

# Irish Defence Force Services and Masculine Identity

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## Irish Defence Force Services and Masculine Identity

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ROBERT MORROW, AUG 5 2013

### **'Man Made' – *But What Makes the Man?***

#### **What Impact Does Service in the Irish Defence Forces Have Upon the Creation of an Irish Hegemonic Masculine Identity: An Analysis of the Diaries and Accounts of Irish Soldiers**

##### **Introduction**

'Brothers in arms', 'It will make a man out of you', 'Cú Chulainn', 'Sinne Fianna Fáil atá fé gheall ag Éirinn...A buidhean nach fann d'fuil Ghaidheal is Gall' or, in English, 'Soldiers are we, whose lives are pledged to Ireland...Sons of the Gael! Men of the Pale!' (Irish Defence Forces handbook, 2011:10): These are a mixture of slang phrases, army chants, popular mythical characters and quotes from the Irish national anthem. All of which conjure masculine imagery- men coming together to fight for the honour and pride of their country. But, does the military really impact upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity? Through examining the diary extracts and accounts of Irish soldiers who fought with the Irish Defence Forces I will seek to answer the following question:

*Does service in the Irish Defence Forces impact upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity?*

Stemming from a masculine theoretical perspective, I will concur with other scholars' arguments in identifying gender as being 'socially constructed and culture bound' (Eksi, 2008:38). In such, I will recognise the argument that men are not born soldiers, but indeed become soldiers, as argued poignantly by Claire Snyder when she states, 'One is not born but rather becomes a masculine citizen, as he performs those tasks required by the perspective ideal of the Citizen-Soldier' (Snyder, 1999:138). Supporting arguments fronted by R.W. Connell and Arthur Brittan amongst others, I will also recognise the existence of plural masculinities as opposed to the singular masculinity, essentially recognising that, 'No one pattern of masculinity is found everywhere. Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct gender differently' (Connell, 2000:10). I will also recognise the line of argument that masculinity cannot be seen to be in isolation to femininity, but instead the two are very much two sides of the same coin. Finally, I will use R.W. Connell's conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity, that being: 'the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (Connell, 1995:77). In short,

'Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it' (Connell, Messerschmidt, 2005:832).

With that I will front the following line of argument: Service in the Irish Defence Forces, as illustrated through the diary extracts of Irish soldiers, impacts upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity.

I will front the aforementioned line of argument through the following format: I will commence with justifying or illustrating the reasons as to why the military is chosen as a suitable case study, in so doing referring to previous research in the field of militarized masculinity. Following which I will then illustrate the methods used by military forces when training soldiers, or 'making men'. I will then move to illustrate and justify the reasons as to why Ireland is chosen as a suitable case study. In doing so I will refer to Ireland's strong history and commitment to UN

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peacekeeping missions, and I will also refer to the ever-present Irish warrior image which is present in Irish society through *Cú Chulainn*, the Irish national anthem and the choice of video games and movies favoured by Irish teenage males. Following which, I will outline the image of the Irish male as illustrated within the Men's health reports 2004 and 2008-2013 and the COSC, attitudes to domestic abuse in Ireland report, 2008. I will then move to analyse the diary extracts and accounts at hand. These diary extracts and accounts are written by soldiers both during and after having served time with the Irish army. These diaries, as accounts of the lives of soldiers in the Irish army, are of course open to varied interpretation, but for the purposes of this paper they will be read in line with masculinity theory and with that analysed in terms of how they are seen to illustrate the impact service in the Irish Defence Forces has on the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity. I will then close with some concluding remarks.

## Why Study the Military?

The military as an institution is an interesting unit of analysis at both the international and national levels. Connected to security relations between states and helping to create and maintain hegemonic masculine roles and identities at the national level, the military warrants intensive research. This section of the paper will be broken into two parts- the former will further elaborate on the reasons as to why the military is chosen as a unit of analysis, in so doing referring to previous research, and the latter will analyse the ways in which the military goes about 'making men'.

