

Filming the Past for a Better Future:
History, Memory, and Irish Cinema, 1988-2007

By

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ABSTRACT

In this study I look at the presentation of history in film and how that presentation/the films assist in the creation of memory. Using theories of collective memory and, what Robert Rosenstone terms, the “new history film,” I look at how each film portrays history, the collective’s role within the film’s production, and what purpose the created memories serve. After providing a brief overview background of Irish film history, I offer an in-depth analysis of four films: *Bloody Sunday* (Paul Greengrass, 2002), *The Magdalene Sisters* (Peter Mullan, 2003), *12 Days in July* (Margo Harkin, 1997), and *Mother Ireland* (Anne Crilly, 1988). In conclusion, I point out that there are a number of uses for the collective memory these films help to create.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Throughout the centuries people have shaped history as a way to remember the past, as an indicator of progress, as a justifier of the present, and as a propaganda tool. Often our view of the past comes through, not rose-colored glasses, but glasses tinted by our present situation. During times of strife and hardship, we glorify past moments of peace and prosperity; conversely, during times of relative well-being, we examine tumultuous or troubling moments. The way in which we remember our history has altered over time, beginning with oral tales, moving to the written word with its often thick academic tomes, and in our twenty-first century society history is again oral as well as visual. Cinema and television have provided mankind with other avenues to explore its past and, since the silents, we have done so.

For many, “historical film” denotes only documentaries. However, this definition is too narrow and does not take into account those films that are fictional accounts of historical events. Film scholar John Mraz, discussing Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s use of both documentary and fiction, notes that “for the director, both are ‘approaches to reality’.”¹ While specifically about *Memories of Underdevelopment*, this description of both film categories is tenable. In this paper, I will discuss both feature length fiction narratives and documentaries, not in hopes of declaring one a

¹ John Mraz. “*Memories of Underdevelopment*: Bourgeois Consciousness/Revolutionary Context.” *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*. Robert A. Rosenstone, ed. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995. 102-114. 108.

superior mode for presenting history – such a distinction would serve no purpose other than to inflame – but instead to discuss how both present history.

By placing both forms within current discourses on filmed presentations of history, especially as relates to the creation of a collective or common memory, I will look at the presentation of history in Irish films of the last decade. In doing so, I hope to answer various questions relating to these works. How do they present history? Do they assist in creating a collective memory of the event or way of life? How? How do these works relate to others, in both Irish and non-Irish cinema? What are the films' relations with the state and/or the Church? Or, similarly how do those bodies affect the films?

To answer these questions I reference various materials that deal with various strands of discourse, as well as the films themselves. In dealing with history on film, not all sources focus specifically on Ireland; however, they provide examples as well as information. The discourse relating to Irish cinema still is relatively small; for a number of reasons to be discussed later, Irish cinema has seen tremendous growth over the last decade. Academia has also seen a growth of Irish studies programs and the appearance of scholarly works on Ireland's cinematic heritage. The number of works looking at that heritage is not large and there has been little written on the presentation of history outside of a few films, such as *Michael Collins* (Neil Jordan, 1996) and *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992). Therefore, this study should help fill at least a small portion of this fertile ground as well as add to the area's growth.

What Do You Mean By That?: Defining Terms

Before continuing, it might be useful to provide explanations of several terms and concepts that will appear throughout this paper. I have thus far used the word “Ireland” a number of times and it may seem straightforward, however in reality it is somewhat ambiguous. Throughout this paper I will be discussing both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Therefore, the term Ireland will designate the whole island; Republic, Free State or State indicate southern Ireland and either Northern Ireland or Ulster the north.

Another term, or in this case phrase, that seems fairly self-evident is “Irish cinema.” How does one define a work as Irish? Does it simply have to have a story set in Ireland or concerning the Irish? If so, what then of the large number of films that meet this criteria but were made entirely by Americans or the British, such as *Far and Away*? Conversely, does the work, no matter the subject, simply need an Irish filmmaker to be considered Irish? Using that criteria, Jim Sheridan’s *Get Rich or Die Tryin’* (2005) about an American drug dealer turned rapper would be Irish (Sheridan’s other works include *My Left Foot* [1989] and *In the Name of the Father* [1993]). Our task becomes even harder when the international aspect of many contemporary films (be it in financing, shooting locations, or talent used) is added into the equation. The film *Michael Collins* was co-produced with American funding, used American actress Julia Roberts, Irish-American actor Aidan Quinn, English actor Alan Rickman, Irish actors Liam Neeson and Stephen Rea, Irish director Neil Jordan, and has an undeniably Irish subject. Is this an Irish film?

Therefore, I use a somewhat fluid definition that attempts to fulfill as many of the “categories” mentioned above. All four films that I discuss in-depth depict Irish subjects and involve either a full or partial Irish cast and crew. With the exception of *The Magdalene Sisters* (Peter Mullan, 2002) each film was also shot in Ireland.

Mapping the Journey: Chapter Survey

In the next chapter, I provide a brief survey of Irish film history, which includes the creation of an indigenous industry and the types of film produced. Here I also discuss the way in which recent Irish cinema has presented history. The remaining chapters will then focus on current depictions of the Troubles² and religion in both feature films and documentaries.

Chapter three contains several sub-sections. First, I give a brief historical overview of the Troubles and how film has portrayed this period. Using such films as *In the Name of the Father* and *Michael Collins*, we look at the stereotypes and themes created and/or used in these presentations. I then present a more specific study of the 2002 feature *Bloody Sunday* (Paul Greengrass), which depicts the events of Sunday, 30 January 1972 when a Derry³ civil rights march turned to disaster, with shots fired and thirteen peaceful marchers killed. An English inquiry into the events cleared the English troops of any guilt; however, persisting questions produced a second inquiry in 1998, which itself sparked this film’s creation.

² This term appears variously as the “Troubles,” the “troubles,” and, in both cases, without quotes. Unless directly quoting or giving a title, I will use the form Troubles. Typically this term denotes Northern Ireland’s sectarian conflict of the, approximately, past 35 years.

³ Known as both Derry and Londonderry, I will use the term Derry to denote this Northern Ireland city.

Following a pattern similar to that used in chapter three, chapter four delves into depictions of the Church.⁴ After an overview of the relation between Church and state in Ireland, I use such works as *Our Boys* (Cathal Black, 1981) to discuss previous presentations of this subject. I then focus specifically on *The Magdalene Sisters*, in which we follow three young women sent to a Magdalene Asylum for their “sins” where, in the manner of Mary Magdalene, they are forced to clean laundry in order to cleanse their souls. Coming on the heels of the American clerical abuse scandals, the 1996 closing of the final Irish Magdalene asylum, and the documentary *Sex in a Cold Climate*, the film presents a strong commentary on the Irish Catholic Church.

While based on true events, both *Bloody Sunday* and *The Magdalene Sisters* are fictionalized accounts. Therefore, chapter five focuses on nonfiction accounts as shown in documentary film. Choosing which documentaries to use was not easy. Availability was a major concern, as many of these works are not available in this country – unless, of course, one is looking for travel or music-based videos. After conversing with Derry-based filmmaker Margo Harkin, I obtained a copy of her work *Twelve Days in July* (1997). The piece looks at the July 1997 confrontation between members of the unionist Orange Order and the nationalist Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition, which ended in rioting and injuries. The other film studied here is *Mother Ireland* (Anne Crilly, 1988), which looks at the image of women in Ireland especially in relation to Nationalism and the Church. Again, availability restricted my choices

⁴ I use Church to indicate the Catholic Church rather than the Church of Ireland.

and led me to use this film even though it is slightly outside my time frame and may not appear to provide the same balance between fiction and nonfiction as does *12 Days*. I show, however, that it provides a balance for both fiction features studied. By utilizing documentaries, I raise several further questions: how do these works compare/contrast to the fiction features, especially regarding memory creation?

Reviewing the Literature

Before diving in, let us step back a moment and discuss the literature that is available. To do so I have grouped my resources so as to mirror the paper's structure: history of Irish cinema, *Bloody Sunday*/the Troubles, *Sisters*/the Church, *12 Days*, and *Mother*. I then conclude with a few general works on history, memory, and film.

Possibly due to Irish cinema's relative "newness," a fair amount of the available literature focuses on its history. Much of the work is general, providing survey-like information and often referencing the same films. Ruth Barton moves beyond the general history in her book *Irish National Cinema*, devoting space to such issues as gender and the heritage film. While obviously related to her earlier article, "From Heritage to History," both pieces are useful in regarding how Irish film, especially recently, has handled the past. Barton argues that the heritage film represents a nostalgic past that never really existed; these films are placed in contrast

to the “Irish historical narratives [that] have dominated contemporary cinema” that typically portray a past “of trauma, which may or may not be overcome.”⁵

When we look at Irish cinematic history, we find that the majority of works (especially until the 1970s) are documentaries. This prevalence is mirrored in the larger number of writings available focusing on documentary films. *The Real Ireland: the Evolution of Ireland in Documentary Film* is both a history of Irish documentary and of Ireland’s representation in documentary film. As the author, Harvey O’Brien, notes, this book only scratches the surface of a so far under studied topic; this fact, however does not diminish the book’s value. O’Brien moves beyond the “milestone works” that are so often discussed, providing a fuller understanding of documentary’s place in the island’s film history. Besides supplying a copious amount of information, O’Brien also includes an extensive and very useful filmography.

Although both pieces are more generalized works that provide important background material, literature specific to the films in question is limited. While most of the literature about *Bloody Sunday* falls into the category of reviews, some goes a little further. Tony Keily’s “*Bloody Sunday* and the British Media” “tr[ies] to examine any journalistic missiles which landed inside the province of cinema”⁶ relating to the film. Interestingly, Keily makes only limited reference to other films depicting the Troubles (mentioning only *In the Name of the Father*), instead using Pontecorvo’s *La*

⁵ Ruth Barton. *Irish National Cinema*. National Cinemas Series. London: Routledge, 2004. 148. Examples: of heritage films, *Into the West* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*; of the latter, “traumatic” history films, *Korea* and *The Magdalene Sisters*.

⁶ Tony Keily. “*Bloody Sunday* and the British Media.” *Film Ireland*. 85 (Feb/Mar 2002): 12-15. 12.

Battaglia di Algeri/The Battle of Algiers and the American war film since World War II as his comparative reference points.

When used in conjunction with works such as Patrick Hayes and Jim Campbell's *Bloody Sunday: Trauma, Pain and Politics*, Keily provides useful information regarding the film's reception and use in creating memory. Although Hayes and Campbell's book does not deal specifically with film, it provides invaluable information on the community/collective impacted by Bloody Sunday. From their interviews with relatives of those killed, they provide an "inside look" into the events impact. This information, in turn, is useful when looking at the place of *Bloody Sunday* in memory making and the collective within that process.

While the Saville Inquiry plays a role in the collective Hayes and Campbell study it also directly influenced the creation of *Bloody Sunday*. This second Bloody Sunday inquiry has set up a website (www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org) that provides important primary source material. While the site presents information without analysis or discussion, this does not lessen the relevance of what is presented. Not only is there background about both inquiries, there are also direct transcripts of witness testimony/statements, inquiry rulings, and daily proceedings. The first category is especially significant, as it also includes copies of testimonies from the original inquiries; for example, if Mr. X testified during the original and the current inquiry, both testimonies are presented. There are a number of ways this information is applicable to this project, but especially because "characters" portrayed in *Bloody*

Sunday are among the witnesses whose statements are available. Therefore, when questioning the events portrayed I can draw upon first-person accounts.

