections of both the man and his work. There is no doubt that Liam O’Flaherty’s literary reputation has suffered as a result of the largely unenthusiastic and occasionally damning critical assessments of his novels.

¹ Patrick Sheeran’s sweeping study of O’Flaherty’s novels offers a detailed description of O’Flaherty’s connection to and friendship with leaders in the Irish literary world of the 1920s and 1930s such as Edward Garrett, A.E. (George Russell), Sean O’Casey, and members of the short lived Radical Club (Francis Stuart, Austin Clarke, Brinsley McNamara to name a few). Sheeran clearly demonstrates that O’Flaherty’s relationship to these writers was vexed at best (78-94).

² O’Flaherty’s disdain is evident in his letters and his autobiography, *Shame the Devil*. He writes that critics do not have “sufficient blood in them to contract syphilis” (*Shame* 59) and then mocks the critical praise for *The Informer* as pompous (191).

Scholars of O'Flaherty's writing do not depreciate all of his works; in fact, there is broad consensus that his short fiction is exemplary. Critical convention contends that O'Flaherty writes better short stories than novels. James M. Cahalan, in his book-length study of the short fiction, points out that "most critics agree that O'Flaherty's stories are superior to his novels" (xi). Angeline Kelly concludes that "as a writer he will ultimately be remembered ... for his work in the short story" (525), and Paul Doyle goes further to praise O'Flaherty's animal stories in particular as the best of his writing (58-59). As a short story writer O'Flaherty is assessed hand in hand with Sean O'Faolain and Frank O'Connor and, in the case of Richard J. Thompson's analysis, he is better: "O'Flaherty's 'Irish' stories have a native purity, an authority in dealing with the feel and smell and essence of peasant life that O'Faolain and O'Connor, for all their insight, cannot match" (81). O'Flaherty's novels, however, are largely excluded from such acclaim.

The canonization of O'Flaherty in the short story genre does not readily extend to his work as a novelist.³ John Zneimer makes it very clear that when one moves from O'Flaherty's novels to his short stories the transformation is into a different world entirely

³ It is important to note that not all of O'Flaherty's short stories have received universal praise. See Michael H. Murray's article, "Liam O'Flaherty and the Speaking Voice," for a discussion of the varied responses to the stories. Despite some adverse reviews of O'Flaherty's short stories, Murray writes that "commentators have been consistent in their agreement that the best tales are those closest to the soil" (154).

(Zneimer's chapter on short fiction is titled "A New Vision"), and it is a "marvelous" metamorphosis at that:

The whole tone has changed. The same vocabulary does not seem to apply. The novels can be described by a vocabulary of heat. The short stories can be described by light. Their surface is cold and shimmering. If the novels are marked by violence and melodrama and fury, O'Flaherty's short stories are best marked by their qualities of calmness, simplicity, and detachment. (146-147)

There is no doubt that Zneimer prefers the "qualities" of the short fiction over those of the novels. When critics turn to O'Flaherty's novels, "he is accused of too frequently squandering literary talent in a series of coarse-textured sensationalist novels" (Heaney 45). John Hildebidle is a good example of this line: "There is hardly a one of his longer pieces of fiction that is not likely, at some point, to prompt an attentive reader to throw it down in disgust" (48). And the novels set in Dublin and/or during the revolutionary period (1916-1923) give critics the most difficulty. The problem, if one believes Patrick Sheeran, is that "these novels are the least interesting and least satisfactory of all O'Flaherty's works. They are frequently badly written, poorly constructed and repetitive" (259).

In his 1995 article, "The O'Flaherty Novel: A Problem of Critical Approach," Dermot Heaney addresses both comments such as Sheeran's and what he perceives as the "problem" with previous analyses of O'Flaherty's work. Heaney argues that critics who have helped define O'Flaherty's importance and influence as a short story writer have equally failed to explain his overall literary effort. To rectify the "problem of critical

approach” to O’Flaherty’s novels, Heaney suggests that the novels can be more productively read in terms of romance and melodrama.⁴ Heaney writes from a critical milieu very much interested in and tolerant of previously labelled “low” forms of writing, and he does so as a way of recuperating O’Flaherty’s longer fiction from relative critical obscurity. He calls for critics to suspend traditional definitions of the realistic novel and allow for a new assessment of O’Flaherty. Heaney celebrates O’Flaherty “as a novelist consciously exploiting an alternative set of conventions he feels are appropriate to his themes, and open the way for a critical analysis of his effectiveness as a melodramatist, rather than his failure as a social realist” (54). And while Heaney is representative of a wave of literary criticism that privileges the romance, or the thriller, or detective fiction as sites of textual as well as cultural analysis, his own work is traditional in his desire to categorize O’Flaherty’s novels in terms of genres such as melodrama.⁵ Heaney does, however, astutely point out elements of a critical orthodoxy at work in the treatment of O’Flaherty’s work.

⁴ Heaney suggests Gillian Beer’s *The Romance* (London: Methuen, 1970), and Peter Brooks’s *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984) as good examples.

⁵ One of the earliest critical assessments of O’Flaherty’s writing, William Troy’s 1929 “The Position of Liam O’Flaherty,” anticipates Heaney’s comments by several decades. Troy considers O’Flaherty to be melodramatic and that his “distinction as a novelist [is] that he has had the courage, through all of his five novels, to adopt what is at once the most dangerous and the most unpopular of literary modes” (9).

Heaney goes on to write that critics seem to allow O'Flaherty all sorts of leeway when he sets his novels in remote island settings simply because such locations conform to a "convention established by the Irish Literary Revival" (46). Heaney hypothesizes that the novels set in urban environments are expected to conform to a kind of city realism, whereas the works set in rural environments are allowed all sorts of fabulist gestures and constructions. Heaney's thesis leads to another critical convention in O'Flaherty studies: the tendency to categorize both the novels and the characters into bifurcated groupings such as rural versus urban. Sheeran offers three such splits: innocence versus experience, the soul versus the body, and action versus contemplation. Hedda Friberg's *An Old Order and a New: The Split World of Liam O'Flaherty's Novels* goes even further in arguing that polarization is central to understanding O'Flaherty's novels. Friberg's 1996 book, the most recent full-length study of O'Flaherty's novels, argues that his works "bristle with tensions and contradictions, and the world they present is a split one" (11). Her thesis is based on a comment in Sheeran's study that O'Flaherty's novels present a broken world, and she extends this observation into a sustained argument that the split is between an "Old Order" embodied by a rural, indigenous tradition that is closely linked to the cycles of nature and a "New Order" that is "largely urban, modernity-marked and 'civilized'" (12).

The tensions that inform O'Flaherty's novels are, however, more complex than an either/or division allows. The city/country or old/new paradigm is not adequate to explain

a novel such as *The Martyr* that, although set in the countryside of Kerry, contains characters intertextually related to those who populate O'Flaherty's city novels such as *The Informer*, *The Assassin*, and *Insurrection*. Moreover, when Friberg specifically states that the "double bind of the colonized psyche" (35) is to resist or to identify, she creates another either/or model and one that does not sufficiently explain either O'Flaherty's content or his method. So begins the most noticeable quality of critical responses to O'Flaherty: his work is not uniform and critics have some trouble rationalizing or theorizing his heterogeneity. He moves his settings from rural to urban locations; he writes short fiction, novels, and memoirs; his style varies from realism to melodrama to satire; and he writes across literary movements from realism to modernism and existentialism. Sheeran sees him as a writer "re-shaping" narrative conventions (51), and Hildebidle writes that O'Flaherty uses the devices of a pure realist in order to "explode the whole enterprise of realism" (31). It is perhaps more accurate to write that O'Flaherty belongs or subscribes to no particular school or genre of writing; his fictional worlds are multifaceted.

O'Flaherty's use of satire, sparingly in *The Informer*, *Insurrection*, and *The Assassin*, but with full force in *The Martyr*, is a way of *both* identifying *and* resisting, and so moves past that "double bind" of the "colonized psyche." The success of satire in general, and the satirical characterization at work in *The Martyr* in particular, depends upon an identification with, or recognition of, the historical situation (the Civil War) and

the character types (gunman, martyr, publican, politician, etc.). Satire is also a rhetoric of resistance; it mocks and derides the very subjects it establishes as identifiable and recognizable. Reading O'Flaherty's gunman novels as satirical representations of Ireland's violent history in the early twentieth century offers fresh analytical ground upon which to build a new critical understanding of O'Flaherty's work.⁶

3.2 Tourists, Priests, and Patriots: Liam O'Flaherty's Satirical Voice

O'Flaherty's satire focuses its attack on stereotypes, and while critics have noted his use, or overuse, of character types they have yet to place such representations in the context of satire. Patrick Sheeran and John Zneimer agree that O'Flaherty creates a trinity of characters: soldiers, monks, and poets. Zneimer locates the clearest articulation of these figures in O'Flaherty's 1946 novel, *Land*.⁷ While acknowledging that *The Martyr* is the progenitor of all O'Flaherty's character types, Zneimer claims that in *Land* and

⁶ Bringing O'Flaherty's satirical talents to the forefront of a critical reading of these novels is also a way of incorporating Sheeran's idea that O'Flaherty "re-shapes narrative conventions" (51) and Hildebidle's observation that his novels "explode the enterprise of realism" (31).

⁷ See pp. 127-145 in *The Literary Vision of Liam O'Flaherty* for Zneimer's elaboration of what he calls O'Flaherty's "gallery of characters" (127).

Insurrection O'Flaherty fully develops a theory of the three distinctive responses "to the absolute challenge that an occasion in history presented" (133). *Land* and *Insurrection* certainly do present a trinity of characters who represent three human possibilities, but the earlier novel, *The Martyr* (1933), presents the fullest range of characters, types, and human reactions to situations of crisis. To acknowledge such a range of types does not, however, establish the way O'Flaherty treats these characters. In O'Flaherty's work, character is integral to his use of satire. Indeed, O'Flaherty is more persistent in his use of satire than critics have heretofore acknowledged.

In *Land*, the character of Raoul St. George states that: "The soldier, the poet, and the monk represent what is finest in man. They represent man's will to power, to beauty and to immortality" (75-76). Zneimer sees St. George as O'Flaherty's mouthpiece, to be taken seriously and literally (134). However, O'Flaherty is far too cognizant of the operation of stereotypes in narrative to be taken so straightforwardly. That none of the characters in *The Informer*, *The Martyr*, *The Assassin*, or *Insurrection* in any way attain "beauty" or "power" and that their only "immortality" as literary characters is just the beginning of seeing them as satirical figures. That so many of them are *failed* soldiers, monks, and poets is even more indicative that something else entirely is going on with O'Flaherty's portrayal of rebel figures than straightforward representation. Zneimer hints at this when he writes that "*Insurrection* ... is more of an idea book" and that "Bartly

Madden, Michael Kinsella, and George Stapleton are not so much characters as representatives of O'Flaherty's ideas" (139). It is *because* the characters in *Insurrection* and the other novels represent ideas that a reading of them invites questions not only of stereotype but also of satire.

In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams writes that satire "can be described as the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation" (275). Abrams further writes that satire differs from comedy in that "comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire derides; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt that exists outside the work itself" (275). The "butt" may be "an individual ... a class, an institution, a nation, or even ... the entire human race" (275). Many critics agree that O'Flaherty is aiming some kind of literary "weapon," but they vary on the target and the purpose of O'Flaherty's often violent prose. Hildebidle writes that O'Flaherty's fiction is a series of "obsessive corrections" of any of the following groups: the nobility, the peasantry, the "long, mythic-historical record of Irish resistance," the priesthood, gombeen-men, "weak-kneed intellectuals," and "disillusioned terrorist True Believers" (12). Zneimer agrees that personalities, or types, are O'Flaherty's "main interest" and goes further to state that *The Martyr* and *A Tourist's Guide to Ireland* attack mysticism in

particular, presenting it as an “extraordinary psychological disease” (116).⁸ O’Flaherty attacks more than mysticism: he criticizes ideologues and obsession in *The Informer* and *The Assassin*, and he deflates the rhetoric of Irish nationalism in *Insurrection*. It is, however, in *The Martyr* and *A Tourist’s Guide to Ireland* that the richness and extent of O’Flaherty’s satire reach their zenith.

There is a significant connection between these two O’Flaherty texts. They both attack something and that something seems to be personalities or character traits, but no previous critic categorizes *both* works as satire. *A Tourist’s Guide* is granted this status, and comparisons are made between *A Tourist’s Guide* and *The Martyr*, but no critic uses the word “satire” in conjunction with the latter.⁹ Kelly, who does look at O’Flaherty’s use of satire, is primarily concerned with the short fiction and argues that O’Flaherty uses

⁸ Sheeran also agrees with Zneimer and writes that *The Martyr* and *A Tourist’s Guide to Ireland* “condemn the ‘mystical’ aspect of Irish life” (249-250).

⁹ Zneimer writes that “O’Flaherty’s disillusionment with the Irish is set forth most scathingly in a little satirical tract, *A Tourist’s Guide to Ireland*” (54), and continues to discuss the *Guide* in some detail. Zneimer also uses the *Guide* as a means to discuss Brian Crosbie in *The Martyr* (117), but never makes the critical leap to read the novel as satire as well.

satire to offer criticisms of things such as “warfare in general” (27).¹⁰ Despite references to characters as “outlandish” (Sheeran 249), and an acknowledgment that O’Flaherty is attacking something, or trying to correct something, no one who focuses on O’Flaherty’s gunman novels has yet to claim that they could be written in a satirical style. *The Martyr* and *A Tourist’s Guide to Ireland* are determinedly satirical, and the objects of O’Flaherty’s attack are specifically Irish.

A reading that takes into consideration O’Flaherty’s satirical talents opens novels such as *The Informer* or *Insurrection* to new and different interpretations. O’Flaherty’s most obvious satire is *A Tourist’s Guide to Ireland* (1929). Although not a novel, this text is, in fact, a useful start for a discussion of O’Flaherty’s satirical voice in the novels because the humour is indisputable and the satiric thrust clear. In other words, an examination of *A Tourist’s Guide to Ireland* provides the basis for an analysis of the satiric content of O’Flaherty’s novels by making explicit his satiric intentions and techniques.

A Tourist’s Guide to Ireland is a “formal” or “direct” satire by Abrams’s definition, in which the satiric persona speaks out in the first person (276). The unnamed

¹⁰ O’Flaherty’s satiric humour is recognized and praised by critics of his short fiction. In *Liam O’Flaherty: The Storyteller*, A.A. Kelly devotes a chapter, “From Ridicule to Contempt,” to O’Flaherty’s use of varying types of humour in his short stories. Kelly also labels O’Flaherty’s autobiographical *The Return of the Brute* as “a savage satire” (27). Critics writing about O’Flaherty’s novels, however, do not address satire in any sustained fashion. Again, it would seem that because critics view O’Flaherty’s gunman novels as a sub-genre entirely different from his short fiction, they tend not to notice similarities between the qualities of his stories and his novels.

narrator/tour guide begins by dividing tourists travelling in Ireland into four groups: “those who come for knowledge, those who come for pleasure, those who come for a rest and those who come for profit” (10-11). The profiteers are dismissed immediately as “robbers, swindlers, shysters and confidence tricksters” and the narrator claims to devote his attention to the other three types of tourist (11). What this slim volume claims to bestow upon such tourists-to-be is salvation from ignorance about the country to be visited, and the narrator then accomplishes such salvation with a robust and witty dissertation on four categories of Irishman: the priest, the politician, the publican, and the peasant. All are potentially threatening to both the tourist’s vacation and his/her bank balance. The resulting romp through cliché, banality, and hackneyed characterization is highly diverting. However, O’Flaherty’s brilliant and scathing satire is more subtle than merely being critical of tourism; while *A Tourist’s Guide* employs stereotypes in order to criticize tourism and to highlight the gullibility of tourists, this “handbook” is also a keen analysis of the power of stereotype, particularly Irish ones.

The audience for the book is ostensibly visitors to Ireland, but it is also clearly directed to an Irish readership. In taking aim at aspects of the Irish situation, O’Flaherty speaks to the native reader rather than the tourist, who may not have the necessary knowledge to appreciate O’Flaherty’s satiric thrust. His targets include, but are not limited

to, increasing materialism, the fetishization of peasant life, the Easter Rising, mysticism, church-controlled institutions, and censorship. Take for example his portrait of the priest:

He is most commonly seen making a cautious approach to the Education Office, where he has all sorts of complaints to lodge and all sorts of suggestions to make. Every book recommended by the education authorities for the schools is examined by him, and if he finds a single idea in any of them that might be likely to inspire thought of passion, then he is up in arms at once. Like an army of black beetles on the march, he and his countless brothers invade Dublin and lay siege to the official responsible. Woe to that man. (27)

Here, O'Flaherty, who was himself targeted for censorship, derides priestly interference with free thought and free press.¹¹ The politician, the publican, and the peasant are skewered with equal intensity. This situation (and its possible amelioration) is something for an Irish audience to consider. Tourists could not possibly feel the force of O'Flaherty's attack.

Curiously for a work devoted to satirizing stereotypes, one of the most conventional, the patriot/revolutionary gunman, is given only cursory attention. Comments about such men are sprinkled throughout the treatise, such as the chapter on politicians in which the narrator claims that

¹¹ A list of books prohibited between 1930 and 1946 indicates that five of O'Flaherty's novels were censored in Ireland (Adams, *Censorship* 242). George Jefferson, in his descriptive bibliography of O'Flaherty's works, notes that *The Martyr* "was banned in Ireland when published" and that O'Flaherty's literary agent "conceded that they could make alterations" if necessary for the American publication (46).

we are guilty of violence only in our minds and on our tongues. The tourist must understand this, when he comes in contact with our revolutionary groups. Their passwords, their secret movements and their hair-raising programmes must be taken with a smile because they mean nothing of it. (52)

This deflation of “revolutionary groups” as all talk and no action informs a much more ruthless condemnation of the Irish Civil War:

Is there any tourist in the whole world of such dull wit as not to be moved to an ecstasy of delight by the spectacle of a whole nation arguing for a number of years about the nature of an oath? In most countries wars are waged over intelligible things like territory, money and real estate, but our politicians waged a civil war over the wording of an oath. Even after the war had been finished, they still went on arguing. The argument has now ceased and the result of the whole business is that the position is exactly what it was before the war.... Indeed, as a result of the war and the argument the people have come to the conclusion that an oath is worth very little, and they abuse it on every manner of occasion to the great detriment of the state. (47)

While any reader will gather that the thrust of this passage is to criticize empty talk and valueless words, it is really the Irish audience who will get the ironic conflation of the oath of allegiance to the British crown with blasphemy (the “oath” that is “abused”). The sum weight of O’Flaherty’s attack in *A Tourist’s Guide to Ireland* is a large scale assault on fixed notions of Irish identity and, indeed, what O’Flaherty seems to be doing is turning tourist expectations of Irish individuality and eccentricity (quaintness) into an expression of ineffectual banality.

To return to Friberg's characterization of the colonized psyche, O'Flaherty puts the narrative device of satire to work in *A Tourist's Guide to Ireland* in an attempt to resist the social apathy that he sees as infecting the nation, and he can only do so if his caricatures are immediately recognizable. Thus he is *both identifying and resisting* Irish stereotypes in a complex, subtle, and comprehensive satire of the state of Ireland past and present. *A Tourist's Guide to Ireland* is a vital introduction to the characters and the political satire of *The Informer*, *The Assassin*, *The Martyr*, and *Insurrection* because it showcases O'Flaherty's talent for humour and satire and it displays an astute comprehension of stereotype.

Such talent and comprehension are best achieved in *The Martyr*. Unlike O'Flaherty's other gunman novels in which the satire is comparatively localized, *The Martyr* presents a multi-dimensional attack on gunmen and both sides of the Irish Civil War that erupted in Ireland in 1922. One of the most striking aspects of *The Martyr* is its treatment of the war itself, a topic that is not often (compared to the Easter Rising) the basis of either historical or fictional works. In his 1989 history of the Civil War, Michael Hopkinson writes that it is "not surprising that a bitter, incestuous conflict in a small country, which saw neither compromise nor reconciliation at its end, has been extremely difficult for Irish historians to write about in a detached manner" (xii). According to Hopkinson, even memoirs of the revolutionary period by those involved, such as Dan

Breen and Tom Barry, “have very little to say about the Civil War” (xii). Some sixty years after O’Flaherty wrote *The Martyr*, filmmaker Neil Jordan encountered difficulty in dealing with the Civil War period when making his film, *Michael Collins*. In an interview with Seamus McSwiney, Jordan asserts that the subject of the Irish Civil War is repressed compared to other events in Irish history:

We were taught nothing about the War of Independence, the Civil War, the brutality of that period, not the complexity of the politics or the issues ... that period has been suppressed in our minds, people didn’t want to talk about it, think about it, or discuss it. But it is part of our past, our history, and it deserves examination. (20)

Jordan’s claim that there exists a cultural denial of the Civil War period is supported by Helen Litton in her introduction to *The Irish Civil War: An Illustrated History*: “I approached this project in a fog of relative ignorance about the Irish Civil War and the events surrounding it, because I am part of the generations of schoolchildren which were only taught Irish history up to, at best, 1921. The Irish Free State may as well not have existed at all” (7). The daring with which O’Flaherty tackles the traumatic events of the Civil War only ten years after its end is magnified by the fact that he does so in a way that

satirizes the war and mocks those involved on both sides. Such a novel, clearly, as O'Brien notes, "run[s] high risks" (66).¹²

One risk, and it is the risk of any satire, is that readers will not "get it," or, that readers will deny what is being satirized. Recalling Kelly's comment that O'Flaherty uses satire to damn warfare in general, it appears that critics generally divorce O'Flaherty's works from specific historical realities. Zneimer, when writing that "military action is of little significance" to *The Martyr* and that the novel "is not as much a historical picture as a representation of the conflict of certain basic forces" (116-117), is more extreme than Kelly in universalizing O'Flaherty's intent. And while such comments are accurate to a point, they also tend to obscure or gloss over precise historical details that contribute to O'Flaherty's satiric representation of conflict.