The military, as argued by Annica Kronsell, has 'historically included male bodies and norms of masculinity have dominated their practices, marking them as institutions of hegemonic masculinity' (Kronsell, 2005:281). The strong association between the male body and the military is ever-prevalent in societies across the world and throughout history. The male being the dutiful 'citizen-soldier' who placed his life on the line to protect his country at times of war while his wife and children looked on from the sidelines is a recurring image throughout history; this being the case as 'historically, the right and duties of citizenship have been linked with the ability to take up arms in defence of the polity' (Steans, 1998:81; Snyder, 1999). With the emotional attributes of anger and aggression being associated with men and masculinity the military and the army became seen as the appropriate outlet for men and the 'making of men'. In the Irish case, the Men's health report, 2008-2013, argues 'Violence and aggression have come to be seen as normal and natural expressions of masculine identity' (Men's health report 2008-2013, 49). In many countries this historical relationship between men, the military and citizenship prevail. Lesley Gill, through using Bolivia as her case study argues, 'Military service is one of the most important prerequisites for the development of successful subaltern manhood, because it signifies rights to power and citizenship and supposedly instils the courage that a man needs to confront life's daily challenges' (Gill, 1997:527).

This exclusive association between the military and masculinity has over time become naturalised by societies; this being the case as, 'once a particular set of behaviours has been established as the norm for appropriate conduct within any institution, it becomes difficult to critique, in part, because normativity makes certain practices appear 'natural', beyond discussion' (Kronsell, 2005:282). This naturalisation not alone forces men to join the military in order to prove or claim their 'manhood', an argument supported by Joshua Goldstein, who argues, 'cultural norms force men to endure trauma and master fear in order to claim the status of 'manhood'' (Goldstein, 2001:264). But, it also forces men within the military to continuously prove their 'manhood', an argument supported by Root Aulette, Wittner and Blakely, whom argue: 'Men in the military are under constant pressure to prove their manhood by being tough, adversarial and energetic' (Root Aulette, Wittner, Blakely, 2000: 327).

The influence the military plays on society is extensive and permeates beyond the walls of the army barracks. Paul Higate and John Hopton argue 'militarism is the major means by which the values and beliefs associated with ideologies of hegemonic masculinity are eroticised and institutionalised' (Higate, Hopton, 2005:236). In the Irish case this is evident through the prevalence of the Irish warrior image witnessed through the Irish national anthem and *Cú Chulainn*, a point which will be further elaborated upon in the next section.

Now that we have established the importance of the military as a unit of analysis, let us now turn to face the second part of the question and analyse the way in which the military goes about 'making' men.

Military training in countries across the world follow the same 'choreographed process aimed at breaking down the

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individuality of the recruits, and replacing it with a commitment to and dependence upon the total institution of which they are now a part' (Whitworth, 2008:111). The recruits are removed from their families and loved ones and placed in a regimented and controlled environment 'under the control of older, unrelated males' (Gill, 1997:533). The recruits, through shaving their heads, sporting the same uniform and marching together, are forced to conform to the overall unit and remove any sense of individuality (Whitworth, 2008:112). The recruits also learn to suppress emotions and in particular learn to 'deny all that is feminine and 'soft' in himself' (Goldstein: 2001:266). Throughout military training the new recruits have to continuously prove their 'manhood' through enduring tests of psychological and physical endurance (Goldstein, 2001:265). The recruits often hear a litany of jeers and insults such as 'cunt, faggot, sissy, and whore' (Whitworth, 2008:112), which in turn seek to remove and challenge the feminine qualities of both male and female recruits. The military seeks to create an emotionally-void man, for emotion is a sign of weakness: 'for a grown man to cry implies [n]ot only the pain of all he had endured becoming in one moment no longer endurable, but the shattering, at the same moment, of a sheltering, encircling notion of who he was, a strong man, a protector' (Goldstein, 2001:268). In short, the ideal soldier is 'both physically and emotionally tough, portraying little emotion, with the possible exceptions of anger and aggression' (Whitworth, 2008:114).

## Why Study Ireland and the Irish Army?

I will now move to justify choosing Ireland and the Irish army as a case study. In doing so, this section will be divided into three parts; the first part will analyse and examine the Irish warrior image as expressed at the covert cultured level, the second part will move to justify why the Irish army was chosen as a unit of analysis through examining Irish involvement in UN peacekeeping missions and the values cherished by the Irish Defence Forces, and finally the third part will outline the image of the Irish male as outlined in the Men's health reports 2004 and 2008-2013 and the COSC attitudes to domestic abuse in Ireland report 2008. In doing so it will illustrate how the picture these reports paint of the Irish male is similar to the characteristics and values cherished by the defence forces.