Unfortunately, I have not found such a source of primary material for the second feature film examined later in this paper. Again, most of the literature discussing *The Magdalene Sisters* falls into the review category but there are some exceptions. Such is the case with “Sisters of No Mercy,” an interview with the film’s director, Peter Mullan. Mullan speaks directly to some of the points the film raises, as well as to the film’s origination and production, the intention behind its creation, and its relation with the Church (beyond mere subject matter).

As with *Bloody Sunday* articles about the film provide only part of the picture. In order to provide a fuller picture of both the history and the reality portrayed on-screen one must consult literature such as Frances Finnegan’s *Do Penance or Perish: Magdalen Asylums in Ireland*. Beginning with the background of their inception, Finnegan provides a history of the Asylums, relying heavily on Asylum records. Finnegan sticks purely to the history, making no mention of modern presentations of the institutions, but she does provide a window onto both life inside and the society surrounding the Asylums and the place/power of the Church within that society.

If there were few articles beyond reviews for the two features, there were even less of either type related to *12 Days in July*. One of these, an interview with filmmaker Margo Harkin, provided “behind-the-scenes” information. Harkin discusses getting both sides of the conflict to trust/accept the film crew and getting a

finished product out quickly. The piece does not, however, provide any technical information about the film's production nor does it provide any background for its production; in other words, other than assuming that the previous year's actions spurred production, there is no discussion of this aspect.

Background information about the conflict and the parade itself helps to round out the picture the interview and the film itself create. Through the Conflict Archive on the Internet: Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland website, a trove of information is available concerning a wide range of topics, events, issues, and people; while some of the information is provided in histories written by various scholars, the site also provides links to, and in some cases full text of, primary source material. The background information contained within the Issues: Parades portion helps supplement that found on other, less impartial sites (such as that of the Portadown District LOL No. 1).

While there is very little information (beyond screening announcements) regarding *Mother Ireland*, there are articles such as Anne Crilly's "Putting a Muzzle on Dear Mother Ireland," which provides information regarding the 1988 Broadcasting Ban's impact on the film. Although generally a step by step-type article tracking the film from completion to being sent from C4 to the IBA and that body's decision on the same day as the ban, one is conscious throughout that Crilly is the filmmaker and that she has a vested interest in the original version being shown.

Other pieces look at the ban more generally. David Owens and Sammy Burns' article "Living with a six year silence" is one such work. Published when the ban was

lifted, the piece provides information regarding the ban's birth, troubled existence, and demise.

I would like to close this brief review with a look at literature that addresses the topics of history, memory, and film, yet does not look specifically at Irish cinema. Of use are two volumes that focus on history and film. Robert Rosenstone's *Visions of the Past: the Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* is a collection of Rosenstone's articles that "chart [his] encounter...with motion pictures – specifically with films that are consciously historical in their subject matter, films that attempt to represent the past."⁷ More than contribute specific information, I found this book useful as an example of how others have looked at the topic. Also of use is *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, which Rosenstone edited. A collection of essays focusing on a variety of films from around the world, the book also provided an example of writings on historical films. Two articles in particular are of value to my research. In "*Hiroshima Mon Amour*: You must remember this," Michael S. Roth discusses memory and the past in *Hiroshima*. His arguments about trauma, remembering, and history are relevant to Irish cinema since, as Ruth Barton notes, many films of the last decades have presented the past as trauma. Also, in "*Memories of Underdevelopment*: Bourgeois Consciousness/Revolutionary Context," John Mraz includes director Alea's comments regarding fiction and documentary as approaches to history, which are applicable in my use of both forms for this paper.

⁷ Robert A. Rosenstone. *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1995. 1.

Similarly, John Storey's "The Articulation of Memory and Desire: From Vietnam to the War in the Persian Gulf" does not speak to Irish cinema in particular; however, it does provide useful information on the concept of collective memory. Before beginning his discussion of Vietnam and the Persian Gulf, Storey looks at French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' ideas and provides a succinct, accessible breakdown of them.

History has often been the subject of Irish cinema, which may not be surprising due to its wealth of documentaries. Only within the last several decades has Irish cinema begun to come into its own, with a great swell in production during the early to mid-1990s. Many of the fiction films made during and since this swell have explored the past, which previously was relegated to the documentary realm. By tackling history, memory, the Church, and the state, the films discussed present facets of Ireland that are both historically rich and provocative.

CHAPTER 2: AN OVERVIEW OF IRISH FILM HISTORY

Several hundred kilometers off the coast of England lies a small island that, for much of film's history, has been but a blip on the world's cinema screen. Since the advent of film occurred almost simultaneously with Ireland's fight for independence from Britain, the tumultuous events of the day overshadowed film's importance. However, this does not mean that Ireland has been totally devoid of all cinematic production. For decades nonfiction films have been produced, helping to sustain indigenous production; and, within approximately the last thirty years, fiction filmmaking has begun to emerge from under the shadows of outside filmmakers.

That outsiders filmed the first screen images of Ireland sets the stage for a decades-long struggle to create an indigenous film industry. In 1896, Alexandre Promo, working for Lumière, traveled to Ireland to show his wares. As in other countries, Promo shot in Ireland and then used his footage to demonstrate the innovation of film. Unlike later images, however, Promo did not try to portray the country "as a rural utopia (or dystopia), or construct any particular character or identity which might be termed 'Irish'."⁸ Even if his non-idyllic images did not set precedence for the decades to come, Promo did start a flow of filmmakers into the country. In fact, Americans ran two significant production companies in 1910s and 1920s Ireland.

⁸ Harvey O'Brien. *The Real Ireland: the Evolution of Ireland in Documentary Film*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004. 24.

It is not hard to see why American filmmakers might look to Ireland as a location: with a large Irish immigrant population films could have a built-in audience. That was one reason why, in 1910, the Kalem Company sent Irish-Canadian director Sidney Olcott and his screenwriter/collaborator Gene Gauntier to Ireland. They set up base in Beauford, County Kerry and over four years the pair moved around the country filming approximately 29 films.⁹ These films typically were historical melodramas in which Olcott relied on location shooting for a “guarant[ee] of authenticity.”¹⁰ However, Louisa Burns-Bisogno notes that Olcott’s films began to change tenor as he and Gauntier “became more aware of the Irish political situation...[and] as hope for a peaceful settlement to the issue of Irish independence dwindled.”¹¹ The films dealt more with republican ideas, ultimately leading to pressure from the British censors and the banning of *Bold Emmet: Ireland’s Martyr* (1915). Olcott went back to America in 1914 but returned to Ireland in 1930 after his retirement.

Kalem was not the only company with roots across the ocean. In March 1916, Irish-American lawyer James Mark Sullivan began the Film Company of Ireland (FCOI). When the FCOI opened it drew its actors from the Nationalist Abbey Theatre and, as they had no studio, production was limited to summer days when light permitted. Like Olcott’s work, many of the FCOI productions were set in County

⁹ Ruth Barton. *Irish National Cinema*. National Cinemas Series. London: Routledge, 2004. 20. Louisa Burns-Bisogno notes that, over a span of less than three months, Olcott produced over twelve reels. I did not find this statistic in other sources, but there was not much about the Kalem Company so I do not feel I can dismiss this number. Louisa Burns-Bisogno. *Censoring Irish Nationalism*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1997. 21.

¹⁰ Barton. 20

¹¹ Burns-Bisogno. 24.

Kerry and tended towards analyzing the present via the past.¹² The FCOI closed shop in 1920, an action Burns-Bisogno deems a death knell for an Irish national film industry; “henceforth, films about the Irish for the Irish would be produced predominantly by British and American filmmakers.”¹³

None of this is to say that there was no indigenous film production occurring; however, that production was limited due to lack of financing and mainly consisted of nonfiction works, which will be looked at later. After the 1922 partition and the ensuing civil war indigenous filmmakers often “focused on two themes, the heroics of the War of Independence and the virtues of a simple rural life. In doing so, they were merely reflecting the ideological climate of the time, specifically the tenets of cultural nationalism.”¹⁴ As Ruth Barton points out, popular acceptance of the new state’s ideology apparently assisted these works’ success.¹⁵ Even the comedies produced tended to uphold the Free State’s ideological tenets, especially regarding rural life. Such an example can be found in Emmett Moore’s *Sweet Inniscara* (1934) a rural tale that is credited as the first all-Irish talkie.¹⁶

With the advent of World War II the already small number of indigenous features shrank even more. Most productions were shorts made by the Irish Film Society, a group of film enthusiasts that began in 1936.¹⁷ In 1945, the “industry” got

¹² Barton. 23 and 31.

¹³ Burns-Bisogno. 38.

¹⁴ Barton. 41. The Irish War of Independence lasted from 1917-1921 and the Civil War from 1922-1923.

¹⁵ Ibid. 42.

¹⁶ Ibid. 41.

¹⁷ Both the Irish Film Society in the Free State and the Belfast Film Society “screened foreign films, organised lectures, published reviews and articles, tried to promote education through film and had

something of a boost when the government provided a £2000 grant for the new National Film Institute (NFI), which was run by laypeople for the Catholic hierarchy. As Barton points out, when considering the Church's position on censorship, "paradoxically, much of the credit for the emergence of a film culture in [Free State] Ireland during this period must go to the [sic] educated, middle-class clergy."¹⁸ The NFI funded production of educational films and provided courses and publications for members. In this way, they foreshadowed other state sponsored bodies in later decades.

A number of people throughout the 1930s and 40s argued for Irish film studios; in the 1950s the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Sean Lemass, also promoted the idea. Finally, the 1958 opening of Ardmore Studios in Bray, County Wicklow, realized that dream.¹⁹ However, commercialism and profit-making drove the Studio's founding, rather than artistic or cultural notions, leading to financial problems; what had seemed a promising opportunity for indigenous filmmakers quickly became a "hireable facility monopolised by British and U.S. studios as a production space."²⁰ After years of debt problems and bankruptcy, the State bought Ardmore in 1973 but could not resuscitate it, closing in 1982. Since then, Ardmore

members involved in making short films." Lance Pettit. *Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000). 72.

¹⁸ Barton. 66.

¹⁹ Besides Lemass, two of the main characters behind Ardmore's founding were Emmet Dalton and Louis Elliman, both of whom later were behind the company Dublin Film & Television Production, Inc. Ibid. 78.