An example of the significant role of military action and historical setting is O'Flaherty's placing of *The Martyr* in Kerry. Both Litton and Hopkinson note that Kerry was not only a site of intense Republican resistance and, by extension, a site of Free State unpopularity (Hopkinson 240), but it was also the place where "the worst atrocities" of the Civil War occurred (Litton 119). In the north-east part of the county, Republican

¹² O'Flaherty's work is not the only artistic representation of the war to be at risk of misunderstanding. Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* is an earlier treatment of the Irish Civil War, and contemporary cultural response to his play tended to domesticate the political content. See Bernice Schrank's "Dialectical Configurations in *Juno and the Paycock*" (438-455) for a discussion of the risks O'Casey ran with his production.

prisoners were used to clear mine obstructions. Prisoners who had not yet “been found guilty of any offence” (Hopkinson 241) were tied up and placed close enough to the mines to be killed when the mines were detonated. Hopkinson notes that the events in Kerry have “left behind a bitterness remarkable even in the context of the Civil War” (240). The publicity surrounding post-Civil War investigations into the Kerry atrocities was active and substantial, and O’Flaherty’s choice of Kerry as the setting for his Civil War satire indicates that he is moving right into the heart of that bitter and ugly conflict. As if taking his cue from *A Tourist’s Guide to Ireland*, O’Flaherty may indeed be satirizing war in general, but he is also aiming his criticism specifically at the Irish Civil War and a particularly divisive and violent part of that conflict. Every characterization in *The Martyr* is refracted through this historical context. The earliest evidence in *The Martyr* of O’Flaherty’s satirical thrust in characterization is in his evocation of a circus.

3.3 Satire and *The Martyr*

The Martyr opens with the description of Peter Clancy, a volunteer on the side of the Irregulars in the Irish Civil War.¹³ With “a bandolier across his body and an old-fashioned rifle in his hand, he looked a typical revolutionary soldier” (5). Clancy prances back and forth with “great energy” and a child-like glee at the news that the Civil War had “at last reached Sallytown” (5). Clancy’s excitement, and the way the Civil War is described as finally arriving, conjure images of a circus coming to town. Very early in the novel, one of the town’s businessmen makes this comparison of the war with a circus explicit: “‘This is as good as a circus,’ said Tobin, slapping his thigh” (37). Jack Tracy later rallies his band of Irregulars with the cry: “We’ll let the circus rip in Sallytown” (45). The action of Tobin slapping his thigh, presumably in laughter, and then responding to Tracy’s rally by “laughing” and putting “his glass of beer to his head” (45), as if he is already hungover from the effects of the party, are both strong narrative signals that not only is the novel a satire in which “the objects of the satire are characters who make

¹³ On 7 January 1922, the Anglo-Irish treaty, which established the Irish Free State and partitioned what is now Northern Ireland, was accepted in the Dail by a vote of 64 to 57. Within six months the forces opposing the treaty, known alternately as “Irregulars” and the IRA, were at war with the newly named National Army, or “Free Staters” (Ranelagh 203-204).

themselves and their opinions ridiculous or obnoxious” (Abrams 277), but that many of the characters themselves deem the action of the war to be slightly ridiculous and comical.

Further examples of the novel’s satirical mode abound, some bordering on the farcical. There is Gunner Regan, an experienced soldier “drummed out of the army once for drunkenness” (95), who leaves his post of lying in ambush for the Free State forces to slip to the pub for a drink. There, he gets into a drunken brawl, thrown into and then locked in the cellar (101-103). When Regan and his cohorts are discovered in the cellar, the ensuing description is, indeed, ridiculing:

Then four extraordinary creatures issued from the cellar, all as drunk as could be. Tobin’s left eye was blackened, his lip was bloody, his pyjama jacket was torn into shreds, there was a streak of blood down his chest and his bare feet were scratched. Regan’s face was daubed with blood; not his own, however, but that which came from Tobin’s lips. Cassidy was limping from a wound inflicted on his leg by Regan’s teeth. Mrs. Cassidy ... was all covered with cobwebs, which hung about her like the shroud worn by a ghost in a cinema film. (142)

The four “extraordinary” creatures emerging from the dark cellar are beat up and wounded, not by the violence of the war but because of a drunken brawl. That Regan is quickly identified by Colonel Hunt as a “notorious Irregular” and promptly arrested and treated as if he were a dangerous criminal – bloody, drunk and tired – is farce that deflates not only the IRA soldiers, but also the commanding officers of the Free State forces.

If O’Flaherty’s satiric style needed any more evidence, then the earlier comparison of Mrs. Cassidy to a figure in “cinema film” is a telling description, as the cinematic motif

is one repeated in the novel's developing satire. Near the end of the novel when Jack Tracy and his gang of Irregulars are preparing to fight the Free Staters to the death, Sailor King, an American who joined Tracy just for the fight, offers one of the most beautifully concise and satirical lines about the character types at work in *The Martyr*. When Tracy is trying to convince his comrades to hold the line and fight an obviously losing battle, King says: "What d'ye take us for? Movie heroes?" (213). The ridiculousness of behaving like movie actors in a western shoot-out is not lost on Tracy, who soon calls off the ambush. In terms of this thesis, King's question cuts to the quick of O'Flaherty's point in so many of his characterizations. Believing in stereotypes of fighting men or mystical leaders gets you killed. O'Flaherty layers the overall, external satire of the Civil War with internal satires whereby characters themselves mock and deride other characters' investment in ineffectual stereotypes.

The Martyr is O'Flaherty's most thoroughgoing satire with the exception, perhaps, of *A Tourist's Guide to Ireland*. Tourists, priests, and politicians aside, it is O'Flaherty's representation of patriots, rebels, and gunmen (and the causes for which they do battle) that clearly establishes much of his work as satiric. His types of fighting men are the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

As noted earlier, there are three exhaustive book-length studies of Liam O'Flaherty's fiction by John Zneimer, Patrick Sheeran, and Hedda Friberg. All three

consider the figure of the gunman, but with varying degrees of specificity. Zneimer argues that O'Flaherty's characters are alienated subjects in a world deprived of, or unable to attain, any sense of spiritual belonging. He places O'Flaherty in a literary history that extends beyond the Irish border, and presents the novels and short stories as belonging to an existentialist expression of "a universe that has no meaning and offers no consolation" (xii). Like Zneimer, Sheeran considers the gunman figure. But for him, the key issue in O'Flaherty's characterization is not spiritual angst, but O'Flaherty's choleric depiction of anyone devoted to a cause. This chapter is very much a dialogue with Sheeran's analysis because Sheeran is the one critic who makes some mention of stereotype in relation to O'Flaherty's methods of characterization. Despite this attention, he does not give stereotypes sustained consideration, nor does he consider satire as O'Flaherty's dominant rhetorical style. Sheeran writes that *A Tourist's Guide to Ireland* is a "bitter, unrelenting expose of all the social classes, creeds, or causes to which an Irishman might give his allegiance" (105). He also notes that O'Flaherty's descriptions of the "Republican movements of the 1920s is savagely ironical" (286). Such leanings toward a reading of satire or irony in O'Flaherty's novels are nevertheless amputated. Sheeran's goal is not a satirical consideration; rather, it is to frame O'Flaherty's fiction within an autobiographical and social context. The third critic of O'Flaherty's novels addresses a significant gap in O'Flaherty criticism: the issue of gender and the female characters.

Before publishing her book-length study, Hedda Friberg wrote an article titled “Women in Three Works by Liam O’Flaherty: In Search of an Egalitarian Impulse.” In it, she offers a consideration of female characters, but she only looks at two novels (and only one character in each), and the autobiographical *I Went to Russia*. Friberg reads O’Flaherty’s female characters through what she terms a “political filter” (46) that is in fact her own desire to find something redeeming in his characterization of women. She looks to find evidence that he is moving toward an idea of a society in which men and women are equal, but notes that he falls short of such a goal. Female characters, particularly female rebels such as Kitty Mellet in *The Assassin* or Kate McCarthy and Angela Fitzgibbon in *The Martyr*, are more often than not O’Flaherty’s most one-dimensional creations. His narrative attention is more dedicated to an articulation of alienated men, and as such the novels minimize women. More so than his male figures, the women in his novels are really only fluctuations on one figure: the mother or Mother Ireland (there are altogether too many named “Kitty”). And yet, O’Flaherty’s depiction of Angela Fitzgibbon in *The Martyr* is the most decisive, most satiric attack on the very idea of personifying Ireland as a woman. By extension, any man who devotes himself in whatever way to Mother Ireland is subject to similar derision.

Even though this thesis is devoted to “gunmen,” part of this chapter will consider female characters, but mostly as narrative devices in aid of a more subtle and interesting

satiric portrayal of men in crisis. Those men in crisis can be divided, albeit hesitatingly, into three sub-categories: the voluptuaries, the acolytes, and the ideologues. The divisions are hesitant because there are gunmen who simply do not fit. Gypo Nolan in *The Informer*, for example, slides between voluptuary and a kind of failed acolyte, and Jack Tracy in *The Martyr* shares none of the extreme obsessiveness of other ideologues. That O'Flaherty's most potent satiric representation is of Angela Fitzgibbon in *The Martyr* makes the *gunman* categories all the more tentative. Liam O'Flaherty's heterogeneity is nowhere more obvious, and difficult to encapsulate, than in his satiric presentation of Irish rebels. Notwithstanding these caveats, the categories of voluptuary, acolyte, and ideologue establish useful commonalities and make divergences from type easier to identify.

3.4 The Voluptuaries

This category includes those gunmen characters who exhibit the appetites and passions of the body, who indulge those appetites whenever possible, but who also possess physical strength and a propensity for brutality. The clearest example of the voluptuary type is in *The Martyr*. It bears repeating that the circus metaphor in *The Martyr* is an important narrative technique in O'Flaherty's construction of his Civil War

satire. The carnivalesque atmosphere of a circus, replete with danger, food, animals, excitement, food, clowns, costumes, and food is the context in which O'Flaherty's chief voluptuary is introduced. And what better arena than a circus to place the character defined by his voluptuous indulgence in sensual pleasures?

Colonel Hunt, commander of the Free State forces, is a character who straddles that fine line between satire and farce. A comic figure who has a "ludicrous appearance," Hunt is too fat to get out of his armoured car without assistance, and he is laughed at by his own men (134). The narrator says that "[h]e looked like a fantastic cartoon, devised by his worst enemy" (136). Hunt is a figure of epicurean indulgence and grotesque obesity, and the mockery of Hunt's appetite is palpable:

"That's the stuff," said the colonel. "Now get me that and the chops and a pot of tea and home-made bread and toast and a saucer of jam and a bit of a raw onion and a plate of fruit and ... anything else that comes into yer head. I like to see full an' plenty around me. A whack at this and then a dip into that." (146)

Hunt may be a ridiculous "fat man" of the circus, but he is also shrewd in matters of local politics. Because of his political acuity, he can also be read as the circus "ring master." Before he and his Free State troops occupy Sallytown, Hunt wisely seeks out the main businessmen, and appeases them with promises of greater wealth as if he took strategic advice from *A Tourist's Guide to Ireland*. Hunt is pragmatic, but in the end he is relatively ineffectual; he operates as a mere figurehead of the Free Staters rather than a military

leader. He gets drunk as easily as Gunner Regan, and washes his hands of the fate of Brian Crosbie, the martyr of the title. Eventually Hunt submits any and all command decisions to Major Tyson, but mostly because he doesn't want to disrupt his feast.

Hunt is a voluptuary because his priority is sating his appetite. He is, however, more a figure of mockery than harsh criticism. Like O'Flaherty's other voluptuous character, Gypo Nolan in *The Informer*, Colonel Hunt is made ridiculous but he does not suffer under the same intense satiric fire as O'Flaherty's acolytes and ideologues. Indeed, Gypo Nolan (who is both voluptuary and failed acolyte) is not so much ridiculed as presented as pathetic, even worthy of sympathy and grace.

Liam O'Flaherty's *The Informer* is one of his most renowned novels,¹⁴ and it follows soon after his critically acclaimed *The Black Soul*. It opens with a description of Dublin that becomes a hallmark of O'Flaherty's journalistic style of establishing setting. There is attention to time, it is "three minutes to six o'clock"; to place, "the Dunboy Lodging House"; and to atmosphere, where the most immediate impression is the smell "of human beings living in a congested area" (*The Informer* 5). The clarity of setting in the opening pages of so many of O'Flaherty's novels is countered by characters who are often

¹⁴ The eminent status of *The Informer* is due in part to John Ford's 1935 filmic version that not only won Oscars for best direction, screenplay, and actor but is also considered by Theodore Huff as "the greatest talking picture ever made in America. It is as much a landmark in the history of sound film as *The Birth of a Nation* is in the silent era" (qtd. in Gallagher 121).

ambiguous and confusing, as if the human element of the narrative is far more complex than the streets they walk or the towns they occupy. So it is that Gypo Nolan enters the scene, an ousted member of Dan Gallagher's outlawed organization.

One of the first physical descriptions offered of Nolan is that he "had a close-cropped bullet-shaped head, fair hair and dark eyebrows" (11). It is significant that his head is shaped like a bullet because Nolan has great difficulty with rational thought (he is a dullard), and his role in the narrative is in many ways as a weapon of death, but one that becomes increasingly sympathetic (the narrative voice begins the novel highly critical of Gypo Nolan's stupidity and animal strength but, by the end, Nolan is a far more attractive alternative to the cold inhumanity of Dan Gallagher). Nolan informs on his friend, Frankie McPhillip, and that act causes McPhillip's violent death. The ideas in Gypo Nolan's head are figurative bullets that kill McPhillip, and in the end, Gypo himself. When Nolan meets McPhillip and realizes that his friend is sick and probably dying of consumption, "he was struck at that moment by an insane and monstrous idea.... A monstrous idea had prowled into his head, like an uncouth beast straying from a wilderness into a civilized place where children are alone" (14). This description of Nolan's idea as a beast in the wilderness is part of the voluptuousness of his character. Voluptuaries may indulge their sensualist desires, but they can also be brutal and animalistic. Nolan's physical prowess, and his

propensity for drink, food, and women when he has money, are the key characteristics to reading him as a voluptuary.

Nolan leaves the lodging house and wanders the shop-lined streets of Dublin at night, looking for anything to help him, guide him. He stops at one window and there the idea of informing on his friend crystallizes:

He was looking at a pair of bright spurs and his face contorted suddenly. His eyes bulged as if he were taken with a fit of terror.... He was contemplating the sudden discovery that his mind had made, about the relationship between his having no money for a bed and his having met Francis McPhillip, who was wanted for murder. (20)

The spurs are an obvious symbol of the fact that Nolan needs something or someone else to tell him what to do. Nolan is very much like a horse; his physical strength is immense but he is stupid and is tormented when situations require him to think for himself. The cold, metallic, injurious spurs are a tool not unlike a bullet, and in this case Nolan is the horse to be spurred on. The question at this very early point in the narrative is, who is doing the spurring? The answer eventually comes in the form of Commandant Dan Gallagher, O'Flaherty's earliest "godfather," leader of gunmen, and ideologue. He is an intelligent, cold, cruel commander of men. Yet, he controls men's fates with none of the fatherly gestures (genuine or not) of later godfather characters such as Skeffington in *Cal* and Joe Hamill in *The Boxer*. That Gallagher can control Nolan to the degree he does is testimony to Nolan's reliance on, vulnerability to, and longing for the spurs of strong

personalities. Just as Colonel Hunt defers critical decisions to a subordinate officer, Gypo Nolan needs someone else to do his thinking. Despite this similarity between O'Flaherty's two voluptuaries, Nolan is granted a quality no other O'Flaherty gunman receives: "mercy and pity and peace" (182).

In the final scene of *The Informer*, Nolan confesses to McPhillip's mother that he informed on her son and caused his death. After Mrs. McPhillip says "I forgive ye," Nolan dies, but with the "majesty of his giant stature, towering above all" (182). Gallagher, by comparison, merely "shrugged himself and turned away" (181). The elevation of Nolan's character to a majestic status and the refusal of any forgiveness or grace to Gallagher is a deflation of Gallagher's character, and an indication that O'Flaherty's voluptuaries are less dangerous than his ideologues. The pathos of Nolan's life and death is, as Sheeran notes, articulated through the "one term that is conspicuously excluded" from the characterization of Gallagher, "pity" (Sheeran 277). Nolan, with all his voluptuary leanings, attains sympathetic status more so because he is a rejected acolyte who not only fights back against the organization that ostracized him, but because he seeks forgiveness.

3.5 The Acolytes

The second group of O'Flaherty gunmen are also represented with some sympathy, and occasional satire. The acolytes are the followers, the henchmen, the students of violence who sit at the feet of the ideologues, but O'Flaherty wields two different representations within this one group. Some acolytes, like the rejected Gypo Nolan and the lost boy Bartly Madden, are depicted as desperate for some sense of belonging. Their vulnerability to stronger personalities (the ideologues) is partly the reason they are sympathetically treated. Other acolytes, often minor characters, are represented as clownish or hollow. These gunmen are treated far more satirically than their lost and vulnerable counterparts.

Gypo Nolan, while possessing some characteristics of the voluptuary, is more accurately a rejected acolyte. At the beginning of *The Informer*, Gypo Nolan and Frankie McPhillip have been kicked out of Gallagher's organization for unsanctioned violence. Nolan, more so than the dying McPhillip, longs to return to the group. He yearns to feel again the "loving interest with which a crowd watches the movements of a champion boxer" that he once felt while serving under Gallagher (56). Nolan's hero-worship of Gallagher turns to fear, however, once he finally realizes that Gallagher knows Nolan informed on McPhillip, and that Gallagher wants Nolan dead. Nolan's physical energy and

strength are soon pitted against Gallagher's intelligence, as the once-devoted acolyte now fights against the organization he once adored and that now wants to see him killed. Gallagher may "defeat" Gypo Nolan, if one can call his capturing and killing of Nolan that, by playing on Nolan's fears and anxieties about being outside the organization. But it is O'Flaherty's granting of Nolan that small measure of mercy and pity in the end of *The Informer* that informs the characterization of his gunmen-acolytes; and, no one better sums up the pathos of the acolyte more than Bartly Madden in *Insurrection*.

Nearly thirty years after the publication of *The Informer*, Liam O'Flaherty wrote a novel specifically about the Easter Rising of 1916. *Insurrection* is his last novel and the fiery, volatile energy of O'Flaherty's earlier prose has abated. Zneimer notes that O'Flaherty's narrative "tension is lacking" in *Insurrection* (184) and Sheeran writes that it is less "powerful and compelling" than *The Martyr* (256).¹⁵ Such observations are accurate. The novel is not saturated with satire; rather the satirical element is by and large located in the characterization of only one insurgent, George Stapleton. Despite the muted tone, O'Flaherty still articulates a criticism of hero worship, empty rhetoric, and the sacrifice of lives for political causes all within the undeniably volatile context of the Easter

¹⁵ In Sheeran's view, *Insurrection* is not only less powerful; it is "a very bad novel" (239). However, he devotes space to a consideration of the book because it is often the "downright bad novels which are the most revealing psychologically and culturally" (239).

Rising. Moreover, it is *Insurrection* that most fully pursues the troubled and disturbing relationship between manhood and violence.

Insurrection opens with a description of Dubliners on the Easter Monday that will see the beginning of the five-day rising in 1916. The narrative point of view is nationalistic in the sense that the narrator portrays the British presence and control over Ireland as admittedly formidable, yet destined to fail. The then Nelson Pillar is described as “the lofty tower that stands exactly at the middle of the street, rising high above the whole city as a *symbol of conquest*” (*Insurrection* 5, emphasis mine). The precision of the British control over Ireland (“exactly at the middle”) is reflected in the later descriptions of British soldiers who are called in to quell the uprising. The Lancers, who have a “rhythm” as they “moved calmly northwards through the silent, empty street” (36) are a marked difference from the disorganized, rag-tag band of Irish rebels. But it is not the calm British reserve that appeals to the novel’s protagonist Bartly Madden; rather it is the impassioned words of Pearse and the valiant actions of Michael Kinsella.

Bartly Madden, identified in chapter two as the quintessential lost boy, finds himself in the middle of the Rising at a point in his life when he is most vulnerable. Penniless, angry, and lost, he comes across a British recruiting officer: the narration is clear that for Madden “war and the wearing of a soldier’s uniform were still an anathema to his peasant soul, that yearned only for a plot of ground on which to mate and breed his

kind in peace” (7). That the narrator uses phrases such as “peasant soul” and “his kind” are indications of the stereotyping that grounds many of O’Flaherty’s characters. Madden stands in contrast to the well-educated, urban insurgents he eventually joins, and his function in the narrative is, in many ways, to bring the story’s action around to the motivation of those rebels and how a man such as Madden would join their ranks.

When Madden encounters the Irish Citizen Army and Irish Volunteers marching down the street, he is “nervous” of them and yet he feels “sympathetic towards them, sensing that their dark rapture had its origin in a tragedy similar to his own” (11). This is a key point: Madden eventually joins the rebellion, after several moments of doubt and indecision, because he feels that with the insurgents he will *belong*: to rebel against British control over Ireland is to become part of something and therefore to dispel the despair he feels at the beginning of the novel (he is much like Gypo Nolan in this desire to belong). But before he firmly aligns himself with the rebels, Madden’s misfortune must become extreme. He does not leap in immediately, but rather joins only as a last resort.