Although following a policy of armed neutrality and despite not being at war for over eighty years, the Irish warrior image is ever-prevalent, most poignantly at the covert cultured level. David Morgan, as quoted by Sandra Whitworth, argues that in countries across the world 'despite far-reaching political, social, and technological changes, the warrior still seems to be a key symbol of masculinity. In statues, heroic paintings, comic books, and popular films the gendered connotations are inescapable' (Whitworth, 2008:113). The prevalence of the warrior image in societies exists as militarism, as argued by Higate and Hopton, 'feeds into ideologies of masculinity through the eroticization of stoicism, risk-taking and even lethal violence. This can be detected in populist fictional and nonfictional books about war and weapons as well as newspaper coverage of military actions (Higate, Hopton, 2005:434). In the Irish case, this eroticization of violence is very much evident through the Irish national anthem, the pervasive mythical tale of Cú Chulainn and the choice of movies and video games favoured by Irish teenage males.

The Irish national anthem, *Amhrán na bhFiann*, or A Soldier's Song, started as a marching song within the Irish volunteers and is an emotive, passionate song which conjures nationalistic feelings of pride and respect. Sung at events varying in nature from formal state events to sporting events, when translated into English the masculine nature of the national anthem becomes apparent, equating masculinity with the military and armed forces: for example, 'Sinne Fianna Fáil atá fé gheall ag Éirinn... A buidhean nach fann d'fuil Ghaoidheal is Gall' or in English, 'Soldiers are we, whose lives are pledged to Ireland... Sons of the Gael! Men of the Pale!' (Irish Defence Forces handbook, 2011:10).

The Irish warrior image can also be witnessed through the ever-pervasive tale of Cú Chulainn. Cú Chulainn is best remembered through the story of the *Táin Bó Cúailgne* (Cattle raid of Cuailgne), where he single-handedly ended the war with ferocious success, killing many of Queen Maeve's men in the process. This captivating tale has been reproduced and retold throughout the years and in its latest form has been described by the Irish Independent's Books editor John Spain as being 'as ferocious, bloody and sexy as anything in a video game' (Spain: Irish Independent article, March 30). The story of Cú Chulainn plays significant importance and feeds into the Irish warrior imagery and ideology, as the story illustrates the 'hallowed characteristics of Irish soldiers- reckless daring, spectacular ferocity and indomitable courage' (Bartlett, Jeffery, 1996:1).

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The eroticization of militarism and violence in the Irish case is also supported by Debbie Ging's research. In 2005, Ging constructed a survey concerning masculinity and media. Her research found that 'the study participants (Irish teenage males, 15-17 years old) consume mainly American and British media. Texts and images which have been the subject of considerable criticism regarding their portrayal of masculinity, most notably action films, war films, male-oriented digital games' (Ging, 2005:33). Ging's research also found that 'The most popular film genres cited by participants were action (60 per cent), comedy (54 per cent), horror (29 per cent) and thriller (19 per cent)' (Ging, 2005:34). Ging also found that 'a generic analysis of the games listed revealed that the most popular genres were action (52 per cent), sports-soccer (20 per cent) and other sports-related games, including driving, wrestling, snowboarding, rugby and basketball. Strategy (5 percent), role-playing (4 per cent) and simulation (1 per cent) were considerably less popular' (Ging, 2005:35). Ging's findings act as evidence in support of the claim that the eroticization of militarism impacts upon the creation of hegemonic masculine identities.

If the Irish warrior image is still prevalent in society, is it equally prevalent within the Irish Defence Forces? And even if it is, as Ireland remains a neutral country, does it really matter?

To answer the first part of the question with a short answer- yes, the Irish Defence Forces as an institution continues to remain strongly associated with masculinity. The admirable qualities of the ideal male citizen soldier, as discussed previously, are cherished as core values of the Irish Defence Forces, these being: 'loyalty- You must be loyal to your commanders and your subordinates, your comrades and your team, selflessness- Your personal interests must come after the needs of the mission and your team/unit, and physical courage- You must have the physical courage to persevere with the mission regardless of dangers and difficulties. Physical courage comes with commitment and professionalism', as published in the Irish Defence Forces information handbook, January 2011 (Irish Defence Forces handbook, 2011:9).

This in and of itself testifies to the importance of using the Irish army as a case study.