²⁰ Pettit. 38.

has passed through various hands and has relied on foreign productions to stay afloat.²¹

By the mid-1960s, a backlash to Ardmore's commercially driven model had begun. This backlash, which benefited from a relatively good economic situation, had several goals, including a need for alternative state support and the creation of a more critical, artistically driven cinema. Out of this reaction grew the Arts Council of Ireland, which although "empowered" in 1973 did not begin to provide serious support for filmmakers until 1977. The first feature film funded by the Arts Council was Bob Quinn's Irish-language *Poitín* (1978).²²

The backlash against Ardmore typically found voice in a new generation of filmmakers. This group "began to explore the contradictions of a changing society in a form of culture (the fiction film) in which there was little in the way of a national tradition or precedence."²³ What precedence existed, such as "Irish" themes and images and the manner of presenting history, did not concern these filmmakers. Instead, their films were concerned with "questioning the 'unofficial' dissemination of the [historical discourses], of foregrounding and problematising the narration of the past."²⁴ This mid-1970s to late-80s period is, in reflection, a "golden age" of sorts noted not only for its political engagement but also for its experimentation. At the time, Irish filmmakers were not in control of the distribution and exhibition of their

²¹ Barton. 105. Ardmore based productions have included: *The Lion in Winter* (1968), *Braveheart* (1995), and *King Arthur* (2004). "Ardmore Studios Ireland." 2002, Ardmore Studios. 1 Dec 2005. Available: www.ardmore.ie.

²² Pettit. 38. Significantly, this film attempts to demystify the romantic images of Western Ireland that are found in works of the Literary Revival period and in English and American films. Pettit. 103.

²³ Martin McLoone. *Irish Film: the Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema*. London: BFI, 2000. 131.

²⁴ Barton. 93.

work and often were in competition for the meager available funding.²⁵ Due to these restraints, filmmakers often worked in each other's films, which added to the commitment to experimentation. Even as films in the later 1980s used more conventional techniques there was still a high level of stylization.²⁶

Not only did the 1980s witness a new wave of filmmakers coming out of Irish art schools and television, the decade also saw a growth of "support services." Established in 1981, the Irish Film Board (IFB) was commissioned to "have regard to the need for the expression of national culture through the medium of film-making."²⁷ Before closing in 1987, the IFB helped finance documentaries and feature films. The "inadequate returns" it received from these films, a mere 8.5 percent "from the £IR1.247m it invested in feature films," forced the Board to close.²⁸

About the time the IFB closed, the Northern Ireland Film Council (NIFC) formed. Indigenous filmmaking in Ulster was very limited, with the area ignored by the British Film Institute and production mostly left to independent groups such as the Derry Film and Video Collective. In 1988, the Independent Film, Video, and Photography Association sponsored a study of the Ulster audio-visual infrastructure as it related to those of the Republic and Britain. The NIFC emerged from that report to "encourage the development of film, television and video in the region."²⁹ They

²⁵ Ibid. 87. This was especially the case from approximately 1978-1988 when the growth economy of the 1960s went into recession. McLoone. 87.

²⁶ Barton. 88.

²⁷ Pettit. 38-39.

²⁸ Barton. 104. As with the Arts Council of Ireland, the IFB was concerned mainly with film in the Republic.

²⁹ Pettit. 40.

received some state funding and, in 1992, another report suggested film receive more support via a revamped North Ireland Arts Council.³⁰

That same year the Republic opened the Irish Film Center and the Irish National Film Archive. Now “the country’s film deposits could be preserved, catalogued and studied.”³¹ Neil Jordan’s *The Crying Game* (1992) was one of the IFC’s opening films and its international success, along with that of Jim Sheridan’s *My Left Foot* (1989) and filmmaker’s campaigns, helped lead to the 1993 reestablishing of the Irish Film Board. With a new location (Galway rather than Dublin) and an annual £IR1m budget, the IFB no longer only supported productions via loans, but also by “act[ing] as the co-ordinating body for the publicly funded infrastructure of the Irish industry.”³² Therefore the Board has a role in supporting publicity, distribution, and training and “supports the financing of feature films, short films animation and, until 2003, some television production.”³³ With this increased support has come growth. For example, during the 1980s IFB funded eighteen features while in 2002 the new IFB funded approximately 100 features plus several hundred documentaries and short films.³⁴

By 1998 a four-part film infrastructure was set: with the IFB focused on indigenous productions, the Film Institute focused on archival and educational aspects, Screen Training Ireland “co-ordinat[ing] all aspects of training”, and the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid. 42.

³² Barton. 105.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Screen Commission focused on promoting Irish locations.³⁵ Both the foreign and indigenous film communities have benefited from a system of tax relief for film investment that not only draws foreign productions but also has provided the indigenous community with a source of funding that comes without artistic control.³⁶

However, we must ask what price has Irish film paid for its newfound support? Irish-made films must now “occupy a more obviously commercial space than their predecessors,”³⁷ the 1970s and 80s films. Many “local Irish films tend to be tagged with the ‘arthouse’ label and so, in a country dominated by multiplex cinemas committed to Hollywood fare (Ireland has three arthouse cinemas, in Dublin, Cork and Belfast), audiences often do not have an opportunity to see these films other than on television.”³⁸ Those films that have done well in Irish theatres have been larger budget, internationally backed productions such as Jim Sheridan’s *In the Name of the Father* (1993), Neil Jordan’s *Michael Collins* (1996), and Alan Parker’s *Angela’s Ashes* (1999).³⁹ This type of production only increases the difficulty of defining Irish cinema as apart from other national cinemas. However, not all films made in Ireland have the same difficulty; such is the case with the island’s documentary production, to which we will now turn.

Reel Life: a survey of nonfiction film history

³⁵ McLoone. 115.

³⁶ Barton. 106.

³⁷ McLoone. 166.

³⁸ Barton. 108.

³⁹ Sheridan’s film had Irish, British, and American backing and grossed £1R2.4m (\$3.3m) at the box office. Jordan’s had American financing, grossed £1R4.0m (\$5.6m) at the box office, and remains the highest-grossing, national film in Ireland. Parker’s film had British and American backing and grossed £1R2,205,593. Pettit, 286 and Barton, 191-192.

Since the silent era, much of Ireland's cinematic output has been nonfiction. While the island struggled to create and sustain an industry infrastructure, the nonfiction trend arguably helped sustain indigenous production from the 1930s to the 1970s. Although foreign productions and filmmakers still had a role in this type of production indigenous nonfiction films had a lengthier existence.

The first Irish-made nonfiction works came in the form of newsreels. In 1917 Norman Whitten began the first indigenous newsreel service. The service did not have a long life, lasting only until 1919, but it did produce the series *Irish Events*. Using the tagline “‘Britain for the British, Irish Events for the Irish’...Whitten was quick to take advantage of a general desire for indigenous Irish news and, in particular, a sympathetic portrayal of the aftermath of the Easter Rising of 1916;” British reels tended to show these and subsequent events as an assault on both propriety and property.⁴⁰ Whitten's service came to an abrupt end with the production of a compilation reel that depicted Sinn Féin⁴¹ activists and the nationalist struggle. The British authorities banned *The Sinn Féin Review*, labeling it as seditious.⁴² Although Whitten continued to shoot newsreel footage, *Irish Events* had come to an end.

⁴⁰ Barton. 15.

⁴¹ Sinn Féin (Ourselves Alone) was begun by Arthur Griffith in the 1900s first decade. Griffith based his policy on “national self-reliance,” rejecting physical violence and advocating a dual monarchy. In the following decades, members supported various aspects of Griffith's original ideas, with the more extreme groups (such as the IRA) becoming more well known. Tim Pat Coogan. *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). 26-27.

⁴² Pettit. 32.

Due to the Civil War following Ireland's partition, the next major marker in Irish documentary history did not occur until 1934, but as with the Kalem Company and the FCOI, it came from an "outsider." Robert Flaherty was already known for such work as *Nanook of the North* (1922). In 1932 he turned his lens on the Aran Islands in Galway Bay off Ireland's western coast; there he told the story of a fishing family that battles and triumphs over the sea. With a budget of £30-40,000 over two years, *The Man of Aran* was the largest production yet done in Ireland. As has been widely discussed regarding *Nanook*, Flaherty created a story for *Man* "reconstruct[ing] a historical world which no longer (or perhaps never) existed, altering the profilmic until it fit the director's vision of what it should be like to live on an island."⁴³ When the wholly foreign venture premiered in May 1934, it was well received by the de Valera government, which is unsurprising as it greatly promoted a "traditional" image of Ireland. As O'Brien and others have noted "*The Man of Aran* might as well have been commissioned by Éamon de Valera, so close did it come to an idealised image of 'mythic humanism'."⁴⁴

Not long after *The Man of Aran* premiered, rumblings of trouble and war began to spread across Europe. Although Northern Ireland, as a part of Britain, entered the War, the Republic did not, maintaining neutrality for the duration. This decision echoed a general inward turn by the new government, which, as noted above, emphasized rural, traditional Ireland. While on the continent the Allies joined to fight

⁴³ O'Brien. 47.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 49.

the evils of fascism, a fight against the possible evils of motion pictures began in the Free State.

In 1943, the National Film Institute of Ireland (or NFI) was established under the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. John Charles McQuaid. “With the specific aim of harnessing the power of the cinema for the good of the Irish people as they saw it,” the NFI began with a £2000 governmental grant to form a “library of ‘suitable’ educational films, including films in Irish.”⁴⁵ The NFI also produced films, often commissions from the government that, therefore, would assuredly depict conventional expectations.

With the 1946 Brendan Stafford documentary *A Nation Once Again*, which was NFI sponsored and received a £3000 government investment, the government gave the “first significant indication of official interest in the production of documentary films.”⁴⁶ So began a characteristic of most post-World War II productions: government sponsorship. These films were often “didactic and, in one way or another, nation-building.”⁴⁷

That is not to say that every documentary made at the time emerged from the NFI or had the government’s backing. There were works, such as *Our Country* (Liam O’Leary, 1948), which took another path. Sponsored by the political party Clann na

⁴⁵ Ibid. 61-62. This latter point again mirrors the State’s inward turn, which included a push to increase the usage of that language. The NFI followed directly from the 1936 papal encyclical *Vigilanti Cura*, which O’Brien notes literally means “‘with vigilant care’ but [was] subtitled ‘on motion pictures’ in English.” Pope Pius XI called for the cinema’s use as an “influence for healthy upbringing and education, and not for the ruin and perdition of souls.” 99 and 61.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 63.

⁴⁷ Jerry White. “Translating Ireland Back into Éire: Gael Linn and Film Making in Irish.” *Éire-Ireland* 38:1-2 (Spring-Summer 2003): 106-122. 108.

Poblachta, *Our Country* was the Republic's first independently produced political documentary.⁴⁸ It was “an aggressive attempt to debunk the official mythology of the state” and it is significant in this history for “its conception of the role and function of the documentary in modern Ireland,” which “could be used to present a political position which would be then accepted not as rhetoric, but as fact.”⁴⁹ Even though the State's mythology had been only marginally explicit in earlier films, it hung over those productions, however this really can be of no surprise since the films were sponsored by and made for the government.

This “official mythology” even hung over films that were without direct governmental sponsorship. During the 1950s and early 1960s the independent group Gael-Linn produced several important pieces that influenced subsequent productions for years. Gael-Linn formed out of the Comhdáil Náisiúnta na Gaelige (the National Gaelic Congress) in 1953 “with the aim of using modern media to promote and expand the use of the Irish language.”⁵⁰ Although the body produced several short pieces gathered under the title *Amherc Éireann* (A View of Ireland), its 1959 *Mise Éire* (I Am Ireland) and 1961 *Saoirse?* (Freedom?) had the greater impact.