As the insurgents begin firing on the General Post Office, Madden is caught in a crowd that panics and is thrown into contact with Mrs. Colgan, a woman who will be the first to exert deadly influence over the vulnerable boy. She spots Bartly very quickly, and out of concern for her own son fighting with the rebels, she maneuvers Madden into a position where he is bound to help her and her son. Several brawls start and Madden is

thrown into one by defending Mrs. Colgan. When he becomes aware that he is bleeding and his clothes are ruined, “he felt it the last straw on his load of misfortune” (25). At this critical juncture, Pearse steps out from the GPO and speaks. Madden, so emotionally vulnerable and physically weakened, is deeply moved by the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. He is not moved by politics or ideology, but he is “enchanted” by the passion of the speaker (29).

At that moment, Madden threw his head forward and stared in rapture at the poet’s face. He trembled and his face shone like that of the smiling woman beside him. For the first time in his life, his mind had conceived an abstract idea that lit the fire of passion in his soul. Although the words that he heard were beyond his comprehension, their sound evoked the memory of all that had exalted him since childhood.... He heard his mother’s crooning voice and he felt the cool touch of her hand on his sick forehead, while the roar of the distant sea came through the moonlit window of his room. (28-29)

Madden is in a “trance” and when the poet leaves, he again feels “unbearably lonely” (30).

The boy is homesick, desperate for something that will offer a balm to his troubles and the poet’s voice gives him exactly that. British Lancers appear in quick order and

their noble chargers and their commander’s arrogant face aroused the base fear of alien authority that centuries of slavery had ingrained in his soul. Robbed of his *manhood* by that fear, he wanted terribly to flee. Yet he was unable to move. Like a *rabbit that stands hypnotized by a weasel’s* deadly stare, an attraction that was stronger than his inherited fear held him motionless. (37, emphasis mine)

The narrative voice at these moments may be overblown, but the recognition that part of what motivates Bartly Madden to join the rebels is the threat to his “manhood” is an astute

one. Not only has Madden been dispossessed of his material gains, but now his sexual potency is challenged. He is, thus, ensnared on more than one level; he is entranced by the poet's words and he is held motionless by his own fear. What manifests itself as salvation for Madden is twofold: the finding of a Lancer's rifle and the meeting with Michael Kinsella.

Madden is transformed into an effective soldier by his association with Kinsella and the possession of a gun. Once Madden has a rifle in hand, "its touch gave him a marvelous sense of power and dignity.... Such an astounding and glorious fact was beyond the realm of thought" (59). Virility momentarily rejuvenated, Madden is like a wild animal searching for the leader of the pack. But soon panic and fear strike him with the awareness that he is wandering around with a Lancer's rifle and his comment to himself is acute: "Sure, even a madman wouldn't join that crowd" he says, referring to the band of insurgents (62). But then the truly fateful event occurs and Madden encounters Michael Kinsella facing a crowd of looters. Kinsella has "a pale ascetic face, grey eyes and brown hair that was faintly tinged with red. He looked very handsome and dignified as he calmly faced the mob" (68). Just as Gallagher embodies Nolan's fear of the mysterious organization, Kinsella comes to personify the rapture and passion Madden felt while listening to Pearse's Proclamation. Kinsella offers a sense of control and dignity that Madden cannot grasp for himself. He is so impressionable that he would likely have followed anyone who

exuded strength and determination, and his desperate need to belong, to be taken care of, transforms him into an acolyte at the feet of a neo-religious master.

Like *The Informer*, *Insurrection* is a study of hero worship: not so much of the men that are idolized but the how and why others follow them. Kinsella becomes an idol in Madden's eyes; he is "the man that was now his master" (77). The narrator spends some time analyzing the nature of Madden's conversion to the "faith" embodied by Kinsella:

His faith was not placed in God but in Kinsella, upon whom he had seized as a symbol and embodiment of all the strange raptures that had ebbed and flowed through his being since noon.... He had been liberated from his torments by a complete surrender of himself to the authority of a leader.... He no longer had to think.... Like a hunting dog straining at its leash, with the scent of prey in its nostrils, his whole body was tremulous with desire to use his rifle. (84-85)

Despite the many moments in the novel that are heavy-handed descriptions of the historical injustices done to the Irish people, the above passage establishes the leaders of the rebellion and the men and women who follow them in the language of a cult: "complete surrender," "liberated from his torments" and, the most important of all, the "authority of a leader." Madden believes himself to be freed of torment, but as the novel moves to its inevitable conclusion Madden is actually *caught* yet again, this time by his own vulnerability and the doomed rising to which he contributes.

Insurrection does not present either Madden's rapture (capture) with Kinsella or the rebellion in a positive light. Instead, the desire that fills Madden is described as a

violent throbbing in his head: a “little hammer beating against the front wall of his forehead” (89). Similar to the pain Gypo Nolan feels when trying to plan his actions rationally,¹⁶ the rhythmic and painful drumbeat in Madden’s head can only be eased by an “outburst of violence” (96). The rapture is a hammer, an incessant, *maddening* pain that provokes violence. O’Flaherty’s acolytes are not so much satirized as they are presented as lost boys and men who fall under the sway of powerful men who use them for their own ideological ends. Some acolytes are, however, ridiculed. There are a number of minor gunmen characters who are easily categorized as acolytes simply because they are there to follow others’ orders. Mulholland, who stalks Gypo Nolan in *The Informer*, is described as a “sincere revolutionist. It was the danger to the ‘cause’ that worried him. The ‘cause’ was his whole existence” (104). But this seemingly straightforward picture of a devoted revolutionary is completely undercut by the physical description of Mulholland:

his mouth was large and open, fixed in a perpetual grin.... In fact, the whole appearance of the face was that of an artificial face, such as that produced in the dressing room of an actor by means of paints. Everything seemed, by some peculiar whimsey, to have cast this individual for the role of a conspirator. The face was that of a clown to hide the conspirator’s eyes. (47-48)

The artificiality and clownishness of Mulholland anticipate the circus metaphor in *The Martyr*, and connote that the revolutionaries (the rebels, the gunmen) are all acting in

¹⁶ “But the inside of his head was perfectly empty, with his forehead pressing against it, hot and congested, as if he had been struck by a violent blow ... repeating itself aimlessly”(*The Informer* 35).

some way. They are all playing some kind of role, and that artificiality is what is being satirized.

3.6 The Ideologues

The men who lead the Mulhollands, the Maddens, or who pursue Nolan and dominate the narrative of *The Martyr* are not struck dumb by dull headaches and are not clownish in appearance. They are fanatical in their beliefs, often ascetic in their behaviour, and they are O’Flaherty’s gunman-ideologues.

The “petty Irish nationalists, with a carped outlook on life” that O’Flaherty mentions in *Shame the Devil* (21), are truly and fully the target of his satire. They are so susceptible to O’Flaherty’s virulent attacks because their “outlook” is all thinking, all talk and – with the terrifying exception of Major Tyson in *The Martyr* – very little action. Dan Gallagher is the first of O’Flaherty’s ideologues, and he is followed by three in *The Martyr*: Brian Crosbie, Major Tyson, and Jack Tracy. But there are others as well. George Stapleton in *Insurrection* fits this group, as does Michael McDara in *The Assassin*. The following discussion will start with Gallagher, as he has already been introduced in relation to Gypo Nolan, and then progress to Stapleton and McDara because their representation

is comparatively simplistic. The trinity of ideologues in *The Martyr* will conclude this section because they are the most complex, the most satirical, and the presence of Jack Tracy is the most difficult to pin down within this category of gunman.

Dan Gallagher is not only the Commandant of a secret revolutionary organization in Dublin of the 1920s, but he figuratively embodies that self-same organization. Nolan, for example,

feared that mysterious, intangible thing, that was all brain and no body. An intelligence without a body. A thing that was full of plans, implacable, reaching out everywhere invisibly, with invisible tentacles like a supernatural monster. A thing that was like a religion, mysterious, occult, devilish. (50-51)

This description of the organization is quickly personified by Dan Gallagher, but not before one of the more interesting sections of the novel. Chapter six is a study in the public perception of Gallagher in terms of competing “versions” of Gallagher’s identity; his personality or character is played out in a series of quotations. The first is from a British newspaper that the narrator identifies as “sarcastically” written. In it, the British writer paints a picture of Gallagher that is violent, deceitful, and libidinous; he is a “flower of Irish manhood” (52):

We can imagine him perfecting himself in the arts of gunmanship, deceit and those obscure forms of libidinous vice which are said to be practiced by this morose type of revolutionary leader in order to dull his sensibilities.... His brand of Communism is of the type that appeals most to Irish nature. It is a mixture of Roman Catholicism, Nationalistic Republicanism and Bolshevism. Its chief rallying cries are: “Loot and Murder.” (53)

The British newspaper may be sarcastic, but O'Flaherty's narrator is satiric. Commentary on the propagandizing of British newspapers, and their indulgence in inflamed stereotyping is then followed by an extract from an American propaganda paper of the "organization": "When the glorious history of the struggle for proletarian liberation in Ireland comes to be written, the name of Comrade Dan Gallagher will stampede from cover to cover in one uninterrupted blaze of glory" (54). The hyperbole of this excerpt is then tempered by a secret report from the International executive of the organization, which characterizes Gallagher as a "problem," a "dictator" and responsible for the Irish people who are now, they claim, "in the grip of a romantic love of conspiracy, a strong religious and bourgeois-nationalistic outlook on life and a hatred of constitutional methods" (54). That the British newspaper and the International executive both point out the religious, nationalistic flavour to Gallagher's appeal is interesting because these are characteristics that are not developed in the narrator's version of the Commandant. The purpose of this chapter in *The Informer* is, in part, to establish the narrative voice as privileged and better able than the other voices to offer a more insightful, honest, perspective on Dan Gallagher. The competing versions of Gallagher also indicate various political uses of stereotyping: to deflate a threat or to rouse emotional support. What all the descriptions of Gallagher share, including the full narrative of *The Informer*, is the synecdochic equation of the individual man for the Organization.

Gallagher is presented by the narrator as a charismatic leader of his men who look upon him as that “champion boxer who is walking around the ring” (56). The hero-worship is obvious, and the boxing metaphor is apt as Gallagher’s encounter with Gypo Nolan will be one based on strength, but the two opponents have very different kinds of power. Gypo is a man of physical energy and drive, and Gallagher is a confident strategist; he is intelligent, but more importantly he is “indifferent” (55). Gallagher is “devilishly attractive” to women: barmaids and Frankie McPhillip’s sister adore him just as his men do (59). But Gallagher also inspires fear. Gypo does not flinch at Gallagher’s gun; rather, he is afraid of the eyes that are “so cold and blue and mysterious,” much like the organization was described as mysterious. Mary McPhillip, the closest thing to a love interest, is excited by Gallagher’s presence and drawn to his physical appeal, yet he also makes her shiver with fear. She misinterprets his advances as sexual, but Gallagher is a character incapable of human emotion. He is a cold-hearted man who can only articulate “theories,” and he becomes irritated when she thinks he is speaking about marriage (71). Gallagher wants a mental rather than physical union with Mary: no marriage and no children. He believes himself to be pure intellect and his mission is his work.

The satire of his character is evident in the fact that he is unable to articulate clearly what that mission is: “It is an outcome of the new consciousness that I am discovering. But I haven’t worked that out fully yet. It’s only embryonic” (73). Ironically,

he is unable to work anything out clearly; he is “not master of [himself]. [He is] an automaton. [He is] a revolutionary.” He claims to believe in nothing other than his definition of a revolutionary as someone who advances the human race. These vague notions of social supremacy are highlighted in his claim that he is “a Christ beating them with rods” and that his only lust is “for power, maybe, but [he hasn’t] worked that out yet” (74). Gallagher is clearly an unclear man. As such, his characterization can be read as a criticism of the entire organization for which he stands. If Gallagher’s intentions are murky, then so too is the organization; and if Gallagher inspires fear, so too does the organization.

Gallagher’s ambiguous articulation of his identity and his goals is a pathetic reflection of the media versions of his character quoted earlier in the novel. The narrator shows a cold, hollow, slightly ridiculous figure whose “intellect” appears wasted next to Gypo’s physical power. He “defeats” Gypo, if one can call his capture and killing of Nolan that, by playing on the informer’s fears and insecurities much the same way as Major Tyson crucifies Crosbie in *The Martyr* after psychologically wearing the man down. Like Tyson, Gallagher revels in his victim’s agony:

His lean, glossy sallow face was lit with a glow of passionate eagerness, like a lover approaching his beloved. But it was not the pure, resplendent eagerness of love. It was the eagerness of the preying beast about to spring He groped with his right hand on the table for his pistol. His fingers found the butt. Slowly they embraced it. The forefinger sought the trigger and found it. (*The Informer* 134)

Despite his thinking and scheming, despite his theories of revolution and the progress of humanity, the narrator is definite that he is as beast-like as any other man in the novel. He is a predator, certainly, but a beast nonetheless. And the only thing that Gallagher “loves” is the power he can wield over other people – like a “supernatural monster” – perhaps because such power makes him feel as though he is living up to his reputation. Dan Gallagher gains none of the redemption that Gypo Nolan does when, at the end of the novel, Nolan is able to ask and receive forgiveness from Frankie McPhillip’s mother.

Another ambiguous ideologue is Michael McDara in *The Assassin*. McDara, the assassin of the title, epitomizes the isolated figure of violence. He is the one character who best conforms to John Zneimer’s reading that all O’Flaherty’s characters are “desperate men seeking meaning through violent action” (ix). Zneimer offers a reading of McDara that is in large part accurate and perceptive:

The assassin can be understood in terms of an intensity of spiritual experience or vision, whether it be morbid or otherwise, that brings the man alone and terrified to the meaning of his own existence. Without that specific meaning all is meaningless, all is fantastic.... The assassin strikes out in violence. He kills not for a cause or a reason but from the terror of his soul, to find meaning, to make meaning, to define himself against the lack of meaning, to do anything in a positive gesture, to relate himself to something that is fundamental, to defy God, to challenge God, to determine if there is a God.... McDara is the true assassin. (80-81)

While this assessment really does sum up the character of McDara, it also rings true of Zneimer’s assertion that O’Flaherty is best understood not as an Irish writer *per se*, but as

“a writer with the same sort of consciousness as Dostoevsky, Sartre, Camus or the filmmaker Ingmar Bergman” (vii). Other critics are less generous about O’Flaherty’s characterization of McDara. Vivian Mercier writes of *The Assassin* that it is “a piece of hokum designed to cash in on the then recent but to this day officially unsolved murder of Kevin O’Higgins.” Mercier continues his attack by writing that McDara is not only a poorly constructed “Irish Raskolnikov,” but that the novel as a whole is “shameless near-plagiarism” (41). Derivative or not, McDara is a man obsessed with one idea: the assassination of an Irish politician.

McDara succeeds in his goal, but that success is far from the end of the novel. Rather, O’Flaherty spends a good share of the narrative describing, in often elaborate detail, McDara’s self-hatred and despair. O’Flaherty is clear in presenting McDara’s status as outsider as that which causes his self-directed violence; violence that is transferred outward to others, and then back again toward himself. Not merely filled with self-loathing, McDara is also suicidal. After he accomplishes his task, McDara realizes that all along he planned to kill himself:

This was an extraordinary revelation to his mind, that he was going to London to meet Kitty Mellet and that he was going to kill himself afterwards. And he became so stupefied at the knowledge that this dual purpose had existed in his mind without his being aware of it, that he again opened his mouth and swayed about on his seat, like a drunken man. (221-222)

This description may connect McDara more to the dullard Gypo Nolan or the unthinking Bartly Madden than to the ideologically propelled Dan Gallagher. However McDara's obsessive desire to assassinate the unnamed politician is successful because of his ability to think through the entire plan. But once his violence has been spent, he has nothing. He is a hollow man with no more chance of redemption than Gallagher.

In contrast to the cold Gallagher and the suicidal McDara, George Stapleton of *Insurrection* is a figure of ridicule. When Madden first encounters him he is dressed in a uniform that "hung loosely about his emaciated frame, as if he were a child masquerading in the clothes of a grown-up person" (102). Even though Stapleton is an outcast just like Madden (he was an invalid for most of his life, cut off from family money when he refused to go into the priesthood), he is a foolish figure of romantic, poetic contemplation. Zneimer admires Stapleton and writes that he endures his death "bravely" and "his spirit rises to meet it, although his frail body collapses in uncontrollable anxiety" (142). While Stapleton represents one reason for joining the rebellion – for "the beauty of it" (141) – his perspective is treated as not only childish but foolishly inadequate. When Stapleton kills a soldier while fleeing an ambush/sniping position, he goes on and on trying to express the feeling of this encounter, but neither Madden nor Kinsella has any time to listen to Stapleton's ravings. During one of several moments of relative quiet between violent skirmishes, Stapleton waxes on about violence and governments and his speeches are full

of the same ellipses that plague Dan Gallagher when he tries and fails to articulate the basis of his actions.¹⁷ The ellipses show Stapleton as incapable of finishing a thought and full of the platitudes of others:

All government is based on violence ... it will use violence, to the fullest extent of which it is capable, in order to maintain itself in power ... a government is really a complex kind of animal [...] I am an insurgent par excellence ... I'm in revolt against the whole concept of good and evil current in our age. I'm in revolt against all forms of government, because they are all based on the same false concept of morality. (143, 182)

Such a "rationale" owes almost everything to Nietzsche and Shelley, and emphasizes Stapleton's lack of originality. Indeed, the "plagiarism" that O'Flaherty is accused of in his portrayal of McDara may in fact be an indictment of the unoriginality of obsessive ideologues such as Stapleton and McDara. These two gunmen are, in fact, personifications of the revolutionaries so ruthlessly satirized in *A Tourist's Guide to Ireland*:

Here again [the tourist] will see the result of the priestly culture of the art of conversation, for the activities of these groups never lead any further than conversation, unless it be some utterly purposeless act committed by what Dostoievsky (*sic*) called the 'Contemplatives': those fellows who meditate for years and then suddenly, for no apparent reason, burn a house, murder a man, or go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes or Jerusalem. (52-53)

Even though Stapleton does battle the British forces alongside Kinsella and Madden, the narrator definitely paints Stapleton as a kind of "Contemplative." In many ways Stapleton

¹⁷ Stapleton's ravings are not that different from McDara's inability to know his own mind, either.

is the narrative progeny of Brian Crosbie in *The Martyr*, but even Stapleton is not derided to the extent the effeminate Brian Crosbie is, or in quite the same manner as the deflation of Major Tyson.

There is no ambiguity or hollowing-out of characters in Liam O'Flaherty's 1933 novel, *The Martyr*. There are three characters (all of them rebels, soldiers and gunmen), who bear the full force of O'Flaherty's satire: Brian Crosbie, the passionate but pacifistic leader of the Irregulars; Jack Tracy, "that *type* of born fighting man" (14, emphasis mine); and Major Tyson, a fanatic just like Crosbie but serving on the side of the Free State forces.

Crosbie is a religious extremist who believes the Civil War is "a holy war. We are out to maintain a Gaelic Republic, but it must be Catholic as well" (16-17). He is a cheap, generic version of Patrick Pearse¹⁸ with his reactionary mysticism and belief in purification through self-martyrdom: "We are a handful of the faithful, making a gesture of protest against the national betrayal.... What we're aiming at is a purification of the national soul, and in order to achieve that we must keep our own souls pure" (24). What O'Flaherty satirizes with the character of Crosbie is one aspect of Pearse's image and, as Cairns and Richards point out in *Writing Ireland*, Pearse and his intentions before and during the Easter Rising are subjects of heated "debate among historians and contemporaries" as well

¹⁸ Sheeran writes that Crosbie is "Pearse writ smaller" (251).

as constant revision (111). The Pearsean qualities that serve as O'Flaherty's targets are mysticism and a desire for Christ-like martyrdom: "a compulsion for personal sacrifice carried to its logical conclusion" (Zneimer 118). The narrator shows Crosbie little respect and labels him an "ineffectual dreamer" (45). Crosbie not only has "the voice of a tortured idiot" (112) and eyes of "maniacal intensity" (168), but he is also disparagingly feminine:

"Don't crucify me," said Crosbie in a *womanish* tone.

"Why not?"

"I'm not worthy of that," said Crosbie in that same *womanish* tone, sighing and leaning back carefully. He looked away, just like a woman who has said something very sharp and cruel, putting some importunate fellow in a quandary. (273-274, emphasis mine)

As Zneimer notes, Major Tyson "dedicates himself to destroying" Crosbie's type of mysticism because "it is mawkish and feminine" (144). The whine of Crosbie's pleas are part of what the narrator describes as a feminine manipulation of Tyson so that Tyson will, in fact, crucify Crosbie. That Crosbie suffers his death nailed to a tree at the hands of the torturing Tyson at the end of the novel is no surprise, and the conclusion for Crosbie the martyr is the "logical conclusion" of his own desire to die. O'Flaherty does not allow any reaction to Crosbie's death other than Kate's comment that "it's only a rabbit caught by a weasel" (286). The absence of any impact arising from Crosbie's death – there is no outrage by the people, no uproar from his comrades – extends the satire of *The Martyr* from the Civil War to include the Easter Rising. Crosbie is indeed a Pearse writ small, and the character is denied any influence over future events; he is deprived of any power as a

political catalyst. The comparison of Crosbie with a rabbit (a small, fairly weak animal) further deflates both the martyr and his martyrdom. The effect of this double deflation is an extension of the satire of the Irish Civil War to include the martyrs of the 1916 Easter Rising.