To now move to the latter part of the question, the answer again is, yes. Although Ireland follows a policy of armed neutrality, Ireland has and continues to illustrate a strong commitment to UN peacekeeping, playing what Katsum Ishizuka describes as a 'distinguished role as a peacekeeper' (Ishizuka, 2005:11). Ishizuka argues that Irish involvement in UN peacekeeping provides a number of benefits to the Irish Defence Forces, chief among them being it 'provides experience of an operational nature which cannot be gained at home; reinforces home training, enabling personnel to practise and develop individual and team skills and has a positive effect on morale' (Ishizuka, 2005:22). In short, Irish involvement in UN peacekeeping allows Ireland to compensate for its policy of armed neutrality.

I will now move to present and analyse the image of the Irish male as outlined in the Men's health reports of 2004 and 2008-2013 and the COSC, Attitude to domestic abuse in Ireland report of 2008. The Men's health report 2008-2013 makes the following claims in the Irish case: 'heterosexuality is synonymous with more dominant expressions of masculinity and this can have a significant impact on young men who are unsure of their sexuality or who are gay, bisexual or transgender' (Men's health report 2008-2013, 58); 'Young men are particularly prone to taking great risks with their health. They tend not to accurately assess the risks associated with dangerous situations or behaviours' (Men's health report 2008-2013, 59). The report goes on to argue that despite the changing role of masculinity, 'society continues to reward and honour aspects of male identity associated with risk, daring and foregoing safety through gendered systems within politics, work and sport....such occupations are traditionally associated with 'men's work' and taken for granted as part of normal and expected masculine practice' (Men's health report 2008-201, 16).

The Men's health report also argues that despite changes to the traditional breadwinner male role, there has not been a marked increase in terms of men's input in childcare and domestic work (Men's health report 2008-2013, 16). The scant involvement of men in childcare and domestic work is poignantly illustrated through the maternity/paternity policies adopted by the Irish Defence Forces: 'Male personnel who are the natural or adoptive fathers of the children may be granted 3 days special leave, with pay and allowances in respect of children born on or after 01 Jan 2000, as Paternity Leave, or Where the mother of a child dies within 154 days of the day of birth, the father shall be entitled to unpaid leave of up to 154 days' (Defence Forces Information Handbook, 2011:54). This paints the picture of Irish men as strong, risk taking breadwinners who are almost emotionally void. This interpretation of the Irish male is

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supported by the COSC, attitudes towards domestic abuse report published in 2008. After extensive surveying the report found that, 'Far fewer people consider domestic abuse against men to be common (42 per cent). In fact a greater share felt that it was not a common occurrence (54 per cent)' (COSC report, 2008:iii). The COSC report went on to argue that, 'Overall the public considered women to suffer more physical harm than men (83 per cent)' (COSC report, 2008:IV). In short, the ideal qualities of the Irish male as expressed by these reports are of a strong, heterosexual, emotionally void breadwinner: the same qualities viewed as being important for the ideal soldier. These strong restrictions placed upon the Irish male make the consequences for men who do conform to this norm more severe. As argued by Harriet Bradley; 'For a boy to be 'soft', a 'sissie' brings general social disapprobation and can make relationships difficult' (Bradley, 2007:50).

## Case Studies

This section of the paper will now move to analyse the diaries and accounts of Irish soldiers who have served with the Irish Defence Forces. These diaries and accounts will be read in line with masculinity theory and will be analysed in terms of how they illustrate the impact involvement in the Irish Defence Forces has upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity.

### *Case Study 1: Dan Harvey- Commandant- 'Peacekeepers: Irish Soldiers in the Lebanon'*

Dan Harvey's account provides an interesting insight into the life of an Irish soldier within the Irish defence force, the preparation they must go through before being deployed, the challenges they face, and the ways in which the individuality of soldiers is broken down and replaced with a sense of group identity. The following will discuss some of the more noteworthy points of Harvey's account.