Feature length, both works are historical documentaries that, using photographs and documentary footage from 1895-1922, present the history of Ireland. *Mise Éire* ends with the events of 1919 while *Saoirse?* details events from 1919-1923 with the outbreak of civil war; there was to have been a third film dealing with the

⁴⁸ O'Brien. 57 and 67.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 67 and 71.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 104.

civil war and its results, but it was never made. Both pieces were a form of “romantic nationalism” that was unquestioned at the time and “construct[ed] Irish history as a steady progression toward liberation through anticolonial struggle.”⁵¹ While both films presented the past, they did so without investigation. Subsequent documentaries followed this method of historical representation “where problematic political questions were reduced to the level of mythology.”⁵²

As is not surprising, due to Gael-Linn’s original aim, both *Mise Éire* and *Saoirse?* were produced in the Irish language. What is somewhat surprising is that they are still available only in that language; there are no subtitled versions. White has argued that this is somewhat elitist and is “cultural narcissism;” due to the small size of the Gaeltacht, or Irish speaking community, the films have a limited audience and exclude anyone wishing to study them who does not have a good working knowledge of the language.

The Gael-Linn productions’ superficial, simplistic presentation of their subjects was echoed in early television productions. Because of the importance of television as a venue for documentaries, a brief picture of television in the Republic should be sketched. In 1960, the Broadcasting Authority Act created a semi-state body that was the basis of Republic television. A year later, the public service broadcaster Telefís Éireann went on air; it “was required to contribute to the well

⁵¹ White. 116. It should be noted, for sake of clarity, that both works treated Northern Ireland as if it had no separate history of its own. Being unable to view the films, I am unsure how this could be done; how, for instance, would they have looked at post-partition Ireland? Surely this division would have to indicate some divergence of histories.

⁵² Harvey O’Brien. “Projecting the Past: historical documentary in Ireland.” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*. 20 (2000): 335-350. 342.

being of the citizenry...[and] was expected to foster and develop national culture and public discourse.”⁵³ Six years later, Telefís Éireann combined with its radio equivalent, Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ). During the station’s first decade most of the nonfiction productions aired were in-house works and any independent productions were usually the result of “direct orders from the state.”⁵⁴

The state’s presence in the realm of television has played a part in what has and has not been aired. For example, many did not see Peter Lennon’s *Rocky Road to Dublin* (1968) when it originally was released, in part because it did not have a wide distribution but also because it was not aired on television.⁵⁵ *Rocky Road* presented a critique of “the state of then contemporary Ireland” and included “a substantial profile of the state of the church in Ireland.”⁵⁶ Not only does the film argue that the “so-called Irish Republic” has not moved forward because of continuing to follow “outdated political and ideological values,” it also claims that the 1916 Rising “was an attempt at socialist revolution which failed and collapsed into bourgeois self-glorification.”⁵⁷ It is not hard to see why the piece was not well received by either the government or the Church.

With Lennon’s work we begin to see an echo of the new filmmaking occurring in fiction films that was discussed earlier. Another example of these newer ideas is found in *Atlantean* (1984). Over three installments, Bob Quinn explores

⁵³ O’Brien. *Real Ireland*. 142.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 156.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 176 and 178. O’Brien notes that distribution probably was affected by “the church’s (unspoken) disapproval [which] was well known.” 176.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 170.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 170 and 172.

connections between Ireland and North Africa, arguing that rather than being Celtic in origin, the Irish really are descended from an Atlantic-faring, North African people. The film problematizes traditional views of Irish history and society; this demonstrates a break with the earlier Gael-Linn tendency of simplifying rather than interrogating issues.

Other, more recent filmmakers have furthered the use of documentary film to investigate important issues. In *Mother Ireland* (1988) Anne Crilly looks at the relationship between nationalism and feminism in Ireland. Others have taken up the standard of even more controversial subjects. Fintan Connolly and Hillary Dully produced *50,000 Secret Journeys* (1994), one of the few films to look at the legal battle over abortion in Ireland. The next year, Donald Taylor Black produced *Hearts and Minds* about the second divorce referendum.

Although such works as *Journeys* approach volatile issues, a large majority of contemporary documentarists do not, due to conservative attitudes toward freedom of expression. Even though the Republic's Constitution guarantees this freedom "it is qualified by ill-defined moral precepts typical of the authorities responsible for its drafting in 1937 – the Catholic Church and the Government of Éamon de Valera."⁵⁸ O'Brien notes that "the [Free State] Irish documentarist is quiet and cautious when it comes to questions of social and political change, working as they must in the shadow of the Constitution and the patrimony of the State."⁵⁹ While this undoubtedly speaks to decades of censorship, which will be looked at in greater detail momentarily, one

⁵⁸ Harvey O'Brien. "Documenting Ireland." *Cineaste*. 24.2-3 (1999): 64-69. 64.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 69.

must ask how this differs from earlier works such as those by the NFI and Gael-Linn? These films did not question and even supported the State; it would seem that perhaps O'Brien's current quiet documentarist simply carries on in a tradition established decades ago.

Trimming the Green: Film Censorship in Ireland

The censorship under which Irish cinema operates is neither new nor confined to authorities in Ireland. Film censorship in Ireland stretches back to the medium's early years and has given Britain a role in the island's cinema both before and after partition.

The "major motivation behind British cinema censorship in Ireland was, from the earliest, containment of the rising tide of Irish nationalism."⁶⁰ As early as 1909, with the Cinematographer's Act, Britain required that all theatres be licensed. However, it was the 1916 Rising that spurred more extreme actions. After the Rising, the British authorities introduced an entertainment tax and imposed a curfew, causing theatres to have to close early. Britain had realized cinema's propagandistic possibilities and felt these actions would discourage attendance. They also rationalized their actions in a May, 1916 *Bioscope* report that noted "that the people were 'not too keen on pictures at the moment'."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Burns-Bisogno. 12.

⁶¹ Ibid. 31. Had the public been "keen on the pictures at the moment" it would not have been hard for them to find a place to view those pictures; as Pettit points out, by 1916, there were 150 cinemas and halls showing films, including thirty in both Dublin and Belfast. Pettit. 32.

The Church also played a large role in censoring within the Free State. This is not surprising considering the close ties between the Church and State; the State founders even included the Catholic Church in their new Constitution. The Church was wary of film because of the content of Anglo and American films and because of “the opportunities for unsupervised social activities between the sexes” that cinema’s afforded.⁶² With the 1923 Censorship of Films Act came the Irish Film Censor’s Office (IFCO), which, especially during its first approximately thirty years, upheld the Church’s moral ideas. In fact, the first censor, James Montgomery, “quite happily stated that he knew little about films, but ‘took the Ten Commandments as his guide’.”⁶³

The cinema became a target for more than just its dubious influence on morality. Some, following the ideas of Adorno and Horkheimer, saw cinema as the culture industry’s worst extreme. Others saw cinema in a more specifically Free State light. To these people it was an “insidious tool of British imperialist propaganda.”⁶⁴ Although Republicans would pressure the censor to act against these “propaganda” films, which included newsreels, groups simply would go into Belfast to see the films. One case in point occurred in 1941. Due to the Republic’s neutrality, then censor Richard Hayes had the power to censor “wartime propaganda,” either for or against the war. Therefore he banned Charlie Chaplin’s *The Great Dictator*; when

⁶² Ibid. 33. In 1916, audiences generally were working class, which led to class tensions with the growing middle class and conflicts between popular tastes and state and church approved films, a conflict that later influenced what was and was not censored.

⁶³ Quoted in Barton. 36.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 39. This position is particularly ironic when held in contrast to the British notion of film as nationalist/republican propaganda.

special trains were scheduled to take audiences to Belfast for screenings, Hayes went so far as to ban advertisements for the Belfast screenings in southern newspapers.⁶⁵ Some even blamed cinema for emigration, claiming that it lured people to places like America.

While each of these arguments may seem somewhat outdated, they, especially the latter two, have understandable roots. Having just gained at least partial independence after centuries of domination, the Republic felt it needed to be on its guard against re-envelopment into the British realm. This was especially true since Northern Ireland was still under British control. The last argument, that cinema affected emigration, is also understandable as, since the famine, Ireland had seen a steady stream of people leave its shores. Only in the last decade has this outflow begun to reverse, with immigration rising and more people choosing to stay.

By the late 1950s, the strict moral censorship that Montgomery instituted started to lessen. The period from 1956-1972 was a transitional one; the censors tried to follow the example that the previous three censors had set but this increased the distance between their actions and contemporary culture. There were several reasons for this easing up. With the increased presence of television, the public had access to international programs, the regulation of which did not fall under the censor's duties. Also, as part of the Second Vatican Council, the Church declared that "individuals

⁶⁵ Ibid. 40.

must take responsibility for their own actions.”⁶⁶ Therefore one’s choices could no longer be blamed on a second party (in this case film).

Also during this time period, the government passed an amendment to the 1923 Censorship of Films Act. The 1970 amendment granted filmmakers the right to resubmit those films banned before 1965; any future films that were banned could also be resubmitted after seven years. Due to vague criteria and subsequent inconsistencies, many resubmitted previously banned films were passed the second time around. An example of this is *Monty Python’s Life of Brian*, which was banned in 1980 but passed when resubmitted in 1987.⁶⁷

Following the 1972 thaw, the censors began to be men who had worked in film and related areas and who, generally, were more progressive than their predecessors. Since 1986, the IFCO has moved away from more repressive censorship to classifying films on an age-related basis.⁶⁸ Under the eighth censor, Sheamus Smith (1986-2003), censoring by cutting virtually stopped.⁶⁹ Up to that point, as in the early days of American film censorship, censors simply could cut out any offensive portion rather than ban the film in its entirety. At times, especially in film’s early years, the censor could/would simply recut the narrative. *Casablanca* is an example of a “remade” film; originally banned under the Republic’s neutrality

⁶⁶ Quoted in Burns-Bisogno. 120.

⁶⁷ Kevin Rockett. *History of Film Censorship*. Irish Film Censor’s Office. 28 Oct 2005. <<http://www.ifco.ie/ifco/ifcweb.nsf/web/history?opendocument&type=graphic>>. 5. Although *Life of Brian* passed upon resubmission, it still received an over-18 limitation.

⁶⁸ Similar to the American rating system, this age-based method includes six categories: G (general audiences), PG (parental guidance), 12A (ages 12 and above and younger with a parent), 15A (ages 15 and above and younger with a parent), 16 (16 and above, no one younger), and 18 (18 and above and no one younger). *Film Classification*. Irish Film Censor’s Office. 3 Dec 2005. <<http://www.ifco.ie/ifco/ifcweb.nsf/web/classcatintro?opendocument&type=graphic>>.

⁶⁹ Rockett. 1 and 5.

restrictions, when the film was allowed it was cut so that there was no extramarital relationship between Ilsa and Rick.⁷⁰

When cutting or banning a film, there were a number of actions for which the censor watched. Various relationship issues could be banned such as: explicit references to intimacy or representations of sex; divorce, which was constitutionally prohibited; and birth control, miscarriages, abortion and childbirth were forbidden while pregnancy was treated with a certain amount of caution.⁷¹ Dancing was banned by early censors not only for the dancing itself, but also because often “they [the scenes] were an excuse to feature erotic displays of female nudity or ‘semi-nudity’.”⁷² Religious representations were monitored and any negative fictional or real religious theme would be cut. Originally banned language included words like “virgin” and “jeepers creepers”; although this aspect of censorship has changed with the standards of the day, it is still the basis of some censorship, especially that language deemed to be blasphemous, such as the use of “Jesus” or “Jesus Christ”. Similarly, violence continues to be an issue. At first the censor cut violence if it “extended beyond the basic narrative demands” of the film; however, this definition became more problematic with horror films, increasingly gratuitous violence, and “the new cinema of spectacle.”⁷³

Both the British and Free State Irish authorities closely monitored violence relating to the Troubles. Following the 1969 unrest in the Bogside area of Derry

⁷⁰ Ibid. 4.