Set against Crosbie's fanaticism in *The Martyr* is Major Tyson, the intelligence officer for the pro-Treaty forces. Colonel Hunt describes him as "actin' more or less on his own hood as far as we're concerned ... Joe likes dirty work, he has no reputation to lose except his own, which isn't up to much, so let him have the pleasure an' the blame" (149). No one likes Tyson, and he and Hunt clash on more than one occasion regarding the best way to administer Sallytown once the Free Staters easily take the town out of Republican hands; but Tyson always seems to win out. Tyson is chillingly malevolent, and how his character operates satirically is different from the open mockery of Crosbie's mystical ideology. Tyson is diminished and made slightly ridiculous because of his physical disabilities; he has a slight limp, and the "air of an ill man" (139). He is a figure of suspicion because of his English heritage: "he was maintained by his natural father, a wealthy Englishman" (140) and because "there's something definitely English about his cold, grey eyes, the firm poise of his mouth and his air of complete detachment" (185). Tyson may be physically weak and alienated from his fellow soldiers because of his demeanour and his accent, but the fact that Tyson is a torturer (the "dirty work" he is

there to do), who enjoys the power he wields over his victims, and the pain he can inflict, makes him very dangerous. Upon seeing his interrogation chamber decorated with scenes of “men being tortured, shot, hanged, quartered” and adorned with various whips and pointed steel bars, he remarks that the room “looks fetching” (172). Tyson’s little “joke” is a different kind of humour than Tobin’s circus comment or Regan’s drunken behaviour; no one is meant to laugh.

In many ways, Tyson’s inability to laugh or make light of the situation truly sets him apart from the other characters. As a figure of destruction and death, Tyson is the most sinister character in the novel; he is the danger inherent in every “circus.” O’Flaherty implies that it is the weaknesses of other characters such as Hunt and Crosbie that create the satiric field upon which Tyson can dominate. Zneimer reads Tyson as the only character in *The Martyr* “with a realistic view of the situation” and who has the wisdom “needed to make a civilized country out of Ireland, cold-blooded as his methods might appear” (117-118). While Tyson may have “a realistic view,” he is also a steely-eyed “Man in Black.” He is the kind of character in satire that evokes in readers “moral indignation, or an unillusioned sadness at the aberrations of humanity” (Abrams 277). His cold-blooded methods are a reflection of some of the horrible events of the Civil War, such as the Kerry atrocities, and his presence in the novel certainly destroys the mystical martyr, but Tyson’s proto-fascism makes him an ideologue comparable to Crosbie.

Tyson's fanaticism is manifest in his enjoyment of torture, but it is also expressed clearly in his "session" with the captured Crosbie:

I maintain that an enslaved person or race struggling towards freedom can only achieve a feeling of dominance through triumphant action.... There is noble suffering, truly, like death in battle, or guarding one's honour in captivity; but martyrdom is the slave's ideal of a noble death. (187)

Tyson has a view of the perfect world just as Crosbie does: freedom is achieved by action and passive endurance or suffering is a purposeless waste of time. The cruel and sadistic

Tyson is intelligent and insightful as he summarizes the two men opposing him:

Tracy is an anarchist. So are you. Therefore, you are both of one kidney. Except that you are a coward and Tracy is a brave but undisciplined soldier.... It's curious how misfits always want to make the world perfect. Is it because they are conscious of their own imperfections? Are you? (192)

Tyson's delusion is that he does not see himself as one of these misfits and therefore fails to see the application to himself of the question he has directed to Crosbie.

The "anarchist" Tyson refers to is Jack Tracy, "one of the most desperate guerilla fighters in the country ... he was typical of the individualist military adventurer who sprang into prominence all over the country at that time; men whom it irked to become cogs in a slow moving machine" (14). Tracy is "that type of born fighting man." The repetition of "type" and "typical" is not narrative unoriginality; it is a persistent reminder that, although the characters may be "individualistic" in some aspects, they are all drawn from stock figures. Further, it is the characters as well as their beliefs that are satirized. Jack Tracy, a

socialist revolutionary who believes that violent action can effect change, could not be more different than Crosbie. Even though Tyson sees Tracy as an “anarchist,” Tracy actually comes to embody a desire for domestic order. Tracy is an unsuccessful man of action who faces a choice at the end of *The Martyr* between romantic ideals and the real love of his mistress. Surprisingly, his one contemplative moment in the novel is erroneously ignored by critics. In the following passage, Tracy chooses life and love (and a kind of maternal comfort) over becoming a “defeated warrior falling on his sword”:

So he determined to die in order to make a finer gesture. And ever since then it had been grand. It was fine enduring the torture of the bullets and the bomb splinter being extracted without anaesthetics in the cabin. It was fine writing that note to Kate, telling her to go home and leave him to his fate. It was fine arriving at the cave and persuading these two men to die with him, after sending the others home as unworthy to partake in this glorious gesture. Yes. This romantic despair was fine. A defeated warrior falling on his sword.

But now she was coming and that spoiled the glorious feeling. Her coming made him want to be nursed back to health, to be petted and fondled like an ailing child in its mother’s arms. Indeed, her coming made him doubt that he was anything finer than the rowdy fellows he often saw in his youth brawling at fairs. (216)

The repetition of the words “fine” and “finer” create the Hemingwayesque effect of inverting the meaning of the words. Being “determined to die” is *not* fine, the “torture of bullets” is *not* fine, and the “romantic despair” of the defeated warrior falling on his sword is decidedly *not* fine.

O'Flaherty's satiric assault advances further when Tracy is described as an infantile lover who craves a kind of banal domesticity and succumbs to a maternal love. Tracy seeks comfort in Kate, and Tracy's men seek a similarly described comfort in him: "They all looked at Tracy, except King, like children whose mother has returned to the home" (209). That Tracy is child-like in his affections for Kate, and those affections are equally felt by his own men toward him, extends to their actions in the Civil War. Tracy and the rest of the "boyos" are boyish in their desire to see action, change the world and risk death to do so. Tracy's thoughts as expressed in the above passage may be read as extreme, but the irony of his reversal of plans – he sees a woman and decides not to die – really showcases Tracy's immaturity. Unlike Crosbie and Tyson, who are both fanatics, Tracy is mocked and satirized for his boyish dreams and desires. And yet, Tracy is the only gunman who is pulled back from the morass of alienation and absolute mystical or political fanaticism. He is wounded at the end of *The Martyr*, but at least he has the company of a woman he loves. That love may be infantile and slightly ridiculous, but compared to the failed relationships of all the other gunmen in O'Flaherty's novels, it is redemptive. O'Flaherty's gunmen are outcasts and misfits in the main because there is no one they can connect to in a meaningful way.

3.7 Guns and Women

What so many of the male characters *can* connect to is their gun, which operates as a metonymic marker for each of the novels' depiction of rebel figures. The most detailed example of a gunman's relationship to his weapon is Barty Madden's sexual-religious adoration of his rifle. During the frenzied mob scene outside the General Post Office, one of the British Lancers falls and drops his rifle. Madden picks up the weapon and his relationship to that gun parallels his emotional response to the events around him. Initially, he feels a similar passion for the gun as he felt upon hearing the voice of Pearse, and his first contact with the weapon seals his fate:

He began to stroke the smoothly varnished woodwork of the stock with the tips of his fingers. He touched the bolt, the trigger guard, the magazine and the sights, like a child caressing a new toy.... Then he shuddered with sensuous delight as he recalled the poet's voice. He closed his eyes once more and let his head fall on to his left shoulder. As he lay that way, with his back to the door and the rifle across his lap, the beautiful images coursed through his mind, like gay white clouds dancing across the sunlit sky on a summer day, giving him exquisite pleasure. (*Insurrection* 39)

He strokes the gun as if it were a lover, and his caresses symbolize his immaturity. Madden is still a boy, a "child" who desperately needs comfort and confuses the pleasure of a new toy with deadly weapons of war. Madden is presented in the language of satiric infantilization and eroticism. Even though this passage romanticizes and sexualizes Madden's reaction to Pearse's words and the found gun, there is an undercutting of any

over-arching romantic vision of the insurrection as he becomes confused and fearful.

When Mrs. Colgan tries to persuade Madden to join the rebellion in order to watch out for her son, Tommy, she brings out the rifle to aid in her manipulation. But as he touches the gun this time, his reaction reflects his ambivalence over the rebellion. As

soon as he touched the weapon the Idea again entered his mind and sent his blood coursing wildly through his veins. This time, however, it did not bring in its train the images of romantic longing that had previously given him much pleasure. Instead, he now recalled how the soldiers had fallen and how the wounded horses had neighed in terror as they sprinkled the roadway with their blood. (56-57)

The narration is clear in its definition of the images surrounding the rebellion as “romantic,” and in the case of Madden the romance outweighs his fear of being seen with a British soldier’s gun (“He felt like a man that is trying to escape from a pit of swarming reptiles.... He began to be afraid of carrying the dead lancer’s rifle slung across his shoulder” [60]). As he rushes out into the street to join the insurgents, the gun now becomes the agent and symbol of his perceived, returned male potency:

Like a lover in the first flush of a newborn passion, he was utterly indifferent to the presence of the creatures that dodged from his path.... His mind was bereft of thought; but his whole being was intensely conscious of the weapon that he carried. Its touch gave him a marvelous sense of power and dignity.... It could only be felt through the blood, like the sensual possession of a beloved one. (59)

Clearly, the gun represents sexual power, and for Madden it is an adolescent sexual experience – “the first flush of a newborn passion” – that brings him in contact with

Michael Kinsella who then embodies Madden's desires, passions, loyalties and devotion. The narrator does not leave the sensual relationship between men and guns at this point. Unlike the character of Stapleton, who claims that "one can't describe things that are purely sensual. They are beyond words. Passion is silent" (115), the narrator makes every effort to inscribe the passion of Bartly Madden and how that passion changes from a youthful adoration to a "barbaric joy" (122).

As Madden becomes embroiled in the street warfare of the uprising under Kinsella's command, the heat of his adoration does not stay a static quality. When the British charge at the insurgents' position, Madden "began to fire his rifle at them" and "his rage changed into a mysterious and satisfying feeling of unity with these men, on whom he spent his passion" (117). And then:

as he took careful aim and waited for the man to move forward again, a new and ugly passion took possession of him. It came from the depths of his soul, which were now being scoured for reserves of strength to sustain the terrible strain of battle. It was a brute hatred of the man that lay hidden behind the tree; no longer his partner in a dance of death, but another animal for whose blood he lusted.... His barbaric joy did not last long. (121-122)

As Madden engages in more and more clashes, his initiation into the world of men and war is articulated in terms of the changing nature of his passion and gun-lust. His child-like caress transforms into a youthful flush, then a homoerotic passion for his adversaries – that "mysterious and satisfying feeling of unity with these men, on whom he spent his

passion” (117). Finally, it is a barbarous joy and an animalistic energy that defines his fighting, “like a man that holds within his grasp a long-sought mistress and strives with all his living strength to thrust the pent-up fever in his blood” (113). *Insurrection* is an intense depiction of the extreme passions at work in warfare and a clear statement about how men relate to their guns.

But the novel is by no means a romantic tale that tells of heroic purpose and glorious death. Madden’s sense of direction or commitment is as fragile and precarious as one man’s life can be in battle. When Kinsella is shot, he is simply dead; there is no narrative rationalization for his death, no redeeming moments that give the reader any sense that any of the characters’ actions had any effect at all. In the final scene of the novel, Madden’s own dead body is simply stared at in silence by a crowd of people “from doors and windows” (223). The final image is of his lifeless body laden with guns, “a rifle slung across its back and each outstretched hand gripping a pistol” (222). The body no longer has a personality or a character – it is an “it” – and the death of Madden, with guns in hand, is far from a heroic or romantic gesture. The undercutting of the sensual passion Madden feels for his gun, and that he feels while using his rifle, supports the narrative depletion of the Easter Rising’s symbolic and political power. And so the gun is not only a metaphor for Madden’s personal engagement with the insurgents, it is also a marker for

the novel's perspective on the events described: immature, passionate, exaggerated, and deadly.

Guns operate as symbols of their owner's emotional states of mind not only in *Insurrection*, but in the other novels as well. The gun Dan Gallagher has at his side is as cold as his eyes and as impersonal as his "love" for Mary McPhillip. It is a lifeless weapon of death that is never described in quite the sensual, romantic terms as in *Insurrection*. For Frankie McPhillip, his weapon is his only comfort while he was hiding in the mountains and it comes to represent his complete alienation from the organization, his family and the world: "Good God, it was awful, Gypo, out there on them hills all the winter, with me gun in me hand night an' day, sleeping in holes in the mountains" (*The Informer* 14). The bitter cold of winter, and the gun at his side foreshadow his demise at the hands of his comrade, all for the price of a bed and a meal. The cityscape of Dublin in *The Informer* is an appropriately inhospitable environment in which to set the actions of anaesthetized men such as Dan Gallagher, self-proclaimed "automaton." The "cold butt" of McPhillip's automatic (7) amplifies the chill of the "drizzling rain falling from a black bulging sky" and the "flock of hailstones" that angrily descend on the Dublin street during the action of the novel (5). Similarly, the cold guns in the novel are analogous to the "inhuman" (117) masks that revolutionaries such as Bartly Mulholland wear. While the narrator of *The Informer* spends relatively little time describing the guns compared to the detail in

Insurrection, the characterization of them as cold fits into the overall atmosphere of the novel.

Interestingly, the fanatical martyr, Brian Crosbie, carries no weapon at all. He is a man tormented by the “shame” of Irishmen fighting Irishmen, and he voices the conflict within the nation at large over the Civil War. His resistance to bearing arms opens him up to calls of cowardice from all quarters. Jack Tracy, Angela Fitzgibbon and Major Tyson all at some point in the novel accuse Crosbie of being an ineffectual leader because he abhors violence. Even the clowning chorus of pub patrons recognize the irony of Crosbie being named the commander of the forces: one calls him a “galoot” who “hasn’t the guts to pull the wings off a dead fly” (33), and another tears into full rant that Crosbie – who when it came to the rebellion of 1916, “fucked it” – is head of the forces and is “calling for a holy war against honest patriots” (43). Tyson’s taunts of cowardice are the most cruel, and they ironically result in Crosbie getting what he so passionately desires: martyrdom. But Crosbie’s death is a *manqué* martyrdom, for his “sacrifice,” his slaughter at the hands of Tyson, achieves nothing. One would think that Crosbie’s pathetic death is held up in contrast to Tracy’s survival: he escapes from the circus of Sallytown alive and in love. Tracy is armed at all times during the novel and if the gun is the metaphor for the tone and ideology of the novels then that would imply that carrying the gun is the key to survival. This interpretation, however, is contradicted by the fate of gunmen in *Insurrection*, who

die with guns in their hands. So what to make of Jack Tracy's escape relatively unscathed from the Civil War, and his relationship with his gun?

To begin with, Tracy is a "thinker" in the same sense as Gallagher and Stapleton and Tyson. He too has a "theory," but he among all of them is best able to articulate that idea of mankind and progress. That theory is related to how he views the purpose of guns:

"Don't ye love the cold, smooth steel?" he said "That's a machine, Kate. That's the new God. That's my God. Not because it's a gun, but because it's a machine. This is a machine to kill, but there are others to till the earth an' to make things in factories, an' to drive ships an' aeroplanes, an' to carry the human voice over the earth. Just like the old God used to be able to do in the fairy tales they told us in church. I love machines. They are my god sure enough, if ye like to put it that way.... I want to make our people drop the craw-thumping God and take to worshipping' this new God. I want to make Irishmen like this gun. Cold steel, lovely, cold, smooth steel that spits death when it's roused. Lovely and calm outside, with a burning heart." (91)

That Tracy worships his God/gun as vehemently as Crosbie worships God brings Tracy dangerously close to the level of fanaticism that is Crosbie's downfall.¹⁹ Unlike Crosbie, however, Tracy is able to temper with common sense his adoration of machinery for progress and political control. Significantly, Tracy's extremism is bridled by his connection to other human beings on a personal and immediate level. He is not the isolated Dan Gallagher, the cold-hearted Major Tyson, or the fanatically romantic Stapleton. Tracy is

¹⁹ Tracy's worship of God/gun is strikingly similar to a scene in Act II of Sean O'Casey's 1928 play, *The Silver Tassie*. In O'Casey's play, soldiers proclaim their adoration of God/gun by falling upon one knee in front of a gun and repeatedly chanting in unison "We believe in God and we believe in thee" (*Silver Tassie* 214-218).

not only in love with Kate McCarthy, but he also listens to his comrades and friends. He does not share the single-mindedness of O'Flaherty's other rebel leaders.

The "love of a good woman" is the only role that Kate fills in the narrative progression of *The Martyr*, unlike Angela Fitzgibbon who is the embodiment of Mother Ireland, Dark Rosaleen and Cathleen Ní Houlihan all rolled into one. She is the most important female character of all O'Flaherty's gunman novels; she is that "wench" from *A Tourist's Guide to Ireland* who:

has a very great number of aliases; in other words that she has changed her lovers more often than she should if she wanted to lead a quiet life. At one moment she is Caitlín Ní Houliháin, at another Róisín Dubh, at another The Old Woman of Beara. She changes her name to suit the particular character of the politician that courts her.... They use every means, fair and foul, to win possession of the woman's body, for all is fair in love and war. When they have obtained possession of her body, they remember suddenly that they are not the first by any means who have had the pleasure and in jealous rage they loot her of all her trinkets and then desert her. (44)

Sheeran adds to Angela Fitzgibbon's significance by pointing out that she is "otherwise Countess Markievicz" (253). Thus, Fitzgibbon is not only a metonymic marker for Ireland in all of her feminine forms, but she is also a representation of a major figure of the period. Again, O'Flaherty's use of historical detail is inextricably intertwined in his satire. In *The Martyr*, Fitzgibbon is satirical because she is overwhelmingly bored. She may be exotically beautiful, mysterious, and passionate; she may have once been "the fairy queen of whom the poets had sung" (*Martyr* 63); she may surge with sexual energy, but she is "essentially

a *rouee*, bored with life” (Sheeran 255). She is so bored that the possible seduction of Tyson, a man on the enemy side, for the sheer excitement of the chase, is worth contemplating: “In any case, it would be exciting to try” (*Martyr* 171). To present the symbolic manifestation of Ireland, replete with a catalogue of poetic descriptions, as essentially bored with the whole situation of men fighting over her is radical. If “Ireland” is bored with the Civil War then the implication is quite obvious that the war no longer has anything to do with the future of the nation, and the men fighting on both sides have forgotten their “fairy queen” and their “Dark Rosaleen.”

Angela Fitzgibbon no longer makes any difference to the battles going on around her; she is more an inconvenience than anything else, and she is so starved for that adoring affection she once received that she turns to any man who may possibly satisfy her. Crosbie turns away from her sexual advances as if she were a demon set to devour him, and indeed she has become a kind of plague to the men who follow her:

she seemed to be the harbinger of death. Up and down the land she went, enslaving by her beauty whatever leader she imagined for the moment to be pregnant with the nation’s destiny. And death came to whomsoever she influenced. (63)

Sheeran is correct in his assertion that O’Flaherty’s derisive image of Dark Rosaleen is more cruel and satirically pejorative than “Joyce with his image of the sow that eats her farrow” (255). It is the *image* of Ireland as a woman (holy mother, fairy queen, whatever) that is the target of O’Flaherty’s criticism. It is the indulgence in such mythologizing

gestures that sets up a situation wherein the image of the nation becomes a whore, a “wench who has a very great number of aliases; in other words that she has changed her lovers more often than she should if she wanted to lead a quiet life” (*Guide* 44). This characterization of Ireland is O’Flaherty’s most daring and dangerous satire.

If Ireland is a whore, then the men who do violence in her name are lost, lonely, pathetic, alienated, caught or deluded: not exactly a heroic cast of characters for the fictional version of Ireland’s introductory decades of the twentieth century and its emergence as a free state. The only gunman who does not die or end up completely isolated and alone is Jack Tracy, but he is probably fatally wounded. The sum total of O’Flaherty’s characterization of Irish rebel gunmen is that they are failed figures: failed figures of romance, of loyalty, of idealism, of obsession. They may not be the most psychologically complex creations, but this is exactly O’Flaherty’s point. His deliberate invocation of stereotypes and his consistent use of satire articulate a scathing critique of anyone, in particular any Irish person, who unthinkingly devotes him/herself to one cause, one goal, one idea of a nation.

All of Liam O’Flaherty’s gunmen are either “rabbits” or “weasels” and in the end, it really does not matter which one. Hunted or hunter, they all end up dead, wounded, or pathetically alone. They are caught in cycles of violence and hero-worship that result in no tangible good and that cause the ruination of the lives of the gunmen as well as the people

around them. In the logic of O'Flaherty's novels, such abject conclusions to gunmen's lives are the ultimate criticism of Irish patriotism and Irish rebels.

Chapter Four

Shooting into the Shadows: Sex, Violence, and the Inevitable Return of the Hero in Neil Jordan's Films

Unlike O'Flaherty, who tends to write of gunmen in collectives, Neil Jordan focuses on the solitary rebel. Containing none of the satiric edge of O'Flaherty's prose, Jordan's films investigate an individual's contention with questions of personal identity, and concentrate on the psychological workings of men who take up the gun and who do violence. As such, his gunmen do share with O'Flaherty's creations the quality of being outsiders. But Jordan's films make central the individual's struggle within, and often in resistance to, the pressures and boundaries of socially determined roles and expectations. Because of his focus on individual gunmen, Neil Jordan's gunmen texts will be discussed separately to facilitate an analysis of each rebel protagonist.