Harvey's account also gives an interesting insight into the association he draws between the military and masculinity in the Irish case, which supports historical arguments that the military remains an institution of hegemonic masculinity (Kronsell, 2005:281). In numerous places within the book Harvey refers to his unit as men, illustrating how soldiers in his mind are synonymous with men: '...confidence in the men...each man of the platoon' (Harvey, 2001:36). Harvey, at several points in the book, also goes on to refer to deployment as a 'coming of age' or the almost transition of boy to man, stating: 'the completion of a six month tour of duty in Lebanon was regarded as a coming of age for the junior officer and soldier alike, with the first trip overseas being a milestone in one's career' (Harvey, 2001:13). Harvey then goes on to state, 'live incidents had been a maturing process, a growing up. In a sense, coming face to face with these realities had caused us to suffer a loss of innocence' (Harvey, 2001:42). Harvey even at one point states, 'for me it was not a professional work experience, it was a life experience' (Harvey, 2001:14). This account strikingly illustrates how Harvey feels the completion of his deployment had helped forge who he is as a man – more poignantly, an Irish man. This is further supported when he states, on returning to Ireland, 'I was very much at peace with myself, there was nothing left to prove' (Harvey, 2001:82). In such, Harvey's account can be seen to support the line of argument that the Irish Defence Forces impacts upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity.

Harvey's account also gives an interesting and honest insight into how the soldier often does not meet the ideal emotional role expected of them, that being someone who is 'both physically and emotionally tough, portraying little emotion, with the possible exceptions of anger and aggression' (Whitworth, 2008:114). Harvey gives an honest account of how soldiers battled with emotions and he at one point poignantly describes this through, stating, 'each man of the platoon was already at war with himself' (Harvey, 2001:36). Harvey goes on to illustrate the array of emotions felt by soldiers through the following: 'It was fascination tempered with dread at the possibility of reacting inadequately, or being afraid' (Harvey, 2001:36); 'A fear of showing fear, a fear of failure, of losing control, of not being able to cope with the speed of reactions required' (Harvey, 2001:36); 'Distraught... sense of emptiness... powerless to prevent some of the acts raging around us' (Harvey, 2001:77).

Harvey's insight into the real emotional experience of Irish soldiers supports arguments fronted by Joshua Goldstein, amongst others, who claim, 'War is something that societies impose on men, who most often need to be dragged in kicking and screaming into it, constantly brainwashed and disciplined once there, and rewarded and honoured afterwards. War is hell' (Goldstein, 2001:253). Harvey's account of how he and his comrade's feared showing fear

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itself and their personal battle with their emotions illustrates how the Irish Defence Forces seeks to create emotionally void men and how, in his mind, in order to be accepted fully, he needed to meet this norm. It illustrates the painful constraints placed upon men in their quest to prove their 'manhood', but also interestingly allows us to question to what degree can society be fully socialised and what emotional and psychological impact does that really have.

Harvey's account also gives an interesting insight into the ethos of the Irish Defence Forces and the desired characteristics of Irish soldiers. Harvey states the desired soldiery characteristics are 'teamwork, discipline, courage and leadership' (Harvey, 2001:77). Harvey later goes on to state; 'the ethos of the Irish soldier, based on experience gained at home, is to contain violence in a community rather than to exacerbate it' (Harvey, 2001:85). Harvey's account of both the desired characteristics and ethos of the Irish soldier can be seen to be in line with the previously discussed theory concerning the 'making' of men. With that, it can also be seen to be concurrent with the line of argument within this essay: that being that the Irish Defence Forces impacts upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity.

## *Case Study 2: Martin Malone- The Lebanon Diaries: An Irish Soldiers Story*

Martin Malone's book contains a combination of diary extracts written during his time as a soldier in Lebanon as well as a narrative written after the event. This book, like Harvey's, gives an interesting insight into the emotional and personal aspects of a soldier's life overseas. The following are some of the more noteworthy points.

Malone starts off his book by stating, 'I come from a soldiering background' (Malone, 2006:14). He goes on to state, after referring to several family members who served in the military, 'soldiering is in the blood' (Malone, 2006:15). This is an interesting statement as it illustrates the way in which masculine participation in the military has been naturalised in the Irish case. This occurs, Kronsell argues, 'once a particular set of behaviours has been established as the norm for appropriate conduct within any institution, it becomes difficult to critique, in part, because normativity makes certain practices appear 'natural', beyond discussion' (Kronsell, 2005:282). In this case, we see how Malone recognises the participation of Irish men within the Irish Defence Forces as being natural through his statement that 'soldiering is in the blood'. This naturalisation of male participation within the Irish armed forces, or men being the protector, in the mind of Martin Malone, can be seen to support the line of argument within this paper, that being: the Irish Defence Forces impacts upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity.