⁷¹ An example of divorce-based censorship occurred when the film *I Want a Divorce* (1940) was retitled *The Tragedy of Divorce*. Ibid. 2.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. 3-4.

“authorities at the BBC and RTÉ tightened internal controls lest the destabilizing images further exacerbate[d] the tense situation and [led] to direct government intervention of the national broadcast services.”⁷⁴ In the early 1970s, the Free State clamped down further on documentary and news images of Northern violence. However, the Republic’s Irish Broadcast Authority did not include the RTÉ drama department in the “clamp down,” which left that portion of production freer to depict the Troubles.⁷⁵

The British government again tightened its grasp on the media when in late 1988 Home Secretary Douglas Hurd announced new two-pronged censorship legislation. First, it included “the direct broadcast of any spoken words by anyone who represents or purports to represent certain organizations if that person is seen or heard in the broadcast,” these groups included the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).⁷⁶ Secondly, the ban included anyone, seen or heard, whose “words, ‘support or solicit or invite support’ for one of the listed organizations.”⁷⁷ Actions such as these would greatly affect the presentation of history or, as Information on Ireland’s Liz Curtis notes “by censoring the present like

⁷⁴ Burns-Bisogno. 146.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 148.

⁷⁶ The main Republican paramilitary group, the IRA’s central aim is an end to British rule and the reunification of Ireland. Similarly, the UVF is a Loyalist paramilitary group that opposes reunification. Both groups are well known to use extreme violence; both sides have carried out numerous lethal attacks and assassinations. "CAIN Web Service (Conflict Archive on the Internet): Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968 to the Present)." University of Ulster and ARK (Northern Ireland Social and Political Archive). 2005-2006. Available: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/index.html>.

⁷⁷ Don Christopher. “The Government Ban on Terrorist Statements on Radio and Television.” (Letter to Producers: Channel Four Television, 24 Oct 1988).

this they are in fact affecting how people in the future will see this particular part of the past.”⁷⁸

While Northern Ireland felt the weight of British censorship, religion has also influenced film on that part of the island. Both the Church and lay religious groups exerted pressure in early Northern Ireland. For example, the lay group the Belfast Corporation “prohibited the building of cinemas within a 360 foot radius of a house of worship.”⁷⁹

These censorship issues have plagued Irish cinema since film’s early years. They have concerned foreign films and those made on the island; and, much like the island’s film history, they have concerned those pieces made by outsiders and by the indigenous film community. This relationship between outside and indigenous filmmakers has echoed throughout Irish film history. Due to indigenous fiction film production’s slow start, nonfiction films have formed the bulk of Ireland’s film output. The industry infrastructure that took decades to coalesce finally has begun to help Irish filmmakers and films come into their own.

⁷⁸ Julian Petley. "Denying the Past." *Broadcast* 11 Dec 1988. 22.

⁷⁹ Pettit. 34.

**CHAPTER 3:
THE TROUBLES AND *BLOODY SUNDAY* (PAUL GREENGRASS, 2002)**

Over the centuries Ireland has passed through the hands of numerous invaders, with the last to come holding on the longest. The twentieth century saw the rise of resistance against that grasp and the growth of turmoil between Nationalists and Unionists. In this chapter I will discuss films that look at the traumatic events that occurred over the past 35 years, during the period known as the Troubles.⁸⁰ However, before moving into those works, let us turn first to history, for the experiences these films portray did not occur in a vacuum and to better understand those events we must first know from whence they came.

By the early 1600s England had gained control over most of Ireland, with Ulster as the main area still outside that rule. During that century the Plantation of Ulster occurred. Unlike the rest of the Irish plantations, Ulster was not merely an increase in titled British settlers; rather the English government recruited all classes of people from Wales, England, and especially Scotland. They tempted the settlers with promises of land, which the native Irish often already owned. In effect, it was an attempt to transplant a society, with its own language and ways, into Ireland, a transplant that pushed out and excluded the native Irish.⁸¹ These actions aided in the creation of an area occupied by two groups, one which felt its land had been usurped

⁸⁰ Typically this term denotes the conflict of the, approximately, past 35 years; it appears variously, both with and without quotes, as the Troubles and the troubles. Unless directly quoting or giving a title, I will use the form the Troubles.

⁸¹ Tanner points out, however, that in areas with poor land, the Irish were not pushed out. Marcus Tanner. *Ireland's Holy War: The Struggle for a Nation's Soul, 1500-2000* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001). 143.

(and were Catholic) and another (the majority of which were Protestant) which felt itself under constant threat of rebellion.⁸²

South of Ulster, Dublin was one of the first areas to come under England's control. It was the base of the Irish parliament and government until 1801, when England passed the Act of Union. This Act abolished the Irish parliament and government and gave the English Parliament those responsibilities. For the next century a variety of groups, such as the Home Rule movement and the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB)⁸³, tried to terminate the union. The outbreak of World War I hindered the creation of Home Rule and before that War's end another had begun that ended the question.⁸⁴

On the afternoon of Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, a portion of the IRB known as the Volunteers marched to the Dublin General Post Office (GPO) and, meeting little resistance, occupied the building.⁸⁵ During that Easter week, a number of other buildings were taken and fighting broke out in Dublin. Those inside the GPO made several symbolic actions, such as replacing the Union Jack with both the Irish flag and the tricolor.⁸⁶ However, the most significant of these actions was the reading of the 1916 Proclamation declaring the existence of the Irish Republic; after the

⁸² John Darby. "Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Background Essay." *Facets of the Conflict in Northern Ireland*. Ed. Seamus Dunn. Macmillan Press, 1995. CAIN Web Service (Conflict Archive on the Internet): Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968 to the Present). 11Jan 2006. <<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelen/facets.htm> >.

⁸³ The latter of these groups was the precursor to the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

⁸⁴ Darby. "Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Background Essay."

⁸⁵ The lack of resistance was due to the day being a bank holiday, so that most of the soldiers were away. Tim Pat Coogan. *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). 53.

⁸⁶ The Irish flag presents a harp and the words Irish Republic on a green background. The tricolor is what we normally associate with Ireland, with a green stripe (representing the Gaelic and Irish traditions), an orange stripe (representing Unionists), and a white stripe (symbolizing peace between the two). Darby. "Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Background Essay."

Rising the Proclamation's signatories would pay for this declaration with their lives.⁸⁷

On Saturday, 29 April, after unsuccessful attempts at negotiation, Padrig Pearse, one of the Volunteer leaders, signed an unconditional surrender.⁸⁸

Although the Rising's popularity had fallen during the week, England's reaction, under the command of General Sir John Maxwell, helped to turn the tide towards the rebels. From 3-12 May, fifteen men were executed, including Pearse; the British also deliberately shot fifteen additional civilians. Tim Coogan notes that, regarding the civilian deaths, "documents kept secret from the public until the year 2001 later revealed that the authorities felt that had the incidents occurred in England, the soldiers responsible would have been tried for murder, but that overall responsibility for the shootings was largely attributable to an order of [General WHM] Lowe's that no prisoners be taken."⁸⁹

These actions did not help the British government earn support and complicated the issue of conscription, which hung like a cloud over 1916 and 1917. In response to the Military Service Bill, passed 16 April 1917, Nationalist leaders met and issued two statements; one in which they pledged to "resist conscription by the most effective means at [their] disposal" and a second that added that "the passage of the Conscription Bill by the British House of Commons must be regarded as a declaration of war on the Irish nation."⁹⁰ The British government was dealt another blow when the Irish-Catholic bishops issued a statement supporting resistance of the

⁸⁷ Coogan. 54.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 58.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 59.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 70.

“oppressive and inhuman law.”⁹¹ Due to the uproar, the government put off instituting conscription and the 1917 Armistice negated the issue, but not before the damage was done. The December 1918 general election saw Sinn Féin⁹² gain a majority; and, on 21 January 1919, they declared, “a new source of authority over the country, Dáil Éireann [Parliament of the Republic]. The new body proclaimed Ireland a republic.”⁹³ For the next two years, Ireland engaged in its own War of Independence.

The 1920 Government of Ireland Act may have helped end the War for Independence⁹⁴ but it also marked the beginning of fighting that has lasted decades. The Act granted independence to the twenty-six counties of southern Ireland, leaving Northern Ireland (six counties) within the Union. The Dáil Éireann accepted the treaty 7 January 1922 but not without arguments. The treaty’s acceptance marked the beginning of the Irish Civil War, which lasted until 1923. However, as we know, the desire for a united Ireland did not die with the War’s end and was not restricted to the Republic.

As noted above, the Northern Catholic population began to face exclusion with the Ulster Plantation. The discrimination worsened after World War II and included the economic, electoral, and educational systems. A growing dissatisfaction in these systems helped lead to the 1960s civil rights campaigns, which were modeled after the American civil rights movement. In 1967 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) formed, voicing a number of demands including an end to

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² For a brief description of Sinn Féin, please see footnote 41 of the previous chapter.

⁹³ Tanner. 286.

⁹⁴ On 11 July 1921 a truce was declared marking the War’s end. Coogan. 91.

discrimination in employment and housing and “one man, one vote,” or the end to plural voting in local elections.⁹⁵ This group later helped organize the Bloody Sunday march. Sit-ins and marches began with protesters leading peaceful demonstrations; however, reactions to these methods were not always similarly peaceful. In October 1968, a march through a Protestant area of Derry, an arguably provocative move organized by Eamon McCann and Eamon Melaugh, ended with violence as the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) batoned marchers indiscriminately as well as employed water cannons. The event, caught on video and shown on RTÉ, sparked rioting in other portions of Derry and the creation of civil rights groups throughout Ulster.⁹⁶

Over the next two years further marches and rioting led to England’s launching of Operation Demetrius on 9 August 1971; with the support of the British Army, raids were conducted that led to internment without charges. In three months, 1,882 men, all of whom were Nationalists and mostly Catholics, were interned.⁹⁷ These raids did not pick up any Provisional IRA members of note, which was one of the goals, but did increase violence; Bloomfield notes that “far from stopping the violence, [internment] immediately produced a ferocious orgy of destruction, a reaction from the Republican communities of sheer rage. In the wider Catholic community the action was presented as a one-sided act in a situation where both

⁹⁵ Ibid. 482.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 486. Coogan notes that during the 1960s “the violence almost exclusively originated from the ranks of the Unionists. The first burnings, the first deaths, and...the first explosions, were all caused by ‘Loyalists’. For most of the sixties, there was no IRA. Republicans did not fire a shot in anger until 1969, and then only in the defence [sic] of Catholic districts or churches.” Ibid. 481.