Neil Jordan's films, whether set in Ireland or not, do share certain thematic and visual motifs. Most notable of these commonalities is a psychological probing into the nature of dream, reality, violence, sex, and identity. Seascapes, bridges, and carnivals are used in many of his films as symbolic settings indicating a mythic past, the importance of thresholds (and characters' frequent inability to "cross over"), and the carnivalesque aspect of the human search for self-knowledge. Neil Jordan's first film *Angel* (1982) is a surreal

exploration of violence and, as Richard Kearney notes, a film that “debunks the orthodox portrayal of Irish political violence and deromanticizes several of its stock motifs” (*Transitions* 175). The narrative of *Angel*, starring a young Stephen Rea, is ostensibly concerned with rage, revenge, and repentance. This final emotional impulse (the desire for forgiveness, respite, and healing) is what connects *Angel* to its thematic sequel, *The Crying Game*. In this, Jordan’s 1992 award-winning film, there is a spirit of reconciliation and an expressed need to negotiate rigid social, racial, national, and sexual boundaries which work to confine individuality and constrain agency. How does *Michael Collins* (1996) fit into this picture? Quite simply, it doesn’t. For that reason, the film is as important to this thesis as *Angel* or *The Crying Game*. Because *Michael Collins* reverts to older versions of the IRA gunman, because it romanticizes Mick Collins so much so that he seems beyond the wretched human existence of Fergus or Danny or Jude, and because it sits firmly in the cinematic genre of historical biography (unlike *Angel* and *The Crying Game* which seem to defy strict genre classifications), *Michael Collins* is a testament to the endurance of national stereotypes: their lure, their power, their inevitable return. It may also be a testament to a nostalgic impulse in Jordan’s filmmaking: a sense of loss for those romantic heroes of the past.

4.1 “What’s your name?”: *Angel*

The following analysis of *Angel* is intricate and lengthy because relatively little has been written on the film and because it is Neil Jordan’s first full-length feature film and as such deserves careful consideration. The protagonist of *Angel*, Danny, is a character who undergoes many subtle transformations; he begins as an alluring musician but is then brought into a violent world by accident. Danny’s shifting identity (he begins as a victim of violence but transforms into a purveyor of violence) is expressed through surreal and often elusive visual images and symbols. The psychic alterations of his character are intertwined with visual and musical motifs that shift as intricately as his mental state. The delicate relationship between character and cinematic context must be teased out carefully in order to grasp the shadowy transmogrification of Danny. To perceive this gunman out of context is not to perceive him at all.

Only three critics have dealt with the film with varying degrees of detail, and it is not surprising that violence has concerned all their analyses. In *Transitions*, a collection of essays on narratives in modern Irish culture, Richard Kearney argues that Jordan’s film exposes unconscious forces that animate ideological violence and that the film “explores the mythical not in terms of ancient legend but in terms of contemporary experience” (175). John Hill adopts a very different approach to the violence in the film. He takes

Jordan to task for *not* offering specific geographic, political, or social images to the audience and, in this way, present the violence in Ireland as “simply an evil running through the collective unconscious” (“Images of Violence” 180). In *Shooting to Kill: Filmmaking and the “Troubles” in Northern Ireland*, Brian McIlroy makes essentially the same argument as Hill. However, McIlroy argues that it is Jordan’s use of Gothic imagery and “magical” scenes that let him “off the hook in not having to delineate more clearly Danny’s motivations” (57). Where Kearney clearly sees the contemporary troubles in Ireland invoked in *Angel*, Hill and McIlroy see the propagation of a long-established notion that violence in Ireland is “a primarily dark” force that is not only unknowable in rational terms, but is also intractable (Hill 180).¹ Kearney and Hill do agree on two things: firstly, that one of the dominant images or motifs in Irish cinema – and cinema about Ireland and the Irish – is the “compelling power of violence” (Kearney 174); and secondly, that *Angel* does explore inner obsessions and unconscious drives.² The following reading of *Angel* will discuss violence and the dark side of human (Irish) nature, but will also argue for the inclusion of a heretofore unacknowledged element in Jordan’s cinematic expression: the compelling power of sex as it relates to political violence in particular and

¹ As this chapter develops, it will become clear that the critical reception of Jordan’s films is diverse, mixed, and at times adversarial.

² McIlroy finds Jordan’s depiction of violence “puzzling” but does assert that there is a necessary Irish context to the film because if Jordan “were just interested in violence or ideology, he would not need potent Irish settings” (56).

violent acts in general. The relationship between sex and violence persists as a motif in *The Crying Game* and *Michael Collins* and becomes, for this thesis, the most potent feature of Neil Jordan's "Irish" films.

Another cinematic element that connects Jordan's three Irish films is a circular narrative. *The Crying Game* begins and ends with the telling of a fable, *Michael Collins* begins and ends with the eponymous character's assassination, and *Angel* begins and ends at the same location: the Dreamland Ballroom. The repetition of opening and closing scenes in the films is buttressed by other repetitions: in *Angel*, for example, the protagonist Danny continually utters the question "What is your name?" Jordan's saturation of his films with visual and narrative echoes creates the feeling that his characters are somehow enacting ancient patterns. Their lives are destined or fated to lead in certain directions and Jordan's camera is following them as they stumble through the complex psychological labyrinths of human existence.³ In the case of *Angel*, that labyrinth leads Danny into hellish violence with a most precarious chance of redemption.

The opening shot of the film is exterior at dusk. A building called the Dreamland Ballroom, complete with a billboard advising the world to "Have a Coke and a Smile," dominates the scene. As the opening credits roll, saxophone music sweeps in eerily. There

³ McIlroy notes that Jordan's fascination with the mythic and the psychological is not surprising given his film apprenticeship with John Boorman ("renowned for his explorations in mythical and archetypal figures") and given his own fiction writing, which "shows a keen interest in the fantastic or Gothic" (55).

is the sound of footsteps walking on the gravel parking lot, and a saxophone player sits in the back of a van. A young girl approaches, her footsteps also audible, and she stares vacantly at the musician. An anonymous roadie says “give her the soldier’s song” as the girl reaches over to caress the musician’s instrument.

This opening moment is a microcosm of the thematic and visual threads that bind this dreamscape together. Firstly, it is dusk, a time when the night has potential for sleep, dreams, and nightmares. One quality that infuses Jordan’s visual texture is the dream-like colours of unreal vibrancy, shadows of sinister complexion, and sounds of seemingly angelic and demonic origin all exist in and around the Dreamland Ballroom. Secondly, the sight and sound of footsteps, without any accompanying face or identity, will become an extended metaphor for Danny’s search. The protagonist’s avenging quest to find the perpetrators of a bombing and shooting is completely dependent on his ability to find out who they are: what are their names. The footsteps also indicate a pace or rhythm for the entire film. The first footsteps heard are tentative, and they originate from a young girl. Her innocence will soon be permanently corrupted by the footsteps of darker figures, as well as by Danny’s involvement in her life. Thirdly, the opening shot introduces the sax-playing anti-hero, Danny, as well as the first incarnation of “the female” figure.⁴ The

⁴ This chapter will argue that all the female characters in *Angel* are different incarnations of one female presence. Taken individually, the female characters tend to be flat and one dimensional, but if read as a collective manifestation, then they become more interesting symbolic articulations.

nameless gamine looks with awe at Danny, and he is established as an object of not only her gaze, but ours as well. The oblique reference to the “soldier’s song” will accumulate meaning as Danny metamorphoses from band musician to avenging angel. The song also foreshadows the grisly violence soon to occur. Finally, the saxophone itself becomes symbolic in the dreamland of *Angel*; the instrument symbolizes performance of different natures: sexual, musical, and homicidal.

Reminiscent of a tension so often present in the characterization of “shadow gunmen,” the opening shot is followed by a sequence of scenes that shift between the exterior of the Ballroom and the interior. Kearney comments that *Angel* is constructed in a “mode of interplay between the public outer world of the thriller plot and the private inner world of psychic motivation” (178), and indeed the opening sequence is testament to such “interplay.” However, there is more to this shifting perspective; it also announces a tension between public and private *violence* that is evident in other gunman texts such as *Reading in the Dark* and *Shadows on Our Skin*. Whereas Seamus Deane and Jennifer Johnston characterize the damage political violence does to individual lives, Jordan’s film explores the dimly lit interstices between the personal and the political.

Another tension established in the shifting scenes is the an uneasy relationship between sex, music (or art), and violence. The empty interior of the Dreamland Ballroom, decorated in 1980s-style cheezy glitter is contrasted to the musician’s dressing room,

which is brightly lit with fluorescent bulbs and one entire wall covered with mirrors. Danny is shown primping, fussing with his hair, preparing for his on-stage performance. He is flirting with a red-haired torch singer named Dee. Danny is sexy and he knows it. The scene shifts again to the exterior of the ballroom, focusing on the “Dreamland” sign in red neon lights. Back inside, Danny comes across the young girl hovering by the ticket booth. He pays for her admittance, brings her in, and dances with her in the empty hall. “Come here often?” he asks, before stepping onto the stage for his solo. The unoriginal “pick-up” line followed by a rousing musical solo begins the connection Jordan will construct between music and sex. The lighting for the band is predominantly blue, with spotlights that do not really encircle band members, but rather go off in different directions, away from the stage. The lights cut across the bodies of dancers on the floor and musicians on the stage creating an odd effect wherein everyone is partially hidden, partially lit. There is a quick cut to Dee commenting to Danny that he loves his sax, implying that his music offers the promise of sexual consummation. As Dee sings “I haven’t got a gun in my hand,” a blue light criss-crosses over the young girl’s torso, drawing our gaze, and perhaps Danny’s, to her adolescent breasts. The lighting and Dee’s lyrics imply that Dee is aware but jealous of Danny’s flirtations with other women and in this case a young girl. The youth is fixated on Danny as she moves across the floor, half in shadow. Outside, the band manager is tossing an unknown man out of the hall while yelling, “I’m protected already!”

The manager threatens the man to leave or he'll be missing a kneecap, the definitive IRA punishment for informers. Obviously the manager is paying protection money to someone, and others want in on the game. Back inside, a bride from the wedding party is flirting with Danny offstage, asking him which sax player he is. Danny replies with a truncated statement: "we all look just the same." His curt reply is the first of many expressions about the lack of individual identity. One of the themes of *Angel* is the lack of any certain knowledge and a kind of anonymity that applies to everyone. The same blue light that crossed over the young girl now crosses onto the bride. The bride and the girl (both nameless) are linked to Dee and Danny's Aunt Mae by their fixation on Danny. All are drawn to him, all want to love him, all are hurt or destroyed by him. They represent the cumulative desire for the dark figure that is Danny, but they also represent the damage such a darkness can cause.

The ominousness of the connection between the young girl and the bride continues in the next sequence of scenes. Now it is post-gig, and the camera again switches from foreboding shots of the hall doors to Danny in the dressing room. Here, the lights are incredibly bright and as unnatural as the dance hall. A face appears, and hands are pressed against the window which is bevelled and obscures the person's identity. Danny mistakenly thinks it is Dee, and follows her outside. At this point the background music changes from the band's repertoire to something much more ghostly. Female voices sing a wordless

version of Verdi's *Requiem*, creating a keening melody that foretells death. Outside there is a tree, and it too is eerie with its decorations of bells, lights, and golden ribbons weakly shimmering in the night. The camera focuses on Danny's face as the young girl comes up from behind him and covers his eyes with her hands (another visual sign of unknowability or impaired vision). He says he thought she was Dee. The conflation of Danny's eyes being covered, the mistaken identity, and the haunting melody imply that Danny will not be able to understand clearly the deaths that are about to occur. The girl is bathed in a blue light; she is wearing a blue denim overall dress with a lighter blue blouse underneath. An immediate association with these blue hues is the Virgin Mary, in ironic contrast to the virgin white the bride is wearing. "You're too young," Danny says, and indeed she doesn't appear to be more than twelve or thirteen years old. His previously innocent dance with the girl begins to develop in a more openly sexual direction. Danny's involvement with such a young person is not merely discomfiting, it borders on the unacceptable. However, the setting of their encounter is such that their presence has something of the fateful about it.

The camera moves back to show the Ballroom, the Coke sign in background, and in the foreground are large, round, cement sewer pipes stacked beside and on top of each other. Danny and the girl sit inside one of the pipes, surrounded by its shape as well the additional pipes on either side and on top of them; they are completely encircled. This

image is undeniably one of confinement, regardless of the pipes' openings. Visually, the characters are shown to have two ways to go, but at the moment they are inside what they mistakenly believe to be shelter. When installed, the pipes will be laid end to end, creating a tunnel. At this moment, they are stacked on top of and against each other, implying that even a two-way tunnel does not yet exist.

There is a quick cut to the manager inside the Ballroom, sorting out the payment money, and then back to the cement pipes. The girl, who is mute, gives Danny a bell from the tree, and he asks, "are you alright? ... Is that what they taught you in convent school?" He will ask this very same question of Dee in the near future. They have had sex, and the act will seal both of their fates. Danny's mention of convent school is the first allusion to religion in the film, aside from the folk tradition of the wishing tree, and with it he assumes the girl to be Catholic. She says nothing; unable to voice her desire, she is still able to communicate it to Danny. He plays music, and she "sees" something in him not necessarily associated with his creative talents. They both "speak" with their hands; and hands can caress, play music, and pull triggers. Sex and sensuality are all intertwined with dancing, the laying of hands, Danny's musical performances, and violence.⁵

⁵ Kearney's analysis of the film works with Roland Barthes' notions of diachronic and synchronic narrative structures. The diachronic, or surface structure, of the film is a thriller, a murder mystery. Kearney writes that the synchronic structure of unconscious motivations is depicted through three motifs: dancing, music, and the laying of hands (180). He is accurate in isolating these motifs as rupturing the otherwise linear narrative of the film, but he neglects to make a final connection between the motifs themselves.

A car pulls up to the Ballroom entrance and the girl tentatively leaves the pipe and approaches. Four masked gunmen get out and confront the manager about payments. They shoot him in the chest under the Dreamland Ballroom sign. Danny is shown in a silent scream; his terror has no voice, yet. The camera then moves to show a club-foot of one of the gunmen (which Kearney reads as a cloven hoof), and their footsteps are heard crunching on the gravel. The girl goes over to them; one faceless gunman sees her, and says: "who the fuck is she?" Another replies, "it doesn't matter who she is" and shoots her. Her identity is irrelevant to these gunmen. As the gunmen drive away, Danny is shown bathed in red light, a rather obvious visual metaphor for desire, rage, and death. More significantly, the shift in lighting from the soft blue to the harsh red reflects the sudden and violent loss of innocence with the girl's death. Yet, Jordan complicates this loss of innocence. It is not merely the gunmen who take away her youth and her life, but Danny too took something from the girl: her virginity. As the gunmen drive off, the Ballroom explodes into flames; all the lights go out except the ones on the wishing tree which are pathetically dim in comparison to the glow of the flames. The haunting requiem plays again.

This opening sequence is quite long (it runs almost thirty minutes out of the film's total length of 184) and by the end of it, all the key motifs of the film are well established. Music is sexual, and both music and sex are tied to violence. Jordan constantly shoots

faces in partial or total shadow, as if to obscure identity; and indeed, the suggestion that identity is irrelevant to the forces that function within one's life has been made by Danny himself. The shadows are also symbolic of the unconscious world into which Jordan's camera will probe. Colours (in particular blue and red), sounds, and music will work throughout *Angel* to express a relationship between violence, desire, and identity.

Another motif in the film is the conflict between dreams and reality, reason and insanity. The next series of shots flip back and forth between Danny's memories of the shooting and his "interrogation" by police. It is now dawn, the night of killing is over, and Danny awakes in a brightly lit infirmary room – the shock of day and reality is striking. His arm is wounded, but this injury is not of concern to him. He is recalling the scene at the ballroom: he remembers seeing a club-foot on the gravel parking lot, and in his memory he hears the footsteps of the police investigators. Both sets of feet make the same sound on the gravel, and a subtle connection is made between the forces of law and the forces of discord. The footsteps of police and of masked gunmen are indistinguishable. Yet, the symbol of innocence (the young girl) also had audible footsteps. Her inclusion in the sounds of law and violence is an important addition. Good and evil are not easily distinguished in *Angel*. It is unclear whether the masked bombers/murderers are Provos or

Loyalist paramilitaries.⁶ Indeed, the two moral drives will be internalized in the character of Danny.

There are two police officers in the infirmary, and Danny comments that it is so quiet that it is like paradise. The film contains several references to heaven, hell, and paradise, and Danny's equation of peace with silence is significant. The murdered girl was mute; she could make no sound and Danny's communion with her is, ironically, a peaceful encounter that leads to hellish blood-letting. Danny makes his life by creating music, and such an act of creation is all too easily translated into one of death. Later on in the film, Dee will comment that the only peaceful environment she's recently experienced was at an insane asylum: another ironic equation that posits the perceived "real" world as mad, violent, and destructive and the "other worlds" of sleep, fantasy, and dementia as paradisaal.

The inspector on the case is named Bloom, and as both writer and director of *Angel*, Jordan's naming of him is deliberate. One cannot help but make a connection to

⁶ The initial indistinguishability of the gunmen is exactly the political ambiguity John Hill criticizes in the film. Hill writes that Jordan's "preoccupation with 'pure' violence requires a suppression of social and political specifics. Indeed, social and political questions are not simply by-passed, or, ... made subordinate to a tale of purely personal revenge, but are rendered irrelevant by virtue of the film's emphasis on the metaphysical origins of violence" (179). The problem with Hill's argument, however, is that he reads *Angel* as being bereft of social and political content, but then proceeds to place the film in the context of the Northern Irish Troubles. As such the film will inevitably fall short of his expectations; it is a tautological argument that limits Hill's reading of the film.

Joyce's *Ulysses*. Joyce's Leopold Bloom is a father/protector figure to Stephen Daedalus, the emerging artist, and the novel sequence of particular interest here is the nightmarish dreamscape wherein Bloom literally saves Stephen from the terrors of the night.⁷

However, father figures are absent from *Angel*; Aunt Mae is a maternal figure, as are Dee and Mary at the farmhouse, but fathers and older men are absent (with the exception of Bloom who is both ineffectual and deliberately manipulative). Danny is an artist, although much more established than the literary Daedalus, but after this initial contact with Inspector Bloom, he becomes an artist of death. Jordan is offering a revisionist reflection of Joyce's world: the two writers share an interest in the nature of identity and the weight of the historical past upon the events of the present, but Jordan prevents his Bloom from having any central role (he is no apostle of love, no organizing presence as in *Ulysses*). Jordan's Bloom becomes a *deus ex machina* at the end of the film. The modernist everyman is translated into an absurd figure of divine intervention in a world where there is no discernable reality.

The only information Danny seems able to convey to Bloom and his associate is that he saw feet. What will become his growing obsession with the gunmen is articulated in his question to a hospital orderly: "where d'you get your shoes?" Other than this query, Danny is silent when Dee comes to visit, as if he has adopted the mute girl's attributes.

⁷ Alternately known as the "Nighttown" or "Circe" section of *Ulysses*.

Dee tells Danny that the funeral for the murdered manager took place on a beautiful day: “it was like heaven,” she says. Again, the references to heaven and paradise are set against a background of fear, pain, and anger. Before Dee leaves the hospital, Danny touches her face (the laying of hands associated with the mute girl) and says: “I wanted to do this to you, and then I did it to someone else.” Dee cannot comprehend the significance of such a statement, but for Danny it marks a kind of connection between Dee and the girl and also speaks to the sense of anonymity which pervades this film. Through a mere coincidence, the mute girl is the one in Danny’s arms when the gunmen arrive, her murder had nothing whatsoever to do with her individual identity (it could have been Dee). Additionally, Danny’s words express guilt in that he believes himself to be the catalyst for the deaths of the previous night.

The next scene is important for the visual contrast it establishes and the thematic links created. A woman is hanging clothes on a line outside an urban dwelling (an action that will be repeated near the end of the film by Mary, outside a rural farmhouse). The *mise-en-scène* is dingy and brown. Danny approaches the apartment building, the home of his Auntie Mae, and he runs through archways and under balconies. The effect is one of his crossing over or under several thresholds. He has moved into another world. Mae’s apartment is shot in dark, shadowy light, as if she lived in an under- or other-world. She accuses her nephew of chasing anything that glitters. “May as well be chasing shadows.”

she comments all too ironically. Indeed, Danny and Jordan both chase shadows. Danny does so by pursuing men whose identities are a mystery to him, and Jordan's use of dim or partial lighting is an attempt to go into shadow and uncover the dark sides of human nature. However, *Angel* does not allow bright illumination in terms of understanding or things becoming clear; the end of film is just as much a mystery as Danny's motivations (again, ambiguity is the source of John Hill's objections). Danny answers his Aunt with a comment that glitter has its charms, and indeed, if glitter is read as indicating sex, violence, or show business, then the film is very much invested in portraying the lure of these "professions."

They sit at a table, and Mae begins to read his cards – an interesting alternative way of seeing, believing, and tapping into one's fate. Using a set of regular playing cards, Mae talks about the Ace of Spades (the card of death) and comments that there are thousands in the city. She lays down the Jack of Spades, covered by the eight of Spades, covered by the Queen of Spades, covered by the Ace. She refuses to show/tell Danny the spread and stops prematurely. Death has been foretold, and it is easy to assume it will be Danny's death. He is definitely the Jack (the quest figure in the Tarot); the eight more than likely represents the young girl, but the Queen could be Dee, Mae, or any number of other women. The important point is that all the cards and the characters they represent are covered by the Ace of Spades. The players in this drama will all die in some way.

The scene shifts to another room in Mae's apartment, and Danny picks up a metronome and sets it ticking. The sound is indicative of time, music, dancing, bombs, heartbeats. Underneath a bed, Danny finds a soprano sax belonging to his now dead uncle who was also a musician. He plays as he gazes out a window covered with bars. With this partially obstructed view, Danny watches as Mae walks into the street and past a British soldier hovering around a corner, holding a gun. Mae passes the soldier, oblivious to both his presence and his gun. She is obviously accustomed to people with guns on street corners; the threat of shootings is commonplace. The lurking violence of the officer as seen through the barred window can be read two ways: the bars keep the violence out of the private domain, or the private life is trapped or barred in by the violent public sphere.