Similar to Dan Harvey's account, Malone also feels that military service has impacted upon creating who he is as a man, as evident when he states, 'and so I was soon to start the first of my five tours, these experience were to shape me as a person' (Malone, 2006:24). This is an interesting statement; coupled with the previous one, it indicates how Malone feels military service impacts upon the creation of Irish masculine identities, again supporting the line of argument inherent within this paper.

Malone's account also gives an interesting insight into the emotional aspect of soldier's lives', and in particular the darker emotional side of those lives. Malone states in one section of his book, 'It also wasn't unheard of for a sensitive young man to turn his rifle on himself' (Malone, 2006:36). The use of the word 'sensitive' is both interesting and telling. The soldier in question is a man who did not live up to the emotional norm expected of him, that being someone who is 'both physically and emotionally tough, portraying little emotion, with the possible exceptions of anger and aggression' (Whitworth, 2008:114). As a result of his sensitive or effeminate qualities, the man in question committed suicide. Malone refers to suicide again later on in his book when he refers to a trip he took to Rambam hospital to visit a Finnish soldier who had 'stick a garden knife in the side of his throat' (Malone, 2006:115). Malone introduces the character and discusses the event in a very matter-of-fact, almost blasé tone stating, 'he'd stuck a garden knife in the side of his throat and yet he had a pistol. I put the knife in an evidence bag, labelled it, and would bring it with me when I crossed the border on Tuesday....' (Malone, 2006:115). The tone in which Malone writes illustrates or suggests that he has become numb to death and even perhaps suicide. This anecdote gives an interesting insight into the emotional pressures placed on men, but also goes toward supporting Harriet Bradley's argument that the consequence on men who do not meet their perceived norm are more severe than they are for women: 'For a boy to be 'soft', a 'sissie' brings general social disapprobation and can make relationships difficult' (Bradley, 2007:50). The experience of the 'sensitive' soldier in question can also be seen to support the line of

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argument within this paper as it poignantly illustrates the way in which the ideal male, or ideal soldier, is supposed be emotionally void.

Malone's book further elaborates on what he calls 'peoples' sensitivities'. Malone describes an incident which took place concerning a figurine of a fat monk, kept by the SIS section, who 'when its habit was raised its penis swung up' (Malone, 2006:96). Malone recalls how one day 'someone decided to write Alifoh's (a Ghanaian warrant officer) name across the monk's arse' (Malone, 2006:96). When Alifoh realised his name was written on the Monks' buttocks he, being deeply embarrassed and offended, stormed from the office, slamming the door in turn, later describing the event as 'no good joke. Not funny. Not nice' (Malone, 2006:97). Malone later introduces another Ghanaian soldier, William, who he describes as 'inoffensive and sensitive' (Malone, 2006:102). In a diary extract dated 11 July, Malone illustrates how he went back to the detachment to find William crying in the sitting room; when William insists he is fine, Malone goes into the kitchen, but later returns to find David, another soldier, 'mouthing off at William, his tone derogatory' (Malone, 2006:103).

These anecdotes illustrate the ways in which soldiers are often jeered and teased for not acting within their heterosexual, emotionally-void norm. It can also be seen as an example of a psychological test of one's manhood, both important parts of the 'making' of soldier as identified by Goldstein and Whitworth, as discussed previously. These anecdotes can also be seen to support the line of argument inherent within this paper.

Another noteworthy point of Malone's book is the representation of women. Although women feature very little within, we are given a brief insight into their lives. In the Irish case, we are introduced to Martin's mother and his wife. Martin's wife, Bernadette, who as described by Malone 'was aware of the demands that a military life brought to a relationship' (Malone, 2006:14), is depicted as a dutiful wife who remains at home to take care of their son Colin, while her husband goes off to fight the enemy. Bernadette is introduced into Malone's writing in an array of caring situations; 'Bernadette pushed Colin in his buggy' (Malone, 2006:24), 'Bernadette and Colin were there to meet me. So were cheese sandwiches and Jaffa cakes, and a kettle steaming at the back of the range' (Malone, 2006:122). The roles played by Bernadette and Martin, as illustrated through Martin's book, speaks volumes of the impact the Irish Defence Forces has on the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity.