⁹⁷ Patrick Hayes and Jim Campbell. *Bloody Sunday: Trauma, Pain and Politics*. Contemporary Irish Series (London: Pluto Press, 2005. 15. One exception to this was the Protestant, Independent MP for Mid-Londonderry (Stormont) Ivan Cooper.

communities had their violent men.”⁹⁸ The week of 22 January 1972, a march on the Magilligan internment camp near Derry turned violent as 300 members of the First Battalion of the Parachute Regiment (Paras) were used “to break up the protest, often using excessive violence;” significantly it was the first use of Paras in Derry.⁹⁹ All the pieces were in place and tensions were high when, a week later a Derry civil rights march ended with the deaths of fourteen marchers – an event now known as Bloody Sunday.¹⁰⁰

Bloody Sunday: the Day

"It was the most unbelievable . . . I have travelled [sic] many countries, I have seen many civil wars and revolutions and wars, I have never seen such a cold-blooded murder, organised, disciplined murder, planned murder." – Italian journalist Fulvio Grimaldi, eyewitness, about 30 January 1972¹⁰¹

Early in 1972 the local branch of NICRA planned a 30 January march in Derry that would end with a rally at the Derry Guildhall. The planners gained assurance that the IRA would not interfere so that it would be a peaceful event. On the day of the march, there was a noticeable increase in the Paras presence. Ivan Cooper remembered the Paras making comments to people on their way to church “that they [the Paras] would deal with the people that afternoon and that they were

⁹⁸ Quoted in Ibid. 16.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 16-17.

¹⁰⁰ The name Bloody Sunday comes from a comment made by Bernadette Devlin during an interview shortly after the event that “evok[ed] memories both of Michael Collins’s era and of the Sharpeville massacre” when she said “‘This is our Sharpeville. This is Bloody Sunday,’ and the name stuck.” Coogan. 559.

¹⁰¹ “*Massacre at Derry*, Published by the Civil Rights Movement to Tell the World, through the Eyes of Derry Citizens, What Happened in Their City on Sunday, 30 January 1972.” Civil Rights Movement. 2006. Available: <http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/bsunday/mad.htm>.

looking forward to seeing the people later;” he felt that these and other comments were attempts to intimidate or scare away possible marchers. However, he notes “in fact, the presence of the paras undoubtedly had the opposite effect of encouraging more people to take part in the march, and making people more determined to participate in the march.”¹⁰²

An Army barrier on Williams Street caused the march to shift course and head for Free Derry Corner rather than the Guildhall. As the march turned from its original path, some young men broke away, moved towards the barricade, and began to throw stones at the Army personnel there. As the youths continued to shout and throw stones, the Army members retaliated with gas and rubber bullets. The remaining marchers continued towards Free Derry Corner where various politicians and activists, including Lord Fenner Brockay, a former MP from Slaugh, Bernadette McAliskey (nee Devlin), Independent MP from Mid-Ulster, and Ivan Cooper, were to speak. As the speakers prepared to begin, shots were fired; both sides have argued that the other shot first. When the shooting began, the marchers ran for what cover they could find, a building of the nearby Rossville Flats and a rubble barricade on Rossville Street. As the Paras advanced, others ran to the Glenfada Park. Thirteen marchers died on 30 January, another died some time later from injuries sustained that day, and another thirteen or fourteen were wounded.¹⁰³

¹⁰² "KC 12-1 Statement of Ivan Cooper." Bloody Sunday Inquiry. 9 Nov 2005. Available: www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org/index2.asp?p=6.2,4.

¹⁰³ Sources have given both numbers. I do not know if those that say there were 14 wounded include John Johnson, who died some time after Bloody Sunday from his wounds, or not. That Johnson's wounds caused his death also has been contested; his family, however, felt that the day's events led directly to his death.

In the months following Bloody Sunday the Widgery Inquiry investigated the day's events. Led by Rt. Hon. Lord Michael Byrne Widgery, the Inquiry focused only on the events of 30 January taking no account of the causes leading to the day (although exceptions to this were made for the Army), did not resolve inconsistencies in the evidence, and did not take into account hundreds of eyewitness accounts.¹⁰⁴ The Inquiry was also blatantly political; cabinet minutes recording conversations between Widgery and Prime Minister Edward Heath have supported this, with the PM telling Widgery that "we are in Northern Ireland fighting not only a military war, but a propaganda war."¹⁰⁵

After only eleven weeks, the Inquiry produced a report that shifted blame away from the Paras, noting that "when the vehicles and soldiers of Support Company appeared in Rossville Street they came under fire.... There is no reason to suppose that the soldiers would have opened fire if they had not been fired upon first" and "there was no general breakdown in discipline. For the most part the soldiers acted as they did because they thought their orders required it."¹⁰⁶ The Inquiry also found that neither the wounded nor the dead "[were] proved to have been shot whilst handling a firearm or bomb. Some are wholly acquitted of complicity in such action; but there is a strong suspicion that some others had been firing weapons or handling

¹⁰⁴ Hayes. 145-146.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 145.

¹⁰⁶ Rt. Hon. Lord Widgery. "Report of the Tribunal Appointed to Inquire into the Events on Sunday, 30th January 1972 Which Led to Loss of Life in Connection with the Procession in Londonderry on That Day." H.M. Stationary Office, 18 April 1972. CAIN Web Service (Conflict Archive on the Internet): Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968 to the Present). 29 Jan 2006. <www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/hms0/widgery.htm>.

bombs in the course of the afternoon and that yet others had been closely supporting them.”¹⁰⁷

The actions of Bloody Sunday as well as the Inquiry’s conclusions carried numerous results. Although there would be other events that claimed more lives, Bloody Sunday arguably was a turning point of the Troubles. There was a marked increase in deaths and violence in the following months.¹⁰⁸ This increase led to the dissolution of Stormont’s power and the implementing of direct rule from Westminster. Except for a short period from 1973-1974 when there was an attempt at power-sharing, Direct Rule remained in place until 2 December 1999, when power was devolved back to the Assembly at Stormont.¹⁰⁹

Over a quarter century after the Widgery Inquiry, under pressure from several groups following Bloody Sunday’s 25th anniversary, Prime Minister Tony Blair called for a new inquiry. An international tribunal of three judges, led by Rt. Hon. Lord Mark Saville, heard testimony starting in 2000 and, originally, a verdict was expected in February 2006. However, in early 2007 the tribunal announced that, due to the large amount of evidence involved, it will not announce a verdict until at least

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “The 1972 figure of almost 500 killings stands as a vivid illustration of the lethal depths to which the troubles descended. There were almost 2,000 explosions and over 10,000 shooting incidents, an average of around 30 shootings per day. Almost 5,000 people were injured. Almost 2,000 armed robberies netted £800,000, most of it going into paramilitary coffers. In the worst month of the entire troubles, July 1972, almost a hundred people died as both Republican and Loyalist groups went on an uninhibited rampage. As the year opened, 17,000 soldiers were available for duty; when it ended, a series of hasty reinforcements had brought the figure to 29,000.” Hayes. 20.

¹⁰⁹ Stormont is used, respectively, to denote North Ireland’s Unionist controlled government (1921-1972) and the buildings in East Belfast where Northern Ireland’s government sits. "CAIN Web Service (Conflict Archive on the Internet): Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968 to the Present)." University of Ulster and ARK (Northern Ireland Social and Political Archive). 2005-2006. Available: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/index.html>.

2008.¹¹⁰ While the inquiry moved forward, new cinematic versions of Bloody Sunday appeared, adding not only to the Bloody Sunday discourse but also to the discourse regarding the Troubles.

Lest We Forget: Trauma, Memory, and Peace Process Cinema

“Bloody Sunday is a story the Irish can’t forget and is a story the British don’t want to remember.” – Jim Sheridan, Executive Producer, *Bloody Sunday*¹¹¹

When *Bloody Sunday* aired in January 2002 it joined a growing number of films looking at the Troubles, the history, events, and players. Scholars have named these films Peace Process Cinema or Peace Process Films¹¹² due to their emergence during the peace talks and ceasefires of the 1990s. Films of this type, such as *In the Name of the Father* and *Omagh* (Pete Travis, 2004), bring to the fore events that have been swept under the rug (or at least attempts at such have been made). By tackling historical memory, scholars feel the films allow the present to come to terms with its past. McLoone notes that “as the political situation grows more hopeful and the ceasefires continue to hold then culture in general and film in particular can begin to deal with the suppressed horror of the recent past. ... Thus the cinema of the peace process is bleak in direct proportion to the optimism that is in the air.”¹¹³

Not only are these films opening and examining traumatic memories, they are also aiding the creation of a common memory. In this light, they could be categorized

¹¹⁰ Joshua Rozenberg. "Verdict on Bloody Sunday Still a Year Away." *Daily Telegraph* 20 Jan 2007.

¹¹¹ *Bloody Sunday: History Retold*. 2003. DVD. Paramount Classics.

¹¹² Ruth Barton. *Irish National Cinema*. National Cinema Series. ed. Susan Hayward (London: Routledge, 2004). 174. Martin McLoone. *Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema* (London: BFI, 2000). 69.

¹¹³ McLoone. 84.

as “new history films,” which Rosenstone describes as films that concern themselves less with entertainment as with coming to terms with the past.¹¹⁴ To an extent, this echoes Maurice Halbwachs’ idea of the “collective memory.” Halbwachs claimed that “remembering is present-situated; memories do not take us into ‘the past,’ rather they bring ‘the past’ into the present.”¹¹⁵ Therefore memory is created in direct relation to the present; the collective can “come to terms with the past” in a way that bears meaning on its current life. Halbwachs also noted that, as the name suggests, memory is collective as well as individual; other people’s memories fill in the blanks within our own and such memory allows us to “remember with others what we ourselves did not experience firsthand.”¹¹⁶ Not only does Peace Process Cinema’s timing and subjects/presentation directly relate to Halbwachs’ claims, but its format as film does as well. Memory, according to Halbwachs, is nothing but reconstruction (which connects to the above notions of collectively-filled gaps) and the collective embodies its memories in “cultural artifacts.”¹¹⁷ Although he refers to such artifacts as statues and memorials, I would argue that other works, such as paintings, literature, and, most importantly for us, film also can fulfill the cultural artifacts role.

By creating a collective memory, Peace Process Cinema also aides in the creation of a national cinema. Admittedly the concept of a national cinema is becoming harder to define, with the increase in globalization and movements towards

¹¹⁴ Robert A. Rosenstone. ed. *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995). 4-5.

¹¹⁵ John Storey. "The Articulation of Memory and Desire: From Vietnam to the War in the Persian Gulf." *Memory and Popular Film*. ed. Paul Grainge. Inside Popular Film Series (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003). 103.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 102.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 103 and 104.

a transnational cinema;¹¹⁸ however, it is still useful and relevant. In his discussion of national cinema, Stephen Crofts delineates five different models and classifies Irish cinema as Third World and European Commercial Cinema. Within this model are films that attempt to compete with Hollywood fare at home as popular cinema rather than arthouse fare. Production of these films, Crofts notes, is typically low and they are rarely exported. There is a problem with his comment that it is “based on small language communities;” it seems he is only including Irish-language films, which constitute a very small portion of Irish films.¹¹⁹ However, Crofts’ general categorization does apply, as some films within the Peace Process Cinema do attempt to compete with Hollywood productions.