Mae's exit into the outside world triggers a sequence of memories for Danny. There is a abrupt, even violent, jump cut to a nightmarish montage: a series of very quick shots from the mute girl at the window, to her hands over Danny's eyes, to the gun shot, to the bells on the tree, to the explosion, to the bride at the dance, to the young girl again (there is the sound of a gun being cocked), to a gun in an unknown hand. The connections in Danny's mind are between the women in his life and guns. Music, women, and guns are connected. These three aspects of Danny's life are the only sources of meaning, however fragile or indeterminate that meaning may be. In an interview with Brian McIlroy, Jordan says about *Angel*:

It's the thought of death and of the injury to others – the whole moral question of that is quite an obsession with me. There is also a certain kind of release in conceiving a violent act or in depicting violence. It's something that I find to my alarm that I'm very good at. (116)

There is also a certain kind of “release” in shooting someone (film pun intended) and in sexual intercourse. Jordan may be interested in the “moral question” of injury to others, but he does not acknowledge that the sexual behaviour of several of his characters also inflicts harm, and that his filmmaking is also a form of violence.⁸ There are levels of violence at work in the film of which Jordan seems unaware; namely that women are the victims of the violence despite Danny's central role as protagonist/sympathetic anti-hero.

Another woman who cares for Danny is the band's singer, Dee (the similarity of their names indicates a connection between the two characters). The next scene is a band rehearsal and Danny enters the room with back lighting: his face is in darkness, and a red light illuminates the door behind him as if he has just emerged from the underworld. There is a distinctly hellish look to this scene, and Dee later asks Danny why he came in “like a ghost.” Indeed, Danny is now something from the spirit world, but the question becomes, is he an angel or a devil? Is he an already-dead spirit wandering in unease, or simply a figure in his own dream? Because this sequence begins with Danny waking up in the police infirmary, the remainder of the film can be read as his own nightmare. However, it is

⁸ How Jordan is often perceived as creating harmful and discriminatory images of women, blacks, and homosexuals will be dealt with at great length in the section on *The Crying Game*.

perhaps more interesting to see Jordan as blurring the distinctions between dream and reality just as he blurs identities and strict moral codes.

The haunting music of the opening murder sequence is heard once again as Danny is shown walking the street and peering into a shoe store window. He is obviously searching for some way to track down the owner of the club-foot who haunts his dreams and memories of that night. Before Danny enters the shop, there is a quick cut, and the scene changes to the band's dressing room. Dee and Danny are discussing new uniforms with the new band manager. The manager wants a "new look," and Danny suggests pink as a colour. This is an odd choice, but in the McIlroy interview, Jordan mentions that part of the rationale behind his colour scheme for the film was to use "cotton candy" hues to make it look like an old Hollywood musical. That may have been his intent, but the result is far more surreal than *Singin' in the Rain*. There is a movie postcard on Dee's mirror, and Danny points to the blonde starlet pictured and asks who she is. (It is another occasion wherein Danny poses such questions of identity.) Dee does not know, and Danny replies that "it's a dream." Movies (*Angel* as well as Hollywood musicals) and the atmosphere of the film are exactly that: a dream.

Following this odd intercalary moment, the camera returns to the shoe store. Danny overhears the owner of the shop talking on the phone. The owner has a club-foot. Danny, dressed in a trench-coat, subsequently follows the store owner. Danny lurks

around corners like a bad imitation of some *film noir* police detective.⁹ The “suspect” is going home on his lunch break, and Danny peers through his window. Significantly, Danny’s reflection in the glass is superimposed over the suspect’s image. The two men are visually twinned; part of the identity Danny is beginning to assume – that of a killer – is refracted from this man. The shots of Danny crawling through a broken part of the chain link fence, moving through the doorway, and passing down the hallway are all framed by window-panes, door frames, and various architectural boundaries. The overall image is one of cramped space, as if Danny is cut off from an openness that might otherwise signify clarity or clear thinking. Instead, the signification is of confinement as Danny approaches his first victim.

Danny trashes the bedroom, looking for something. He is angry, frustrated, and violent in this acting out of his pain. He finds a gun and fits it together rather too easily; the visual parallel is with Danny finding his uncle’s soprano sax and piecing it together, not unlike the piecing together of a puzzle. The gun is just another instrument, but one of destruction rather than creation. Ironically, as Danny seems to figure out the identities of the gunmen, the audience becomes increasingly uncertain of Danny’s role. Again, is he an

⁹ The trench coat is not merely a visual gesture toward *film noir*, it is also a marker of the IRA in earlier films and novels such as Bowen’s *The Last September* and *Shake Hands With the Devil*.

angel or a killer devil? Jordan seems to be purposefully confusing traditional notions of creation and destruction, good and evil, dream and reality.

The man walks in to find Danny in his room. Danny says, "I wanted to talk to ya ... what's your name?" Just as Danny enquired as to the identity of the movie starlet, asking for one's name will become one of Danny's refrains as if he wants to know the people and their reasons for killing. The man with the club-foot slams the door, and Danny fires six times. There is a close-up of Danny's face; his expression is one of shock or amazement. His stare is rather blank and it is a stark contrast to his violent reaction of witnessing the shooting at the Ballroom. Danny's reaction to violence has changed; he is no longer horrified. He drops the gun by the man's body and says, "I wanted to tell ya how beautiful she was." Thus, beauty becomes associated with death and vengeance. The final scene of this sequence is back at the band rehearsal, lit in red, and Danny is passionately playing the sax. His passion for music and women has been translated, or extrapolated, to killing.¹⁰ In another interview, Jordan makes this comment about art and violence: "I think the lure of art for people is that very often it will give their lives a pitch of intensity they don't normally have. The lure of violence is quite similar, because it gives them this pitch of excitement, this visceral drive" (Comiskey 23). It is unfortunate that Jordan does not

¹⁰ Many saxophone players call their instrument their "axe."

articulate his own role as artist, his own “visceral drive” at work in the formulation of this film.

The connection between music, women, and violence is further emphasized in the next scene. Danny is driving Dee home from the band rehearsal and unintentionally drives to the house of his victim. Dee tells Danny that he is “charmed,” and she becomes associated with Aunt Mae. The two women share an intuitive understanding of Danny. With one of the few innovative camera movements in this film, Danny looks out of the rear-view mirror, and the mirror frames his backward glance. The looking backwards is what connects Danny to the murder and to Dee. He kisses Dee as if to seal the pact between sex, violence, and music. Later that night, Danny returns to the murder scene under a ghostly white light from the moon. His face is blocked out by the window frame. He has become as faceless as the masked gunmen from the Ballroom. He has come for the gun, and in the process he picks up something else that looks like his neck chain for the sax. Two other men come in, see the dead body, and simply leave. They are compatriots of the now dead man, and Danny has a further lead in his investigation/vengeance.

There is a quick cut back to Mae’s where Danny is making tea. The simple domestic task is strikingly mundane in comparison to Danny’s other activities this day. Mae enters, and she is babbling about being haunted by a dark spirit. That spirit is both death and Danny, who has now become an avenging angel. An unknown amount of time

passes, and Danny is next seen walking along the street as a car pulls up. Bloom gets out and takes him to the police station. He gives Danny files to look at, and Danny peers at many faces of suspected killers. Bloom tells Danny that he is Jewish, whereupon there is the first moment of dialogue that firmly places the film in the context of the Northern Irish troubles. Danny replies to the information about Bloom's religious background with an old joke: "sure, but are ye a Catholic Jew or a Protestant Jew?" There are sides to any conflict, but whose "side" one is on is not easily distinguished. Bloom ignores the joke and offers Danny advice, which may be accurate, but it is not helpful for the young musician who has now joined in the violence. Bloom says, "everybody's guilty ... maybe you're better off forgetting ... it's deep, it's everywhere and it's nowhere." This is a very Joycean statement about the "ineluctable modality" of violence and death and evil (*Ulysses* 45).¹¹

The presence of photographs connect the police station scene with the next one. Presumably Danny gains the address of one of the gunmen from looking at the pictures Bloom showed him, and the next scene is set in a small green house by the seashore where Danny is shown looking at a family picture on the wall. He goes to the breadbox and takes a piece as if he is at home. He sits on the bed and waits until a man returns. Danny gets the gun ready and forces the man to walk to the beach. "What's your name?" Danny asks again of his new victim. It is George. Danny forces George down to a broken, dilapidated

¹¹ It is, however, Stephen Dedalus's reality and not Bloom's that is being described in Joyce.

shelter on the beach. It is a strange, burned-out structure: a remnant, a ruin. Both men are sitting on the beach, leaning against it and talking in an odd parody of a “man-to-man” conversation. Danny apologizes for hitting him, and George comments that “that thing doesn’t suit you,” meaning the gun. George reaches into his coat pocket and Danny figures he’s going for a gun. He shoots George on the beach with one shot; he has become considerably more efficient in his killing. There has been a shift in Danny’s psychological world: the knowledge of George’s name does nothing to prevent Danny from killing him. The repetition of the question, followed by an answer that articulates his victim’s identity in no way changes Danny’s actions. Danny gets mad at George for “making” him do it. In a fascinating moment, George asks Danny not to leave him, at this moment of his death, as if George recognizes that Danny will function, somehow, as a guardian angel. Indeed, Danny has changed from avenging angel to the angel of death.

Keeping the sea as a visual motif, the band moves to a beach resort for another gig. The connection between the shore where Danny kills George and the shore where he plays his music becomes increasingly significant in terms of Danny’s relationship with Dee. Danny goes into the club where there is a dance competition going on. Red lights dot the tables, and the room’s ambiance is very dark with vibrantly coloured lights. The place has a surreality about it in contrast to the bleached sunshine of the outdoors. Danny struts along the dance floor and asks Dee to dance. His face is in shadow. They have fun, and

they dance rather frenetically, even after the music is over. During the band's evening performance, Dee sings "Danny Boy," which is essentially about doom and death, and their mellow music is quite different from the Samba tunes of the dance competition. What is obvious is that Danny's performance moves people, as dancers sway to his impassioned playing. Afterwards, Danny approaches Dee who is standing near a yellow and green neon palm tree. That tree is a trashy version of the wishing tree, and Danny seems aware of this with the question, "want to make a wish?" This is a particularly chilling question in light of a situation that obviously reminds him of the murder of the beautiful young girl near another wishing tree.

To secure the association of violence, sex, and music, another beach scene is included. Danny and Dee walk the shore, and they kiss and caress each other. A bonfire is burning behind them as if a diminutive version of the flames of the Ballroom explosion. The seashore is a site of foreplay as well as death. Back at Danny's room, they make love. The room is brightly lit with blue lamp shades and sheets. Danny asks Dee about sin, and one must wonder if his context is sex or murder. This is really a rhetorical question because the two are related. He has sex with Dee by the seashore (as he murdered George at the seashore) and this is the second time he has "taken" Dee close to his scenes of killing. When they wake, Dee is wandering around the hotel room wearing Danny's trench

coat, and he places the sax chain around her neck. This is a macabre visual moment wherein she dons the apparel of his violence.

The band returns home, and as Danny gets out of the tour van, the camera pans to a Salvation Army band playing on the quay. Jordan is being particularly absurd here as he shows Danny talking to one of the musicians. They sit on the beach, facing the shoreline, their backs to the camera – a reverse angle of Danny and George sitting on the beach. The Salvation Army man says he played with all the bands, but now he “plays for the Lord.” The implied, unasked question is, who Danny is playing for?

The police inevitably catch up with Danny (having now killed two men) and an officer approaches Danny at the rehearsal hall, then takes him to the police morgue. This policeman, named Bonner, notes that everyone is sleeping and then pulls out George’s corpse and roughly shoves Danny’s head close to the dead man. The gesture is at once violent and appropriate, as Danny looks into the now dead eyes of his mirror image (in the same way that Danny’s face and the face of his first victim were superimposed). Bloom enters and sends Bonner away. Bloom plays on Danny’s sense of guilt by saying that George might have been in love. There is a double meaning here: that Danny should feel guilt for killing a man with feelings and with a life; and love kills as much as hate. Bloom, in what has become his signature cryptic style, asks Danny, “What do you know?” “Nothing,” Danny replies, and Bloom concludes: “Got to watch ‘nothing,’ it can take hold

of you.” Bloom knows that Danny is somehow involved in these killings, and he misquotes Shakespeare – “if music be the food of life” – and Danny completes the quotation – “play on.” Bloom has basically asked Danny to keep doing what he has been, that is, tracking down the gunmen and killing them. Bloom has, in uncertain but recognizable terms, told Danny that he has the “poetic licence” to do as he sees fit.

The film moves from this scene involving the forces of law and order, with references to playing roles and the gripping potential of nothingness, to one in a mental hospital. Jordan thereby connects police security, information, and playing different identities with madness and, subsequently, a fall from grace. A brief scene between Dee and Danny continues the heaven and hell imagery. They are walking on the wooded lawns of the hospital. It is an Edenic setting in comparison to all others in the film, and indeed, another question about Danny arises: has he fallen? Dee says to him for no obvious reason: “you’re nuts.” And Danny replies, “I know, just like them.” *They* could be the patients at the hospital, the gunmen, or the police, or all of them.

As the band plays in the hospital, Dee focuses on a female patient who is wandering aimlessly and clapping her hands to the music in a distracted way. The patient is directionless in her movements, and she and Dee are coupled. Dee’s emotions seem to be reflected by the patient’s movements. Later that night, Dee shrinks away from Danny’s touch as she now is haunted by something in Danny’s behaviour. She asks him what’s

wrong, and he answers as if continuing his conversation with Bloom, "It's nothing ... like a nothing you can feel. And it gets worse."

Things do get worse for Danny, and the plot thickens with yet another arrestingly powerful analogy between sex and violence. The scene changes to a coffee shop where Danny and the new band manager sit silently drinking tea. Danny talks to a waitress whom he quickly recognizes as the bride from the fateful night at the Dreamland Ballroom. He finds out that her husband disappeared after the Dreamland murders/bombing, so Danny consciously works at seducing her for information. The waitress/bride offers what is probably the most direct thematic statement of the film: "you know, men start out angels, end up brutes." Indeed, Danny knows this all too well. He then arranges to meet her after the band's next gig. The bride waits for Danny outside the back door of a community hall. She is covering from the cold in the shelter of the doorway and is visually confined by the door frame. Jordan presents a visual statement of victimhood, but who is really confined, the victims or the victimizers? Indeed, who are the real victims in this drama? Danny has worked himself into a psychological corner, and he will be taking others with him into this predicament. Danny and the woman get into a car: an action that foreshadows a later scene when Danny confronts that same woman's husband in a car with his own lover.¹² After Danny and the "bride" make love, their post-coital conversation consists of Danny

¹² The car scene is also a visual echo of Danny kissing Dee in a car outside his first victim's house.

learning as much as possible about the husband: “I want to know everything you ever did with him.” Danny asks the young woman if she and her new husband had sex the night of the murders, and then asks, “Am I like him?” “You’re like him now,” she replies as they embrace in bed. The embrace symbolically seals Danny’s brotherhood with the masked gunmen. She tells him about her husband’s mistress and where the two illicitly meet in the forest near his workplace. Danny gets up from her bed, after using sex to gain access to another victim, and leaves to find her husband and kill him.

In another forested glade reminiscent of the mental hospital’s grounds, Danny views the lovers through the trees. The lovers get into a car (they discuss that she is Catholic and he is Protestant – another indication that in *Angel* religion has little influence over who is killed or is a killer) and Danny sits up from the back seat and pulls a gun on the husband who is driving. The two men talk about their “line of business”; they both know how to kill. The husband tells Danny, “I’ll take you to hell ...we’ll all go together” and he viciously taunts Danny into pulling the trigger. Danny does. It is a scene of exactly that visceral thrill Jordan described in his interview with McIlroy. The car goes off the road and careens into an open, ironically idyllic, green field. Danny leaves the dead man and his mistress in this field, and nothing more is shown of them.

The next scene contains a number of visual and narrative echoes from the opening sequence. It is exterior, night, and Danny wanders from under an iron bridge toward a tent

lit up in carnivalesque lights.¹³ Danny is injured from the car accident, and it appears that his arm or hand is hurt. He was injured by the bomb blast at the film's opening, and he has again suffered physical injury, the difference being that he is the cause of it. As Danny walks into the tent, the band's new manager is discussing protection payments with an anonymous man. Danny shoots the man, screaming at the manager that this was how the previous manager got himself killed. Dee walks in, and Danny wildly rushes toward her with desperate cries of help. She repels him, yelling "don't touch me, you're dead." Dee tells Danny that "they" were looking for him, and when he asks who, she replies: "Them, like you – only in uniforms." It is Dee, like Mae, who articulates connections without truly understanding the deadly links. The triangle of gunmen is complete: police, paramilitaries, Danny.

Another jump cut brings the scene to a farmhouse, with a woman hanging clothes on a line (like Mae did earlier) and Danny approaches. The violence in the film is precipitated or followed by scenes of comparatively mundane household endeavours: making tea, hanging out the wash. These traditionally female activities of care and nurturing are impoverished by men's violence but inseparable from it. Danny tells her he

¹³ This is a striking parallel visual image to the opening of *The Crying Game* with the shots of bridges and carnivals. Also, in *Michael Collins*, Jordan uses the image of the bridge to comment on various ways of passing from violence, to negotiation, to love.

has a gun and that he needs clothes. He is exhausted, but still asks her name – it is Mary. Inside, he now asks Mary to cut his hair after he has put on her dead husband's clothes. (It is of course significant that Danny is wearing a dead man's clothes in the same way that Fergus, in *The Crying Game*, dresses Dil in a dead man's outfit.) Mary leaves to get a better pair of scissors, and there is a long shot of Danny sitting in the chair, facing toward camera: his eyes wander, his gaze is a madman's stare. He gets up to go find Mary in the kitchen, and she takes a stab at him with the scissors, and she connects with his hand. This is the only scene in *Angel* wherein a woman lashes out violently and, significantly, Mary hits the hand that plays, that kills, and that caresses. He whacks her with the gun, takes the scissors, and stands in front of the mirror to cut his own hair. The ease with which he strikes Mary, then attends to his appearance is a darkly satiric gesture compared to his much earlier, more innocent, primping in the dressing room.

Danny looks in the fridge for food (just as he did at George's house by the sea) and then goes to the hen house to get eggs, which he cooks for Mary. The audience would be correct to fear for Mary's life at this point. In the bedroom, Mary bandages Danny's hand, and he moves to lie on the bed. There is a picture of Christ on the wall. As Danny drifts off into an exhausted sleep, Mary talks in vague terms of her husband and his involvement in the Troubles. She asks Danny how he learned to use a gun, and then says: "Hating is easy. That's what I found out. It just goes.... Love is kind, the priest told me.

But I never felt it." Danny dozes off, Mary takes the gun out of his hand and says, "I'll show you how I feel," and shoots herself. She looks like an older version of the "bride," and indeed Mary is an aged, Catholic image of what the young Protestant girl might have become had her husband lived. Their fates are pretty much the same; perhaps the bride is saved much of the anguish that Mary has obviously experienced in her life, but their beginnings and their connections to Danny imply that anyone can be wounded. Mary's suicide informs a set of images in which women are victims of the violence of men. The mute girl is murdered, Dee is emotionally destroyed, Mary kills herself, and no one can tell the impact on the young bride. The women are barely individualized: they are all connected to Danny (who becomes symbolic of the obsessive power of violence) and they are all changed for the worse and/or killed by Danny's actions. The women combine into what could be all too easily interpreted as an image of "motherland" and in particular Kathleen, the feminine symbol of Ireland.

Danny rushes out of the farmhouse, into a red truck and drives off. As he is driving, the point of view is Danny's; it is a road to nowhere: misty, rainy, foggy. He stops nowhere in particular, and wanders off across a farmyard to the site of the burned-out Dreamland Ballroom. The sewer pipes are still there in the background as a reminder of the circular, spiraling path that violence leads one down. There is a traveller's tent with a man calling out that the seventh son of a seventh son can heal inside. Danny walks in, and

the tent is full of lit candles and Catholic iconography. The boy is dressed in a snazzy blue suit – much like the band uniforms – and Danny faints inside the trailer after asking to be healed. When Danny opens his eyes and gets up, Bonner is behind him. “You’ve been a bad boy,” Bonner comments and drags Danny out of the trailer and into the rubble of the Ballroom wreckage. “Vengeance is mine, who said that?” Bonner asks. “I don’t know,” Danny replies, implying a loss of faith if not a moral centre. The mystical boy has followed them, and if he is Danny’s spiritual guide it is only ambiguously so. Bonner takes aim at Danny; the camera shoots from an angle which is actually Bloom’s. “Lot easier to play than a saxophone,” says Bonner, and Danny agrees. We hear a shot from off screen, Bonner falls into Danny’s arms and whispers “stay with me” just as George did earlier.

There is the sound of a helicopter overhead, and Danny turns to see Bloom. Danny screams in frustration: “why didn’t you tell me?” in reference to Bonner’s involvement with the gunmen, and Bloom answers, “I didn’t know.” No one knows anything in this world, which may go a long way to explaining the mixture of images of institutionalized and folk religions/beliefs that are scattered through the film with no apparent order or meaning. Danny simply backs out of the frame with the boy following him. There are papers flying everywhere: dust and garbage from the helicopter’s force create an apocalyptic scene. Credits roll as dust and paper fly around. The *deus ex machina* of

Bloom's arrival does little to answer any questions. The final line of the film is, indeed, "I didn't know."