Some of the other representations of women within Martin's book are witnessed through 'Woody, the prostitute who plied her trade on the street' (Malone, 2006:111) and a strict female Ghanaian officer who Malone describes as being 'some cow' (Malone, 2006:116) because of her strict nature. Malone goes on to argue that if a white man treated a Ghanaian soldier in the same way she did, he would be branded a racist (Malone, 2006:116). These representations of women illustrate the subordinate role of women to men in times of warfare and go towards supporting the line of argument inherent within this paper.

## *Case Study 3: Tom Clonan- 'Blood, Sweat and Tears: 'An Irish Soldier's Story of Love and Loss'*

Tom Clonan's book provides an in-depth and personal account of service in the Irish Defence Forces during a tour of duty in Lebanon from 1995 to 1996. Dealing with the emotional, personal and psychological aspects of military service, the following are some of the more noteworthy aspects of his book.

The 'Getting inside Men's health' report, published in 2004 by the South Eastern Health Board, found that 'the development and maintenance of a heterosexual male identity is associated with pressurizing many males into risky behaviours and lifestyles that in turn, heighten their susceptibility to illness or accidental death' ('Getting inside Men's Health', 2004:35). A fact also referred to in the Men's health report, 2008-2013, which states, 'men who engage in health damaging or risky behaviours often do so to 'prove' their masculinity to others' (Men's health report 2008-2013,15). Irish men placing themselves in dangerous situations in order to illustrate or affirm their masculinity is evident throughout Clonan's book; for example, Clonan recalls an incident concerning a young, innocent looking soldier who, in order to quell mocking and to prove, in his own words, that 'I'm as fuckin' mad as any of youse' (Clonan, 2012:39), decided to eat a mot, which Clonan describes as being 'almost as big as a sparrow' (Clonan, 2012:39). After eating the mot, the young soldier is greeted with applause and even 'his tormentors are shaking hands with him and back-slapping him' (Clonan, 2012:39). Clonan later recalls another incident where a snake

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entered the crowded shower block and, after being shooed out by one soldier, it was later captured by another, Johnny, to a roar of approval (Clonan, 2012:65). These incidents not only support Root Aulette, Wittner, and Blakely's claim that men in the military constantly need to affirm their manhood, but it also illustrates the way in which Irish society and members of the Irish Defence Forces itself praise men who place themselves in dangerous or risky situations.

Another interesting aspect of Clonan's book is the way in which it captures Irish men's attitudes towards homosexuality and sexual achievements or conquests. Heterosexuality in the Irish case, as argued by the Men's health report 2008-2013, 'is synonymous with more dominant expressions of masculinity' (Men's health report, 2008-2013, 58). The Men's health report also goes on to argue that 'sexual achievement and conquest have been identified as markers of masculinity, whereby a man is judged by both numbers of sexual 'conquests' and by his sexual performance' (Men's health report, 2008-2013, 58). These aspects of Irish masculinity are very much evident within Clonan's book: when arriving in Lebanon, Clonan and his comrades hear jeers such as; 'I'll be ridin' yer wife this time tomorrow night ye sad bastard ye' (Clonan, 2012:24). It also becomes apparent when Clonan recalls how he received a loud cheer of applause and approval and was later branded 'ye foxy fucker ye' (Clonan, 2012:130) by Corporal Kennedy who overheard him during a telephone conversation at Christmas 'tellin two birds that you loved them' (Clonan, 2012:130).

The Irish soldiers attitudes towards homosexuality also becomes apparent early on when Clonan states, 'All along the coast road we see men walking hand in hand. The troops find this endlessly amusing' (Clonan, 2012:27). The Irish soldiers attitude towards homosexuality is later revealed when Clonan recalls an incident in which he was jeered at after a man called him beautiful: 'Lieutenant Clonan...(...)..He is very beautiful.' There is an enthusiastic round of applause from the troops accompanied by loud whistles' (Clonan, 2012:75). These brief excerpts illustrate the way in which the members of Irish Defence Forces praised and almost awarded comrades who acted like heterosexual promiscuous men; it also supports arguments fronted by Root Aulette, Wittner and Blakely, whom argue: 'The armed forces are an important source of the rules that define proper behaviour for women and men as heterosexual' (Root Aulette, Wittner, Blakely 2009:325). Thus, this supports the fact that service in the defence forces impacts upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity.