Crofts also points out that there are a number of possibilities in cross-cultural reception and goes on to discuss three: “blank incomprehension,” which he explains often comes from a lack of shared cultural knowledge; “misreadings...; and the responses of producing countries to foreign praise.”¹²⁰ We can see an example of the first possibility, incomprehension from lack of shared knowledge, in the poor reception *Michael Collins* received in the United States as compared to its reception in Ireland. The film relies heavily on a pre-knowledge of early twentieth century Irish history and of the key figures portrayed (Collins, Éamon de Valera, etc.), which many

¹¹⁸ As evidenced by the difficulty I had in defining Irish cinema in chapter one. As Alan Williams queries, in the situation of films with cast, crew, and funding from various countries, “at least on the level of big-budget, star-driven cinema, is there going to be any ‘national’ film production left...?” Alan Williams. “Introduction.” *Film and Nationalism*. ed. Alan Williams. Depth of Focus Series (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2002). 16

¹¹⁹ Stephen Crofts. “Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s.” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 14.3 (Spring 1993). 54

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 59.

American filmgoers did not possess. It is this form of knowledge that Luke Gibbons states “operate[s] as shadow texts in Irish cinema, allowing a culture to look at itself, as it were, through a glass darkly;”¹²¹ an introspection that, in turn, allows a culture to create its own collective memory.

Bloody Sunday: the Movie and the Memory

Current events, namely the Saville Inquiry, had already thrust 30 January 1972 back into the collective consciousness (or, perhaps, pulled it from under the rug) when *Bloody Sunday* (Greengrass, 2002) aired on ITV (a United Kingdom television network), had limited theatrical release, and hit the festival circuit in 2002.¹²² The film depicts only the day’s events and focuses on Ivan Cooper as protagonist. We see both sides, marchers and Paras, throughout the work, from day-of preparations to the wee hours of that night.

The use of a hand held camera, available light only, and no music gives the film a cinéma vérité-like style.¹²³ By using this style, Greengrass does not, and indeed cannot, fill in all of the gaps that remain about the day; for example, because there is no “all-seeing/all knowing” camera, we are looking at a group of boys throwing stones and, therefore, do not see who fired the day’s first shots. Keily argues that by

¹²¹ Luke Gibbons. "Projecting the Nation: Cinema and Culture." *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*. ed. Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005). 218.

¹²² The film won numerous awards, including the Golden Berlin Bear and Ecumenical Jury Awards at the Berlin Film Festival, the World Cinema Audience Award at Sundance, and four IFTAs (Irish Film & Television Awards) for Best Director of a Feature Film, Best Feature Film, Best Script, and Best Sound. "Awards for *Bloody Sunday* (2002)." Internet Movie Database, Inc. 6 Feb 2006. Available: <http://imdb.com/title/tt0280491/awards>.

¹²³ The film has also been called a documentary, which as it is not a non-fiction piece does not work; Keily argues it is rather in the style of a television news report. Tony Keily. "*Bloody Sunday* and the British Media." *Film Ireland* 85 (Feb/Mar 2002). 15.

“construct[ing] a ‘gapped history’” Greengrass is “acknowledge[ing] that before *Bloody Sunday* there was Bloody Sunday” and he “reminds us of the raw events that had an irreducible shape all of their own: not a story, but 30.1.72.”¹²⁴ Rosenstone discusses the use of a similar, documentary-like style in Manuel Octavio Gomez’s *First Charge of the Machete* (1969). Gomez’s use of this style to reconstruct history “gives the feeling of ‘events filmed as they occur.’ History told like this can be no ‘illusion of distant times,’ no ‘vehicle of escapism.’ The form insists that the issues of history are as immediate as those of our own time.”¹²⁵ Rosenstone could just as well be talking about Greengrass’ film as Gomez’s. Also, in this analysis we see the notion of the past brought into the present.

This style also allows the viewer and the collective to “remember...what we did not experience first hand.” However, some did experience the original trauma first hand. Greengrass uses a limited number of actors; the filmmaker cast a large number of people from Derry, some of whom were involved in or have direct memories of Bloody Sunday. He also brought in British ex-Army soldiers to portray the Paras, many of whom had had tours of duty in Northern Ireland.

Greengrass also depicts direct memories of specific collective members. Through the film we see a young man, Gerry Donaghy, who wants to do his bit “for the area” but does not want to be picked up (he’s already been in jail once and is hoping to marry his Protestant girlfriend). Gerry is one of those shot; when the

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Robert A. Rosenstone. *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1995). 185.

shooting ends, he is put in a car to go to hospital, but the police stop the car at a roadblock and he dies in the car. Later, in a close medium shot, we see hands putting an item in his pocket and, moments later, we hear that a nail bomb has been found on him. (We already know he had nothing of the sort on him earlier, because when the police stop the car and search him, they note that he is “clean.”) For their book *Bloody Sunday: Trauma, Pain and Politics*, Hayes and Campbell talked with family members of those killed. In one instance a woman who lost her brother told how the Army had her brother’s body and “photographs later showed him in the back seat of a car with nail bombs jammed in his pockets.”¹²⁶ She went on to say that “the clothes that he wore was far too tight [sic], so they couldn’t even get the nail bombs into his clothes. You couldn’t even hardly get your hand into his pocket because even the jacket that he had on him was very tight. There was only wee pockets. They would have had to open the jeans to put the nail bombs on him.”¹²⁷ It is unknown whether Greengrass talked to this particular woman or if it was a story already in circulation within the collective. However, producer Mark Redhead has stated that the crew was in close contact with the families in Derry.¹²⁸ By including community members and their memories, the collective, therefore, contributed to the creation of its own memory.

Greengrass does not give the film (and by extension the event) a tidy conclusion. In the film’s last twenty minutes, a trifecta of scenes emphasizes Bloody

¹²⁶ Hayes. 82.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ *Bloody Sunday: History Retold*.

Sunday's consequences. First, in a series of medium shots and close-ups, we see the Paras being questioned, including a Private Lomas. Throughout the day Lomas has voiced doubts about the Paras' presence, which frequent close-ups of his face emphasize. It seems he possibly will be the one to break from the official story. However, he does not, indicating a closing of ranks that will occur during the Widgery Inquiry. Next, we track along a line of young men at least two of which we know to be Gerry's friends, in a non-descript, dark hall being issued arms. Although we are not told directly that this is the IRA, we assume it is. This assumption is reinforced in the last scene in which we see a brief news conference held by the march organizers. In an eye-level close-up, Cooper warns the British that they have "destroyed the Civil Rights Movement. And you've given the IRA the biggest victory it will ever have. All over this city tonight, young men, boys...will be joining the IRA and you will reap a whirlwind."¹²⁹ Bernadette Devlin also says "we will not rest until justice is done."¹³⁰ Not only does this lend a bit of prophecy to the characters, but it also mirrors the fact that Bloody Sunday is not over. This mirroring also reflects Halbwachs' claim that memory brings forward the past into the present.

The reexamining of a traumatic memory may allow for a cathartic experience. In *Bloody Sunday: History Retold*, a short, making-of-type piece that accompanies the film on DVD, those responsible for the film note the idea of healing several times. Greengrass mentions the different attitudes towards 30 January 1972; in Ireland there has been discussion and are definite ideas/stories of what happened while it is not

¹²⁹ *Bloody Sunday*. Paul Greengrass. 2002. DVD. Paramount Classics.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

talked about in England. Therefore there is no common story (or we can substitute memory here); Greengrass states that the film should help create a common story so that wounds can begin to heal. Similarly, co-producer Don Mullan, who also wrote *Eyewitness Bloody Sunday* on which the film draws, says that he sees the film as part of the peace process and as an “attempt for us to come to terms with the pain of the history of Ireland.”¹³¹ These views were directly contradicted by British critics, such as the *Telegraph*'s Nigel Wade, who wrote that “keeping 30-year-old wounds gaping serves no one but the IRA.”¹³²

Other British critics felt the film was “no more than an ill-advised addition to ‘IRA revenge’ [and] that...there was no allowable difference between the political interests of Civil Rights marchers and the IRA.”¹³³ These reactions could stem from what the film does not do as much as from what it does. It is not mainstream nor does it sentimentally enforce the status quo, in this case the national (English) myths about the day. Earlier Peace Process Films, such as *In the Name of the Father*, had also not upheld English national myths. However, that film, which depicts the story of the Guildford Four, who were held fourteen years for a bombing it was known they did not commit,¹³⁴ was a mainstream film.

More recent Peace Process Films, however, do follow the same pattern as *Bloody Sunday*. For example, 2004's *Omagh* closely follows *Bloody Sunday*'s

¹³¹ *Bloody Sunday: History Retold*.

¹³² Keily. 15.

¹³³ Ibid. 14.

¹³⁴ On 9 February 2005, PM Tony Blair issued an apology to the Four as well as the Maguire Seven for their wrongful conviction. "CAIN Web Service (Conflict Archive on the Internet): Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968 to the Present)."

example. Using many of the same techniques, such as natural lighting and hand held shooting, *Omagh* depicts the 1998 bombing in that city that killed 29 civilians and the ensuing investigation into whether the authorities had had prior knowledge of the attack and their lack of action on that knowledge. Therefore, like *Bloody Sunday*, *Omagh* looks at a traumatic event; however, and perhaps significantly, the time between event and examination of that event is much shorter.

As noted previously, *Bloody Sunday* appeared thirty years after the event depicted; *Omagh* on the other hand appeared a mere six years after the event, three years after the Police Ombudsman submitted her report, and only one year after the Irish government announced the official inquiries findings. One could argue that the shorter space of time for *Omagh* is due mainly to changing times; occurring as it did during peace talks and by a group known not to represent the IRA¹³⁵, the political atmosphere was somewhat different than in the 1970s. It is also possible that the reexamination of past trauma and the creation of collective memory already underway allowed for a quicker response. Also, after the bombing and the apparent lack of response by authorities a group of victim's family members created a support group that became very vocal; not only did they press the authorities for greater action but they also directly confronted/questioned the IRA and its supporters about their role in the bombing. Therefore, unlike *Bloody Sunday*, both sides (the IRA and

¹³⁵ A faction calling itself the Thirty Two County Sovereignty Committee, or Real IRA, conducted the Omagh bombing. The Real IRA broke with the IRA because of the peace talks with which they did not agree. Shortly after Omagh, under pressure from the Provisional IRA, the group agreed to a ceasefire. Coogan. 687.

the authorities) came under scrutiny, which may, in turn, have allowed for the quicker examination.

Perhaps this more even handed investigation also aided *Omagh*'s timely release. Although unlike *Bloody Sunday* we do not go back and forth between two sides, we do see the investigation and the announcement of the police Ombudsman's findings. This helps give the event and the film a greater sense of closure than was present in *Bloody Sunday* and is perhaps an indicator of the differences in both the original events and in the changing attitudes towards the past.

Although the films discussed in this chapter have revolved around a single era and topic of the past, we can apply the ideas introduced here to films addressing other topics. Similarly, we also can apply these ideas to works of non-fiction. In the following chapters we do just that, look at other films through lenses polished here.

