

## **Michael V O'Mahony**

1. In my family context, the geneses of the influences on my current thinking lie in my interactions with my maternal grandfather, Johnny(Sean) Collins{1878-1965} (the oldest brother of M.C. and father of my mother, Kitty, born 1910) during my time living with him and his(second) wife(and my godmother), Nancy O'Brien Collins(1884-1967) when I was a solicitor's apprentice to my uncle, Liam Collins, in Clonakilty in the 1959-64 period. During these interactions, I became well aware and personally witnessed the regular stream of visitors, both pro and anti-Treaty, to Johnny's house, all to Johnny being simply old friends, My later involvement, in 1990, with Liam in his planning the centenary Celebration of M.C.'s birth at Woodfield saw his entire motivation as 'handing' M.C. back to all Ireland rather than M.C. simply been seen as a partisan figure feted by one political party and excluded by another. His ambition in that regard was successful to the extent that all political and religious sides were represented on the platform that day, including then President Patrick Hillery and Sile DeValera.

2. In the non-family context, influences included my being present at the unveiling by Tom Barry of a memorial to M.C. at Sam's Cross at Easter 1965, attending the annual mass in Dublin Castle to all the dead of the 1916/23 period organised by Ruairi Bruga during the 1970's, as well as my long exposure as a partner to Alexis Fitzgerald, solicitor, who, although from the pro-Treaty side(son-in-law of John A. Costello), could never come to terms with the simplistic emotional 'labelling' of people in that so-called 'traditional' way.

3. When it comes to history, established facts are established facts. However, in the Irish context over several generations opinions masquerading as 'facts' became vehicles for transmitting viewpoints that created 'gods' of some and 'devils' of others but sadly left in its wake families and groups riven by generational anger and bitterness towards other families and groups, and vice versa, giving rise in turn to unhealthy guilt and silence in perceptions of the past. Writers of history are never entirely objective and this has been notably so in addressing the history of early-20th century Ireland.

4. I have in recent times striven to be objective in my reading of history. Perhaps this may be easier for a lawyer who by training and experience learns to view any disputed situation from both sides in order to identify flaws on his or her own side - the Latin maxim being 'audi alteram partem'('hear the other side'). Whether I have so far succeeded or not I will keep trying!