Another interesting aspect of Clonan's book is the association he draws between the military and Irish masculinity. This in itself is a powerful indicator of the impact the Irish Defence Forces has upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity. Despite referring to the fact that both men and women work within the Irish Defence Forces – for example, he refers to the fact that at the time he started his PhD there were '123 female personnel in the Irish Defence Forces' (Clonan, 2012:226) – he refers to the soldier in masculine terms: 'the lads'... soldiers 'on their way home to wives, girlfriends, families, kids' (Clonan, 2012:22). In fact, one of the few times he refers to women in the Irish Defence Forces is when he addressed a bus full of men stating, 'Listen up ladies...' (Clonan, 2012:26).

Finally, another interesting aspect of Clonan's book is his motivation behind joining the Irish army. Ireland, unlike other countries, follows a policy of armed neutrality; in such, the option to fight for Ireland, so to speak, is something which is hoped not to come to fruition. Alternatively, the option to partake in UN peacekeeping is something much more tenable. This realization is evident within Clonan's decision to enlist when he states, 'I felt I needed to make a different kind of contribution to Irish society... If service in the military could even save one life... then it would be worth it' (Clonan, 2012:59). Idealist motivations for Irish participation in UN peacekeeping is an argument fronted by Ishizuka, whom argues that Ireland's commitment to UN peacekeeping can best be accredited to 'Ireland's commitment to sustain or enhance the authoritative status of the UN' (Ishzuka, 2004:180).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I set out with the aim to analyse and investigate whether or not the Irish Defence Forces impacted upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity. Through an examination of the diary extracts and accounts of Irish soldiers who served in the Irish Defence Forces, I hoped to answer the following question:

*Does service in the Irish Defence Forces impact upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity?*



# Irish Defence Force Services and Masculine Identity

Written by Robert Morrow

In answering this question, I fronted the following line of argument:

*Service in the Irish Defence Forces, as illustrated through the diary extracts of Irish soldiers, impacts upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity.*

I commenced with illustrating the importance of using the military as a unit of analysis, in doing so referring to previous research which illustrate the strong association between the military and the creation of masculinity. I went onto explore the ways in which the military created soldiers- through removing any sense of individuality, effeminate or 'other' from the individual, replacing it with a group identity. I then went on to explore the ever-present Irish warrior image, best identified at the covert cultured level. I then went on to justify using Ireland as a case study through referring to Ireland's exemplary track record in the field of UN peacekeeping and then illustrated the image of the Irish male as identified in the Men's health reports of 2004 and of 2008-2013 and the COSC, attitudes to domestic abuse in Ireland report of 2008. I then turned to analyse the diary extracts and accounts written by Irish soldiers who served in the Irish Defence Forces.

Through this research I found that involvement within the Irish Defence Forces did impact upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity, with that supporting the line of argument fronted by the paper. The qualities depicted as being possessed by the Irish male as identified by the Men's health reports and the COSC were the same qualities cherished by the defence forces, those being men who are emotionally void, heterosexual and strong. I found that the eroticization of militarism through popular imagery and covert cultured indicators impacts upon the formation of hegemonic masculinity. Such eroticization was evident through the Irish national anthem, the pervasive tale of Cú Chulainn, and the choice of video games and movies favoured by teenage Irish males.

Finally, I found the existence of the impact of the Irish Defence Forces in the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity is evident through the diary extracts and accounts examined. The men in question, Dan Harvey, Martin Malone and Tom Clonan all identify an association between militarism and Irish masculinity, or identify the role of the Irish man as the protector and Irish women and children as being those in need of protection. All three men also identify involvement within the Irish Defence Forces, to borrow Harvey's expression, as an almost 'coming of age' (Harvey, 2001:13), or an aid in their transition to Irish manhood. Other interesting points which emerged across all three books were the association between Irish men and heterosexuality, and the way in which soldiers battled with their emotions, a point which leads us to question: *To what degree can the Irish Defence Forces fully create soldiers and what is the true emotional impact of such?* This is an interesting question for perhaps further analysis.

I also briefly referred to the motivations held by soldiers in their decision to join the Irish army and partake in UN peacekeeping. What emerged was the idea that such involvement was borne out of a want to 'protect' or save lives. This in itself begs another interesting yet pertinent question for further research: *How does the motivation to join a National army differ between countries that do and do not follow policies of armed neutrality?*

In conclusion, this essay can close in stating that the Irish Defence Forces, as illustrated through the diary extracts of Irish soldiers, does impact upon the creation of an Irish hegemonic masculine identity.

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