Kearney's analysis of *Angel* applauds Jordan's aesthetic vision and the ironic mode of interplay between the public and private spheres. Hill condemns the film on ethical grounds: because of the ambiguous ending, there seems to be no room for personal agency. The characters are either driven by the forces of fate or unconscious, dark, desire. Neither critic is wrong: both are accurate and both offer valid, defensible readings. *Angel* is a striking cinematic journey into the psychological world of violence, and violence is a cyclical force that ensnares. Danny's downfall is partly a result of his inability to see the trap he not only falls into, but also perpetuates. The most troubling ambiguity in the film is the unanswered question: once inside the cycle of violence, how does one get out? In many ways, Jordan's second film to deal with violence in Ireland is a sequel to the first (and having Stephen Rea appear again as a gunman in both helped in viewing the two films as companion pieces), and *The Crying Game* offers some uncomfortable answers to this question.

4.2 “You’re never out”: *The Crying Game*

Several things connect *Angel* and *The Crying Game* other than the casting of Stephen Rea in the lead. Besides the circularity of action mentioned earlier, both films also use mirrors as a continuing motif, and both have scenes of cutting hair. All of these similarities indicate a common concern with questions of identity. Neil Jordan’s Academy Award-winning (best original screenplay) film requires less introduction than *Angel*. *The Crying Game* received much media attention when released, mostly due to the not-so-well-kept secret of Dil’s male biological identity. Nevertheless, it did not take long before critics settled down to keen analyses of the film’s structure and meaning. What is most interesting about the critical history of the film is the strong reactions and harsh criticisms levied against Jordan for his portrayal of women, blacks, and homosexuals.

Initial praise for the film was followed by backlash from various fronts. For example David Lugowski, while allowing that the film is thought provoking and takes on “thorny issues,” asserts that *The Crying Game* offers the overall impression that “the only good woman is a man. Inversely, the film also implies that the really gay man is a woman. The overtly sexual relationships between men in the film replicate heterosexual paradigms” (34). bell hooks is exacting in her criticism of the images of black people, in particular Dil. hooks writes that “all the people who are subordinated to white power [in the film] are

black” and that black men and women become the “playing field where white men work out their conflicts around freedom” (59).

While it is difficult, if not impossible, to argue that Jordan gives black and/or female characters the same degree of liberation as he gives Fergus, it is important to note that all of the critical responses applaud, on some level, the film’s attempt to deal with complex readings of identity. If one were to hypothesize that the film attempts to reveal assumptions about people based on political ideology, skin colour, or wardrobe, then the film is entirely successful *because* the response has been so focused on further revealing stereotypes at work and because the film has undeniably re-invigorated the critical debate about identity formation. Lugowski focuses his analysis mainly on the portrayal of homosexuality, hooks focuses on images of black people, and others such as Kristin Handler and Amy Zillax focus on the depiction of women. The interest of this chapter is the depiction of violence and, in particular, the relative “Irishness” of that violence. Thus, the following reading of the film is an attempt to bring *The Crying Game* into dialogue with *Angel* as well as an effort to contribute to the existing criticism.

The Crying Game opens with a scene of a hostage taking: a Provisional IRA operative, Jude, lures Jody (a British soldier) away from the activity of a carnival. Once isolated, Jude and Jody are pounced upon by other IRA gunmen, and Jody is taken away bound and masked. The scene firmly sets the film into an Irish literary context and an Irish

political arena. Unlike *Angel*, there is absolutely no doubt that the setting is Northern Ireland, and the leader of the gunmen, Peter, announces their identities as Provisional IRA. The two films share qualities of the thriller genre, but whereas *Angel* is quite surreal in its performance, *The Crying Game* is relatively realistic as it turns from political into romantic thriller. Additionally, there exists a precedent in Irish literature for the hostage-taking sequence (a precedent Jordan acknowledges in the preface to the published version of the screenplay).¹⁴ In her article, "Women, 'Queers,' Love and Politics: *The Crying Game* as a Corrective Adaptation of/ Reply to *The Hostage*," Maureen Hawkins makes explicit the points of convergence between Jordan's script and Brendan Behan's play. Hawkins's analysis of the two texts' relationship is more invested in Behan than in Jordan, but her use of Judith Butler's theories on gender performativity is informative. Hawkins comes to a similar conclusion as both Lugowski and hooks that no matter how much the film presents gender, race, or nationality as performative, it seems "to endorse the patriarchy by only allowing biological males" the benefit of free choice in individual constructions of self (205). Once again, *The Crying Game* warrants serious critical attention, but it is attacked

¹⁴ Jordan writes that the situation of *The Crying Game* "had been dealt with twice before in Irish literature, by Frank O'Connor ... and Brendan Behan. The attraction of such a theme for Irish writers, the friendship that develops between two protagonists in a conflict, that grows paradoxically deeper than any of their other allegiances, lies in the broader history of Anglo-Irish relationships: two cultures in need of each other, yet at war with each other" (*A Neil Jordan Reader* xii). This paradox is not the only one articulated in the film.

on the grounds of its perceived white male prejudice that allows only the masculine to constitute signified and signifier. The character of Jude, however, can be productively read in response to such criticism.

This film has a narrative frame: the telling of a fable about a scorpion and a frog. In both scenes, the teller of the tale is a captive, a prisoner, and as Zillax writes, the film “presents us with many subjects whose freedom is profoundly circumscribed by their ideological identities” (26). The contexts in which the fables are spoken (the speakers being imprisoned) force us to ask if our identity is indeed rooted in an essential nature, and if so, then what agency, if any, do we have? The visual and narrative metaphor of confinement offers a clue as to how the film will go about answering these questions.

The Crying Game begins with the IRA entrapping a British soldier and taking him hostage, but what makes Jordan’s presentation different from Frank O’Connor’s “Guest of the Nation” or Brendan Behan’s *The Hostage* is the end result of the friendship between captor and captive. The time that Jody and Fergus spend together in captivity is revealing on a number of levels. Early in the film, Fergus is named as “kind,” and Jude is shown to be brutal in comparison. Precisely because the structural positioning of “IRA volunteer” and “British soldier” do not allow for more complex and, by implication, dangerous understandings of individuals, Fergus’s commander warns him to limit his contact with the “prisoner.” Nevertheless, Fergus is attracted to Jody’s sense of humour, and their

friendship moves beyond initial identifying gestures based on national distinctions. When Fergus leaves Ireland and goes to England because he “needs to lose [himself] for a while,” he changes his name, gets a haircut, and seeks out Jody’s girlfriend in order to honour Jody’s last request. While Fergus may be “on the run” while in England, he finds and maintains love despite the prison walls that will separate him from his lover at the end of the film. Unlike the gunmen on the run described in chapter two, Fergus does not end up dead or alone. Of course Fergus falls in love with Dil, and their relationship, as complicated as it becomes, is the primary locus of Fergus’s humanization process. However, at the point when you think the film-as-political-thriller has turned into a more simple romance, Jude re-emerges.

When she appears in Fergus’s apartment, Jude has completely changed her appearance. In the opening of the film, she is dressed in order to lure Jody sexually into the IRA’s trap. Her hair is dyed blonde, she is wearing a short, tight, denim skirt with high heels, and she is wearing much make-up. At the IRA’s rural hideout, Jude seems to be more natural in her shapeless clothing, flat boots, and lack of make-up. In London, however, she acquires an inhuman, lacquered kind of glamour. Her hair is dyed a darker reddish-brown, and she wears a tailored suit – she needs “a tougher look” as she tells Fergus. Whereas Fergus embarks on a journey of self-awareness and humanization, Jude moves in the opposite direction. She becomes a *femme fatale*, and in the logic of *film noir*

she will die, or end badly, because she is bad. Jude acquires metaphoric significance as that which Fergus rejects and that which threatens love and understanding.

When Jude rediscovers Fergus in London, he refuses to help her (and the IRA), telling her he's "out" for good. Jude replies that "you're never out," warns him to "stay in one place" and to "keep the faith." Fergus resists all such limitations. He has already left Ireland, he loses his faith in the cause, he renounces his former identity, and he kills no one. When Fergus protests Jude's threat on Dil's life, Jude replies: "Jesus, you're a walking cliché." The irony of this statement is that Jude is the cliché, not Fergus. Jude is allowed little room to manoeuvre past stereotypes of the killer bitch or the vicious terrorist. She is what Fergus might have become had he not broken away from the rigidity the film portrays as indicative of the IRA and, by extension, any and all polarized positions.

Jude serves as a foil not only for Fergus, but for Dil as well in just one example of how *The Crying Game* complicates standard narrative techniques, such as the doppelgänger, into multiple images and constructions of self. The film suggests that Jude's physical changes, rooted in and motivated by her political ideology, are shallow and false compared to Dil's. Visually, much is made of both women carefully composing their appearance. Jude is shown more than once dressing in front of a three-way mirror; there is more than one shot of Dil applying lipstick or fixing her hair. But on the level of

masquerade, of dressing, of performing identity through physical appearance, there is a sharp criticism of Jude's actions compared to Dil's. Both Dil and Jude know exactly why they alter their appearance. Dil dresses as a woman in order to express who she feels she really is: in order to reject biological determinants of identity. In one scene, following Dil's revelation of her penis, Dil tells Fergus that "a girl has her feelings." Fergus replies that the "thing is, Dil, you're not a girl." Dil appropriately retorts with "details, baby, details." In contrast, Jude dresses in order to constantly hide her "real" identity which, within the context of the film, is never anything other than IRA volunteer. We are never allowed to see Jude outside the constraints of the IRA, and the film accuses rigid political beliefs of completely obscuring if not erasing individual personalities. Jude does not have any "nature" other than political violence, other than as a carrier of ideology. And Jude dies at the hands of Dil.

Even though Jude (as threat, menace, evil) is killed in the film's penultimate scene, it is far too easy to say that the film's message is that if you love, then you live, and if you hate, then you die. For one thing, Jody is a loving character, and he is accidentally killed by his own British forces.¹⁵ For another, the film insists that the viewer acknowledge the presence and power of social and political barriers to love. So, while Fergus rejects many

¹⁵ In fact, Jody can be read as a Christ-like figure in his sacrifice for the cause of love and understanding. If so, then Fergus becomes an apostle of the doctrine of love and, ironically, Peter then becomes a false prophet because of his hatred. Jude, however, remains a betrayer.

of the rigid boundaries that restrict his identity, and even though Fergus and Dil survive, their bond of love and understanding (and their willingness to negotiate and accept each other's difference) is still blocked and prohibited by exterior forces. Dil may have shot Jude, but Fergus takes the blame in an ironic moment which mocks both the mythic Irish rebel-tradition of self-sacrifice and the musical cliché of "Stand By Your Man." Because of his sacrifice, Fergus ends up in prison behind the glass barrier reserved for "dangerous criminals." Ironies are further layered in the final shot of the film as Fergus is imprisoned for being that which he tried to escape: an IRA gunman.

The glass walls separating Fergus and Dil at the end are a visual echo of the opening sequence. The film begins with a long, wide-angle pan of a fairground by the water. Cutting across the screen, however, is an iron bridge. A bridge certainly connotes crossing over or passage, but in this opening sequence it functions so as to block our sight; it prevents us from seeing the full picture. The iron bridge establishes an extended visual metaphor of confinement and only partial vision.¹⁶ The camera looks through windows and doorways, shots are framed by furniture, scaffolding, and bars. Dil's apartment is a maze of diaphanous curtains and mirrors. The consistent use of mirrors emphasizes the importance of appearance, but the mirrors also create a sense of the constantly receding

¹⁶ Even if the bridge which Danny crosses under in *Angel* is seen as a metaphor both for connection and confinement, it is significant that he goes underneath the bridge. He is below or beyond comprehending the need to get out of his situation and the need to connect with someone else for "salvation."

self – there are so many different images of the characters that their unique, individual identities become confused, doubled, multiplied. If you get the chance to see around or beyond the structural barriers, you can never be sure of what, or who, it is you are looking at. Even though the barriers in the visual text become increasingly transparent – to the point where the walls are glass at the end – they remain barriers. Spatially, the two lovers are separated despite whatever emotional and psychological union has occurred. In this way, the film may detest rigid definitions of identity, but it also mocks individual agency.

When Fergus gets a visit from Dil in prison, he repeats Jody's parable of the scorpion and the frog, completing the narrative frame. Having the film begin and end with a tale that describes the impossibility of escaping one's nature creates a narrative container within which all the mistaken identities, performances, negotiations, and violence exist.

The Crying Game presents a world where binary opposites have controlling power.

White/black, Irish/British, male/female, straight/gay are all systems of opposites which the film portrays as inescapable. Individual flexibility, however, seems to be the tonic offered for existence in such a world. Looking back to *Angel* and its world of equally unclear identity and ambiguous answers, the love that Fergus and Dil share is exactly what is missing from Danny's life.

“Keeping the faith” is not acceptable in *The Crying Game* if it means sacrificing your humanity. In the logic of the film, ideological rigidity leads directly to violence,

death, and destruction. Individuals, such as Dil and Fergus, may resist various external definitions of themselves, but they cannot deny that their identities are also dictated by or are the by-product of the cultural logic of determinism. As Neil Jordan writes in his introduction to the screenplay:

the story does end with a kind of happiness. I say a kind of happiness, because it involves the separation of a prison cell and other more profound separations. But for the lovers, it was the irony of what divided them that allowed them to smile. So perhaps there is hope for our divisions yet. (xii-xiii)

Dil and Fergus have “a kind of happiness” for two reasons: they are able to recognize “the irony of what divided them” and they are able to negotiate a relationship within such divisions. The hope of overcoming that which partitions people is at work in Jordan’s most recent Irish film, *Michael Collins*, but that hope never materializes.

4.3 “Are we discussing the treaty, or are we discussing myself?”: *Michael Collins*

Michael Collins is a film demarcated by conflict. Ostensibly about the revolt against Britain and the rivalries and divisions within the Irish people, the film is also concerned with the internal conflict within the man Michael Collins between violent rebellion and political negotiation. The tension between the personal and the political is nothing new to Neil Jordan’s films; but, unlike *Angel* and *The Crying Game* in which

thematic and visual motifs cohere within integrated narratives about violence, negotiation and identity, *Michael Collins* fails to achieve the same level of rigorous synchronization of content and style. The film is lodged between a story about a historic individual and an allegorical undertaking, and the text is unable to reconcile or effectively negotiate these dual purposes. *Michael Collins* has an internal conflict between the representation of a dramatically important period in Irish history and the representation of Michael Collins as a fallen hero.

Michael Collins has none of the surreal atmosphere of *Angel* and little of the irony of *The Crying Game*. The film is problematic on a number of levels not the least of which is Jordan's inability to accommodate historical events within his signature cinematic style. *Michael Collins* is part epic, part elegy, part allegory, part historical biography; it takes on controversial events such as the Irish Civil War and the life of Michael Collins without ever finding an adequate form with which to tell these stories. Jordan creates in Mick Collins another figure of conciliation (albeit controversially so) who exists in a world where "taking sides" is a matter of life and death. Unlike *The Crying Game*, however, the character who is seen to accept negotiation over violence, the character who wants to "take the gun out of Irish politics," is killed because of his perceived betrayal of one side or another in violent conflicts. The situation of having to take a side, of having to position oneself against others, is portrayed in *Michael Collins* as not only heart-wrenchingly

difficult, but tragic. The following discussion will focus on tensions that prevent an integrated text: the tension between historical accuracy and narrative style, the tension between Michael Collins's public and private worlds, and the tension between creating a national hero and documenting a life.

Just as Jim Sheridan's *In the Name of the Father* came under fire for distorting historical facts, so too did *Michael Collins* endure harsh criticism. In his article, "Cat-Calls from the Cheap Seats," Keith Hooper documents many responses to the film, and the diversity of opinion is telling. Focusing on the many British critics who condemned it for historical "inexactitude," Hooper notes the heavy weather that has been made over the anachronistic car-bomb, the armoured tank shooting at Coole Park and other scenes in the film which do not conform to historians' version of events (2-5).¹⁷ Critical response in America was "generally luke-warm" and the mass of letters to the editor of *The Irish Times* speaks to a divided reception in Ireland. Hooper notes that rarely has "any film elicited such schizophrenic responses from historians and critics" (2). In the end, Hooper correctly comments that the question which provides the most interesting avenues into the film is "how does film construct a historical world?" (14). But looking to the method of the film, the "how" of its construction only leads to more problems and tensions.

¹⁷ For other documentation of historical inaccuracies and the related critical controversy, see Elizabeth Butler-Cullingford's "The Reception of Michael Collins" (*The Irish Literary Supplement* [Spring 1997]: 1) and Joe Lee's "Collins: the Man, the Myth and the Movie" (*The Sunday Tribune* 3 Nov. 1996: 14-15).

A sampling of headlines from reviews of and articles on the film indicates the different categories in which critics try to place *Michael Collins*. Michael Dwyer labels the film “Dynamic, Thrilling, Epic Cinema” in *The Irish Times*; Glen Newey calls the portrayal of Collins “Both Gangster and Gandhi” in the *Times Literary Supplement*; and Luke Gibbons places the film in the category of “Narrative Allegory” in “Engendering the State.” Neil Jordan adds his own generic definition when he speaks of his stylistic decision to “use silhouettes ... the contrasts between light and dark. We were trying to achieve a kind of elegiac realism” (McSwiney 23). Epic, gangster, allegory, elegy, realism, historical biography: what is the film? The difficulty in placing *Michael Collins* within a specific genre is not the result of a postmodern manipulation of such categories; the film is not a self-conscious *pastiche*. Rather unfortunately, the film is a failed attempt to exploit the contrasts “between light and dark” and the associations with good and evil, heroes and villains, that go hand in hand with such visual imagery. The mixed critical responses to *Michael Collins* are in large part due to the film’s conflicting style and the incompatible methods of representation at work in the reconstruction of Michael Collins’s life.

The opening of the film is an immediate indication that different styles of narrative are being used. *Michael Collins* begins with crawlers offering the audience information about Ireland’s “700 year history of domination by the British empire” and then

introducing Michael Collins, whose life is defined by “triumph, terror, and tragedy”(70).¹⁸ This pseudo-factoid beginning, with the language of both epic and tragedy, is followed by the scene wherein Joe O’Reilley, Collins’s right-hand man, tries to comfort Kitty Kiernan, Collins’s fiancé, after the news of his death. Joe says to Kitty: “Some people have greatness flowing through them. They’re what the times demanded. But he’s dead. And life is possible. He made it possible” (71). In a funereal-like oration, Joe presents Collins as both a Christ-like figure and a great man of history who sacrificed himself in order to make life and hope “possible.” Then, the action goes back in time to the 1916 Easter Rising, and the violence of the historical period bursts onto the screen. The elegiac tone of the film is certainly evident in the opening frame with Joe and Kitty, but after the action begins outside the General Post Office the film follows a kind of ‘this is the way it happened’ presentation. That the film opens with two framing devices, the historical notes and the news of Collins’s death, is a typical Jordan manoeuvre.

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, Jordan frames his films deliberately. However, unlike *Angel* and *The Crying Game*, *Michael Collins* is a film that ineffectively constructs history; the story within the frame does not cohere. Obviously, there are a number of problems with *Michael Collins*, all of which cannot be dealt with here. The focus of this thesis is characterization, in particular that of the Irish gunman. As such, the

¹⁸ All quotations from the film are taken from Jordan’s *Michael Collins: Film Diary and Screenplay* (London: Vintage, 1996).

following discussion will address the problem of Collins's character by way of another character: Kitty Kiernan. The film's conflicting styles can be best understood through the character of Kitty because she is part of the film's opening frame and because she is, in large part, the representation of the viewer's perspective. She is also the allegorical personification of Ireland.

The first scene of Joe coming into Kitty's room after she has learned the news of Collins's assassination establishes the viewpoint of the film. She is in bed and she turns to Joe who then offers her a reading of Collins's life and legacy as a means for her to understand, for her to work through her grief. There is an extreme close-up of Joe as he stands facing the camera. Looking directly into the camera Joe is also looking directly at the audience. Joe gives a sympathetic and stoic account of Collins as both great man and martyr. By facing both Kitty and the audience, the opening scene establishes Kitty as an emotional surrogate for the audience. What she feels for Collins is invariably what we are supposed to feel. We are meant to fall in love with and then mourn the loss of Michael Collins as both a lost hero and lost lover. Thus Kitty represents the viewer, but she also represents Ireland.

Played by Julia Roberts, Kitty is a character desperately underwritten compared to the men in the film. Luke Gibbons rightly points out that "it is not too difficult to see the national allegory of woman as nation, the figuration of the body politic in terms of the

female or maternal body” (“Engendering the State” 265). This allegorization of “woman as nation” is perhaps responsible for the much commented on lack of depth and even emotional charge in the characterization of Kitty.¹⁹ The scene that clearly presents Kitty as an allegory for Ireland is more than half way into the film. In the midst of the War of Independence, Kitty Kiernan and the rivals for her affection, Harry Boland and Michael Collins, have escaped the turmoil for a day at the seaside. Kingstown Pier is like a place out of time: a fitting setting for the most allegorical moment in the film. The three friends walk together, their arms harmoniously linked with their backs to the setting sun. The increasing darkness of the scene foreshadows the impending doom to these relationships. Kitty is dressed in pale green rather than the neutral greys and dark colours she wears throughout the rest of the film. The choice of colour is significant for Kitty’s embodiment of Ireland. That the green of her dress is pale and muted is an indication that the state formation of an independent Ireland has yet to be fully realized.

The conversation in this scene is connected by a series of references to gambling and wagers. Kitty speaks of a bet she had made on the horse named “Irish Republic,” which came in first at the Donnybrook racetrack with odds of fifty to one. In an intertextual way, she has bet on herself as both she and the horse are rather obvious

¹⁹ Harry Browne of *The Irish Times* writes that Kitty Kiernan is “a cypher, only half a character at best” (14) and Elizabeth Butler-Cullingford suggests that the “pale but aesthetically satisfying” reflection of Kitty lacks any conviction (“Gender” 184).

embodiments of Irish freedom and nationalism. Kitty's allegory is one that speaks to the future in as much as the Irish Republic is something which has yet to come into being as a political reality. The second wager occurs during the threesome's relaxation inside a restaurant/ballroom. Kitty tosses a coin to see which of the men will dance with her. Harry wins the toss and the camera follows the couple to the dance floor. There, Kitty and Harry speak with double entendres as Harry tries to figure out what his romantic odds are. "I was a length ahead. Now it's more like neck and neck," Harry says to Kitty (133). Even though Kitty replies "It's not a race, Harry," the connection between Kitty, the horse, and the Irish Republic has been made explicit. Winning Kitty's heart is equated with winning the Irish Republic.

Thus, Kitty is an allegory for the Irish nation and the battles fought over her between friends and lovers refer to battles fought between soldiers and countrymen. But if she is to be read as symbolic of Ireland, then she must also (given the opening frame) be viewed as the audience's representative on screen. This conflation of national allegory and viewer does not work. The problem with the representation of Kitty is that the film invests too much in her character, and this problem then extends to the portrayal of Collins.

The question must now be asked: how to understand the character of Michael Collins? If he is to be integrated into an allegorical context, then the character of Collins undoubtedly stands for something other than the historical, literal person. Given Joe's

opening words, Collins could be an allegory of the rebel-martyr: Pearse's blood sacrifice made human. On another level, Collins can also be read as the figure representing conflict in the political/historical sense. Collins intensified the armed struggle against British control over Ireland. In other words, he is also "Conflict": his character is the nexus of personal conflicts over Kitty as well as the political strategies required to attain Irish freedom.

Collins's character is also subject to competing determinations. At the height of the Treaty debate in the Dail, Collins is labelled by his colleagues as a traitor, a mystical character, and a romantic figure. He rises to his feet and says: "On a point of order – are we discussing the treaty, or are we discussing myself?" (140). No one answers Collins's question and neither does the film ever reconcile the opposing versions of Michael Collins. Rather, the film adds another layer, with its portrayal of Collins as conflicted within himself over the use of violence. He says to Harry: "I hate whoever put a gun in young Vinnie Byrne's hand. I know it's me, and I hate myself for it. And I hate them so much that I have to do that. I hate them for making hate necessary. And I'll do what I have to do to end it" (104). The anger Collins feels toward the British ("them") is also self-directed. The violence for which Collins hates himself and the British is a conflict between political action and personal desire, and this struggle is made provocative in the portrayal of Collins's seduction of Kitty Kiernan.

On the night that Michael Collins sends out his twelve gunmen (men he mockingly refers to as the apostles) to gun down the British agents who have been sent to Dublin to stop the rebels, Collins makes love to Kitty.²⁰ He takes Kitty to the grand Gresham Hotel, and while he paces about the room the scenes shift from his brooding to the actual killings. While Collins and Kitty receive room service on bone china, the British agents are murdered and the double-agent Ned Broy (played by the now ubiquitous Stephen Rea) is tortured to death. The scenes in the hotel room are shot with soft-filtered light, while the murder sequences are shot in either the dark of night or the dingy atmosphere of an interrogation room. Kitty is obviously falling in love with Collins: she fondles a rose while trying to get him to talk to her. She guesses that he has sent his men out and she compares the actions to the sending of Valentine's cards. She asks him, "do you send love notes?" and he replies that he must order the violence in order to convince the British to give them the "future to live and love" (122-123). Collins kisses Kitty, and she is in his embrace while the murders take place. In *Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation*, Lance Pettitt argues that this series of scenes clearly shows the influence of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972): "Jordan's intercutting of intimacy and violence, sanctity

²⁰ The night is Sunday 21 November 1920, and the deaths of the British intelligence officers initiate the "Bloody Sunday" at Croke Park. During the all-Ireland Gaelic football final, Black and Tans fired upon spectators and teams. Ranelagh notes that the Black and Tans were "incensed by the shootings that morning and [thought] that an IRA meeting was taking place at the grounds" (196). With an eerie equivalence, twelve people were killed including a child, a woman, and a Tipperary football player.

and savagery, imitates Coppola's masterpiece" (258). Pettitt argues that Jordan has consciously integrated cinematic references to many mainstream Hollywood genres besides the gangster movie. "Film noir and ... references to the Western genre" operate in a process of "postcolonial mimicry" (257-258). Conscious or not, the intertextual cinematic references in *Michael Collins* do not aid in the creation of an integrated expression; the visual gestures to Hollywood films only add to the film's list of unresolved conflicts.

The final and, for this thesis, the most important conflict in *Michael Collins* is between the desire for a national hero and the historical facts of Collins's life. Jordan's characterization of Michael Collins borders on the hagiographic. Casting Liam Neeson in the lead role brings to the screen the emotional/heroic baggage of Neeson's earlier portrayal of Schindler and Rob Roy: two characters who fought against unbelievable odds in the face of tyranny. Collins immediately has the face of a hero. The screen Collins is also saucy (as he confronts spies from Dublin on a country road and asks them what they had for breakfast), brutally strong and courageous (as he head-butts a Constabulary officer), a speaker capable of rousing crowds into action, a powerful commander of men, and a wooer of women. Such a portrait of Collins is uncomfortably close to the romantic paradigm of the rebel Irish gunman.

The depiction is uncomfortable because Jordan's previous films, *Angel* and *The Crying Game*, make such concerted attempts to move beyond such stereotypes. These two films probe the emotional and psychological fallout of violence and, in particular, violence done in the name of political goals. *Angel* and *The Crying Game* also weave considerations of violence with questions of identity how to know oneself and others in situations that restrict or constrain open dialogue and trust. As a result of such probing, Jordan's earlier gunmen (Danny and Fergus) are troubled characters who struggle with both political and personal dilemmas. They are non-stereotypical in their searches for understanding and their attempts, even if failed, to negotiate relationships of love. In the case of *Michael Collins*, however, Jordan has succumbed to the bittersweet temptation of the archetypal fallen hero. The romanticization of Collins (his life, his death, his position in Irish history), is testament to the lingering allure of such figures. That the film ultimately fails as a coherent text is, more importantly, an indication of the increasing inadequacy of character types to effectively portray the complexities of national identity and identity in general.

Conclusion

Prometheus Unbound

Here is Prometheus, the rebel:
Nail him to the rock; secure him on this
towering summit
Fast in the unyielding grip of adamantine
chains.

Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*

That *Michael Collins* harkens back to older paradigms of characterization is unsettling given Jordan's previous investigations into the complexity of identity. However, the narrative return of a fallen hero in *Michael Collins* is, perhaps, not that surprising. The power of stereotypes, the lure of heroes and villains, lies in their simplicity: the ease with which they are recognized, the comfort in knowing that something can be knowable.

The texts considered in this thesis, from early films such as *Irish Destiny* to contemporary novels such as *Reading in the Dark*, share one characteristic. They all offer some version of Irish identity as articulated through rebel gunmen. Some texts confirm stereotypes of heroic patriots and insidious terrorists. Many more offer variations of, contradictions to, and rebellions against the confines of such character types. It is the purpose of this thesis to offer examples of both the endurance of stereotypes (the appeal of

their stability) and sites of resistance. Just as real Irish gunmen rebel against forces of official law and order, so too do many representations of the gunman rebel against official discourse or conventional wisdom. The seemingly contradictory impulses of identifying with and rebelling against type that inform the entire collection of gunman characterizations discussed in “Rebel Narratives” are inescapable incongruities in any study of identity. When the Delphic oracle advised all who entered to “Know Thyself,” the advice was meant to be a riddle. Questions of who someone is, what something is, are not questions to be answered easily or permanently. Any tentative reply will immediately become subject to revision and re-articulation.

Three further examples of the relentless revision that mythic figures and stereotypes undergo are offered by way of concluding. The first is an ice-hockey team in Belfast, the second is a television character from Hollywood, and the third is the course offering of a summer school at the University of Ulster. All three of these “texts” confirm, at least in part, Richard Kearney’s contention that Irish culture and politics have gone global. Kearney’s analysis in *Postnationalist Ireland* presents Irish literature and culture as having worked through a polarity between mythologizing the past, and viewing the present in terms of a sacred tradition, and demythologizing such traditions. Now, Kearney asserts, Irish cultural creation looks beyond the present and in terms of a secular progress toward a pluralist future.

In the fall of 2000, Belfast got its first Seconda Superleague hockey team. Calling themselves the Belfast Giants and wearing jerseys depicting a cartoonish image of Fionn mac Cumhaill, their team motto is: "In the land of the Giants, everyone is equal." Without wanting to make ridiculous claims that Canadian hockey has come to save Northern Ireland (seventeen of the nineteen players hail from such fertile hockey training grounds as Brandon, Manitoba, Thunder Bay, Ontario and Oxbow, Saskatchewan), things are changing in Northern Ireland. International news coverage of the team's debut season from CNN, the BBC and the CBC, all point to the non-sectarian nature of the team and the sport. Not having a history in Northern Ireland prior to 2000, hockey is the only sport in Northern Ireland that is not tainted by religious or community rivalries. Interviews with spectators in the stands of the Giants's stadium (interestingly named *The Odyssey*) inevitably come around to some discussion of how the hockey team has none of the political "baggage" associated with cricket, rugby, or soccer. By all accounts, every home game sold out long before the games were played and hockey's popularity is on the rise in Belfast. The mythic figure of Fionn mac Cumhaill, once the heroic predecessor of Fenian rebels and an icon of the UDA, 5th Battalion, Bushmills, has metamorphosed once again into an image that suggests the changing relations between Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland.

The second example of changing representations concerns RUC. One of the controversies to gain much attention as a result of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement is the status of Northern Ireland's police force, the RUC. The Conflict Archive (CAIN) notes that approximately ninety-three per cent of the officers of the RUC are Protestant. The force has come under a lot of criticism from the Nationalist community since the beginning of the Northern Irish conflict. Following a period from 1969 to 1975 when the British Army had primacy in security matters, the RUC has gradually taken over the main responsibility for security. The RUC has approximately 8,500 officers (The RUC Reserve is made up of 1,500 part-time and 3,200 full-time officers). Three hundred and one officers of the RUC have been killed during the current period of the Troubles. During the same time the RUC were responsible for the deaths of (approximately) fifty-two people, of whom thirty were civilians and most of the civilians were Catholics. Following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, a commission was established to make recommendations on the future of the RUC. The report of the commission, the Patten Report, was published on 9 September 1999 and made 175 recommendations, not the least of which is the implementation of a new Code of Ethics, integrating the European Convention on Human Rights into police practice.¹ The role of the RUC in the Troubles has not been a predominant subject of fictionalization or characterization in novels and films, until now.

¹ The full text of the Patten Report has been transcribed onto the *CAIN* data base and is available online at: <<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/police/patten/recommend.htm>>.

Terry George, who collaborated with Jim Sheridan on three films dealing with Northern Ireland and the violence that affects both family and community, is now a script-writer working in Hollywood. One of his current projects is writing for *The District*, a new television series about the Washington, DC police force. One of *The District's* main characters is detective Danny McGregor, a former RUC officer who has left Belfast for the comparative ease of policing in America. Played by David O'Hara (who had minor roles in *Some Mother's Son* and *The Devil's Own*), the representation of a Northern Irish, Protestant police officer is unprecedented in mainstream Hollywood narratives. The show is one of the most-watched programs on Friday nights, and the presence of O'Hara's character cannot help but radically revise the Hollywood convention of presenting Northern Irish characters as troubled Catholic terrorists and tragically doomed revolutionaries. That Irish artists such as Terry George have moved to the United States and worked in the film and television industry there is nothing new. His creation of a character like Danny McGregor, however, is innovative and another example of how Irish identities are increasingly given varied representation in Ireland and elsewhere.

The third site of varying representation of Ireland and Irish people is the 2001 summer school at the Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages, the University of Ulster (Derry). The title of the Academy's course is "Ireland Has Many Voices," and the pluralization of both "Cultural Heritages" and "Voices" is significant. The Academy is

home to the world's first Institute dedicated to the study of Ulster Scots heritage and culture. The advertisement for the summer school states that the courses "will draw on the expertise of leading scholars in the fields of Irish history, literature, language and culture to provide an in-depth but enjoyable course of learning and study designed to explore the diversity of Irish culture and heritage." The key word is "diversity." That the Academy is dedicated to the study of the Ulster Scots indicates new directions in academic study of Northern Irish culture and literature, and the summer school represents a movement in Irish studies that focuses on the *plurality* of Irish cultural identities.

The rebel hero of myth, folklore, literature and film may have once been held "fast in the unyielding grip of adamant chains" of representation; but, once "unbound," he becomes a figure of infinite possible characterizations. There is no doubt that future narratives will evoke the powerful figure of the Irish hero, but there is also no doubt that future narratives will also continue the critical process of revising and resisting rigid stereotypes and confining narrative conventions. This thesis offers a sustained examination of narratives that break out of the chains of orthodoxy yet remain aware of the existence and tenacity of those fetters of representation.

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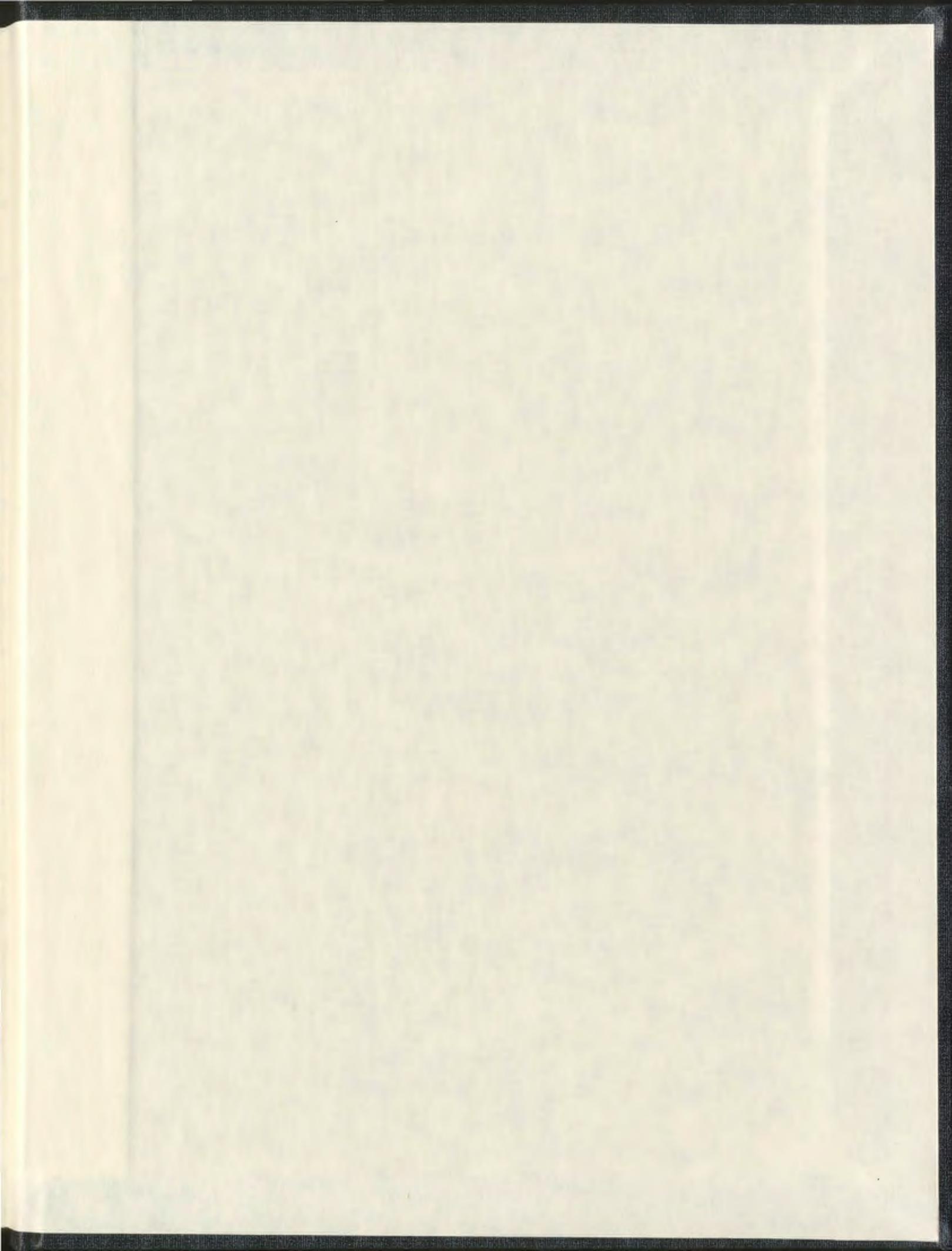
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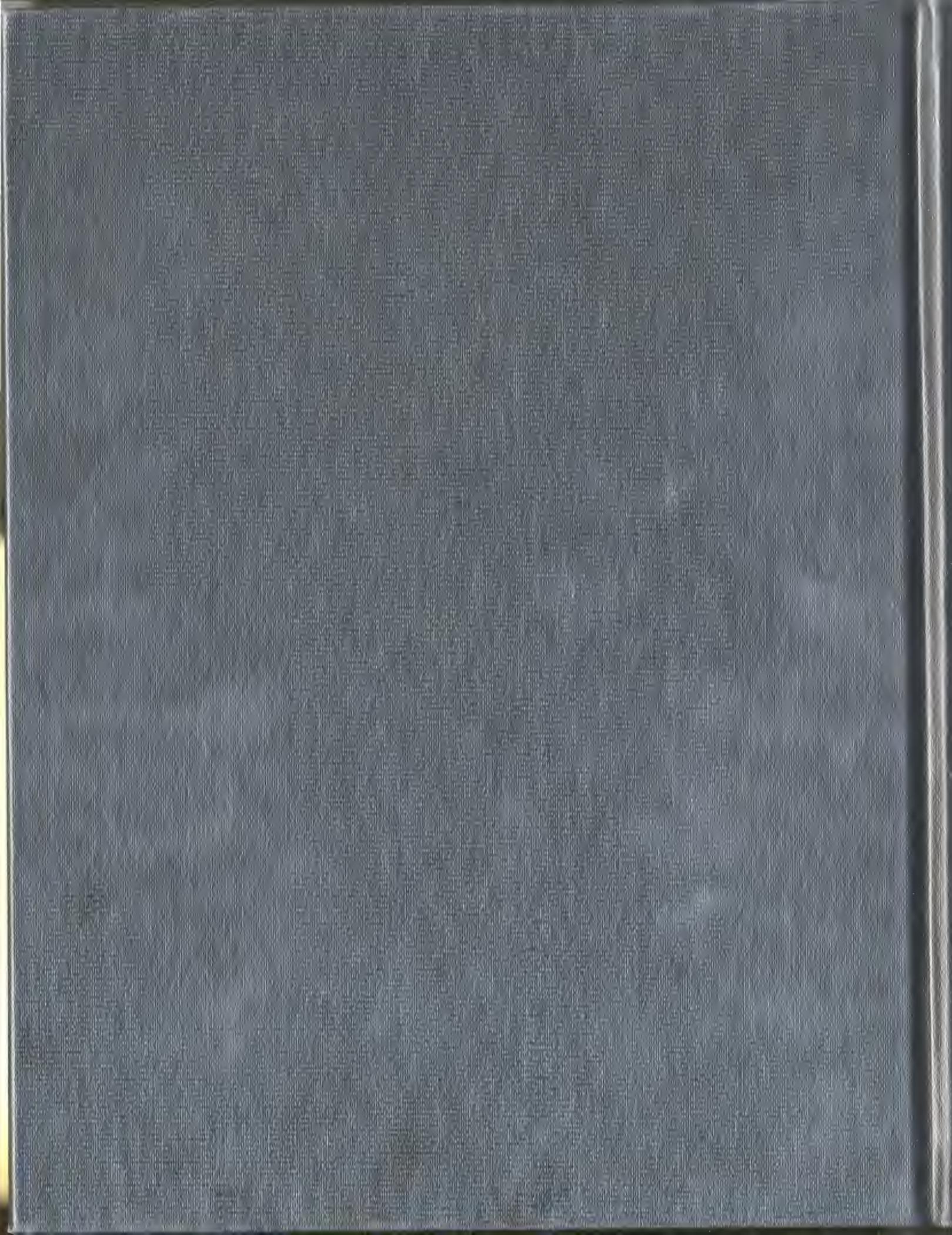
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Chapter Two

The Character of the Gunman

The act of organizing or characterizing people into discrete categories is an ancient undertaking. Foucault is not the first to use “archeological” methods to describe objects of study. There are surviving documents from as early as the fourth century BCE, such as Theophrastus’s character sketches, that attempt to define people on the basis of distinguishing characteristics.¹ Theophrastus’s work is by no means a set of whimsical vignettes on the human condition; rather, it is a “scientific” (in the Aristotelian sense of direct observation) attempt to set down attributes that differentiate people. He details – in the style of a deadpan observer – the characteristics of, for example, the Flatterer, the Suspicious Man, the Shamelessly Greedy Man, or the Man of Petty Ambition.² All the

¹ Questions of what humans are hold a primary place in studies we take to be classical. Theophrastus works in a tradition of philosophical inquiry populated by Plato, Hesiod, and his own teacher, Aristotle. While the controlling question in Aristotle’s *The Nicomachean Ethics* (which is a description of the nature of man) is “What then do we mean by the good?” (Book A 8), the *Ethics* also investigates the nature of pleasure, friendship, happiness and virtue. Aristotle’s discussion of excessive actions (Book B) and the vice that can result is reflected in Theophrastus’s descriptions of non-virtuous characters.

² See *Theophrastus: The Character Sketches* (Kent State UP, 1979), which is Warren Anderson’s translation (along with notes and a lengthy introduction) of the surviving fragments of Theophrastus’s work. All references to Theophrastus come from Anderson’s edition.