**CHAPTER 4:
THE CHURCH AND *THE MAGDALENE SISTERS* (PETER MULLAN, 2003)**

Catholicism long has held a powerful and, until recently, unquestioned role in Ireland. Our subjects here are films tackling the subject of the Church and its role. First a brief look at pre-twentieth century history, then a more in-depth look at a specific Catholic institution will allow us to better understand the films discussed.

When England's King Henry VIII broke with the Catholic Church and formed the Church of England in 1533, he also created a Church of Ireland.¹³⁶ The two churches, however, did not enter into "competition" until a February 1570 papal bull excommunicated Elizabeth I and began the "fight for the soul of Ireland."¹³⁷ However it was Elizabeth's successor, James VI of Scotland and I of England, who set in motion events that still reverberate in both Ireland and England. To James "the protestantizing and civilizing of Ireland [was] his special care" and in 1609 he began the plantation of Ulster, with the understanding that the settlers would then populate the land "with good and godly Presbyterians."¹³⁸ Less than fifty years later Irish Catholics again were displaced when, in 1652, Oliver Cromwell transplanted the majority of the Irish Catholic population to the province of Connaught, west of the

¹³⁶ Although the break occurred in 1533, it was not until November 1534 that the passing of the Act of Supremacy made Henry the, "Supreme Head of the Church of England". Lacey Baldwin Smith. *This Realm of England: 1399-1688*. A History of England. ed. Lacey Baldwin Smith. 7th ed. (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath & Co., 1996). 124.

¹³⁷ Marcus Tanner. *Ireland's Holy War: The Struggle for a Nation's Soul, 1500-2000* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001). 89.

¹³⁸ Smith. 253.

River Shannon. Cromwell's actions accomplished enough "to embitter English-Irish relations for the next three hundred years."¹³⁹

Both James VI's and Cromwell's actions helped deepen negative feelings between Ireland's Catholics and Protestants. The Protestant-assisted defeat of Home Rule in 1886 further widened the divide; it also helped create the dichotomy of patriotism/Catholicism and loyalism/Protestantism. This binary arose from the claim shared by many anti-colonial movements that all that was wrong in the country came "from the occupier and the oppressor."¹⁴⁰ These strong political/religious ties led to the Catholic Church's inclusion in the creation of the free Republic. Therefore, legally, the Church¹⁴¹ held a substantial role and power in the lives of the Republic's Irish, perhaps especially the lives of women, as will be discussed shortly.

In late 1958, the then-Bishop of Limerick, Jeremiah Newman, "looked to the continuing, rock-solid alliance between religion and nationalism. 'For centuries, religion and patriotism went hand in hand in Ireland...the priests were leaders of the people in many national movements. They helped the country rise from political and social depression. The memory of this is still fresh in Irish minds and accords the priest a high place in the public estimation.'"¹⁴²

During the 1970s and 80s the Church began to face a number of "problems." There was a rise in curiosity about the "pre-Christian Gaelic culture" of Ireland; the Church was shown not as invigorating and supporting Gaelic Ireland as much as

¹³⁹ Ibid. 294.

¹⁴⁰ Tim Pat Coogan. *Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). 700.

¹⁴¹ I use Church to indicate the Catholic Church rather than the Church of Ireland.

¹⁴² Tanner. 336.

quelling it. Relations between the Church and women also began to change as feminism seeped into the country from America and England. The Church was hit even harder in the 1990s, beginning with the 1990 election of Mary Robinson as President, noted as a “milestone in the history of the decay of Catholic Ireland...secular, liberal, agnostic Ireland [beat] Catholic Ireland.”¹⁴³ Revelations of clerical abuse followed closely on the election’s heels; this aspect will be discussed in more detail below. Although these blows have caused changes they have not spelled the death of the Catholic Church. For example, the 2002 income of the Dublin archdiocese increased by six percent and the Church still influences hospitals and education.¹⁴⁴

Houses of Mercy: the Magdalene Asylums

“They sent me to the sisters for the way men looked at me/Branded as a Jezebel, I knew I was not bound for heaven/I’d be cast in shame into the Magdalene Laundries.” – The Chieftains and Joni Mitchell, “The Magdalene Laundries,” *Tears of Stone*, 1999

As previously mentioned, the 1990s saw the Church facing allegations of clerical abuse. The Church-run institutions included (but were not all named in allegations): reformatories, orphanages, industrial schools¹⁴⁵, and “penitentiaries,” or Magdalene laundries.¹⁴⁶ While all of the institutions are linked through their common

¹⁴³ Ibid. 393.

¹⁴⁴ Coogan. 748, 749.

¹⁴⁵ Industrial schools were “poor law schools” where the state sent children because of their family’s poverty.

¹⁴⁶ I found Magdalene spelled both with and without the last e; for consistency I will use “Magdalene,” except in cases of direct quotation. Any other special uses will be so noted at that time. Also, I have

overseers, we will focus on the latter. Although Magdalene Asylums were not confined to Ireland, they played a key role in the lives of thousands of Irish women and, over the last decade, have been brought into public consciousness.

The first Magdalene Asylum was built in 1758 in England; less than ten years later the first Irish Asylum was built in Dublin.¹⁴⁷ Traditionally the Asylums were built as a place for “fallen women,” which in the beginning were mainly prostitutes, to do penance for their sins and rehabilitate themselves for inclusion in the community at large. During the nineteenth century, the asylums became part of the Rescue/Penitentiary Movement, a reaction against prostitution that also spawned the 1860s Contagious Diseases Acts. These Acts were an effort to keep diseased prostitutes from working and applied to selected port and harbor towns in both England and Ireland, towns selected for their high rate of venereal diseases among the armed forces stationed there.¹⁴⁸ One of the key differences between the Acts and the Rescue/Penitentiary Movement is the uproar the former elicited, especially from Women’s Rights activists, that eventually led to their repeal in 1886; the latter Movement, however, elicited no such uproar and, therefore, lasted well into the twentieth century.

The dominant force of the Irish Female Penitentiary Movement was the Good Shepherd Sisters. The first Good Shepherd Asylum was built in Limerick in 1848;

found these institutions named variously hospital, penitentiary, and asylum. I will use the term asylum here, unless another term is warranted, as in direct quotes or other special cases.

¹⁴⁷ Frances Finnegan. *Do Penance or Perish: Magdalen Asylums in Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004). 8.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 161.

other Asylums followed in Waterford, New Ross, and Cork.¹⁴⁹ A number of elements set the Good Shepherd Asylums apart from others in both Ireland and England. The Good Shepherd Asylums, generally, were larger (with between 100-200 penitents, as opposed to 20-30 in other turn of the century “Rescue Homes”).¹⁵⁰ Upon entering the Asylum, the Sister’s gave the women new names, a practice that reinforced the rule that the women could not discuss their previous life with each other. Some Asylums would shave the women’s heads or closely cut their hair as a deterrent from running away; this practice continued in the Limerick Asylum through the late 1950s.¹⁵¹ Another long-lasting practice was the Rule of Silence, which continued into the second half of the 1900s; the women were not allowed to speak at set times, usually while in the laundries and at night in the dormitories.¹⁵²

While cutting a woman’s hair or forcing her not to talk of her past may have had psychological side effects, especially for those with traumatic pasts, being treated as a child would have weakened the women further. Although I have used the term “women” for those confined to the Asylums this is not what they were called. In these institutions the women were treated like children and were even referred to as such no matter whether the woman was twenty or sixty. When at work, the women were referred to as a “class.” Up until 1971, when the term changed to “sister,” all nuns were referred to as “Mother” not just a Mother Superior.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 10.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 23.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 26, 28.

¹⁵² Ibid. 24.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 42.

As noted above, a woman who found herself in an Asylum was supposed to work towards her restoration into society. The Good Shepherd Asylums, however, did not always share this goal; “unlike the vast majority of Refuges (whose Rules strictly limited to two or at most three years, any penitent’s length of stay) the Good Shepherds’ goal was the reform of these women, but not necessarily their restoration to society.”¹⁵⁴ The *Rules*, written by Foundress Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia Pelletier echoed this sentiment:

The greater number of our children we know desire to return to the world. The thought that they will be once more exposed to the danger of going astray...is a sorrow for a Religious. We should then, make every effort to induce them to remain in the asylum opened to them by Divine Providence, where they are assured of the grace of a happy death...The departure of a penitent is generally a misfortune; it causes as much grief as her arrival caused joy.¹⁵⁵

The question of how happy that death could be is arguable. The women, under both the Good Shepherds and in other Asylums, worked long hours doing laundry, both that generated within the Asylum as well as laundry sent in from the surrounding community.¹⁵⁶ A schedule from the turn of the century noted times of work from 5:40-6:30 am, 8:15-11:45 am, 1:15-3:30 pm, and 4-6:30 pm, with “breaks” for either

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 35.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Ibid. 35-6.

¹⁵⁶ Many have argued that the communities in which the asylums were situated knew nothing of the conditions within; however, it is from this latter point, laundry being sent into the asylums, that questions arise about how much the communities knew.

Mass or meals.¹⁵⁷ The laundries did bring the Asylums some funds; Asylums that were associated with industrial schools also got funds for the care of each student.

Society stigmatized those women who did leave the Asylums. The society that they worked to reenter often shunned them or saw them as easy targets of which to take advantage. The treatment the women met pushed many to be readmitted and others not to attempt to leave. The system in which many chose to stay often aided in the women's failure once they rejoined society; the Good Shepherd Asylums took all kinds of "penitent" and, unlike the asylums in England there was no internal classification or separation of the penitents. In other words, unwed mothers and girls who had been abused were treated the same as were the prostitutes; this policy "blighted the prospects of hopeful cases and endangered the future of those with least to atone for in their past."¹⁵⁸

Some women who were readmitted after attempting to rejoin society were doomed from the start. A number of women were children in an industrial school who, after coming of age, were then shunted into an Asylum. "Tradition has it that even up to the mid-twentieth century such re-cycling within the system was not unusual."¹⁵⁹ Other women, once admitted, lived the rest of their lives in the Asylum. Mary Connolly, at the time approximately twelve years old, was put into the New Ross Good Shepherd Magdalene Asylum for "protection" (it is thought she was a victim of incest or attempted incest); she did not leave until she was 73, when she

¹⁵⁷ Finnegan. 196.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 41.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 127.

went to her niece as a housekeeper. This arrangement did not last long, however, and Mary was readmitted the next year; she died in the Asylum at the age of 82.¹⁶⁰

While these institutions sound outmoded, as previously mentioned a number of these practices persisted well into the latter half of the twentieth century. With the rise in modern laundry services, the decrease in income from the laundries, and the drop in numbers (of both nuns and penitents) the Asylums were already on the decline by the century's last decade. The last Magdalene Asylum in Ireland, Dublin's Gloucester Street Refuge, finally closed in 1996.

Remembering the unforgettable: questioning the Church on film

“...a bunch of bullies and devils dressed as nuns.” – Brigid Young, Interviewee, *Sex in a Cold Climate*

The same year that the Gloucester Street Refuge closed its doors, after the clerical abuse scandals had broken, “open season on the nuns” began.¹⁶¹ That year Louis Lintton produced the documentary *Dear Daughter*, which follows Christine Buckley, who had lived in the Goldenbridge orphanage, as she attempts to find her birth mother. O'Brien notes that “rather than an investigative documentary about child abuse in Goldenbridge, which is how the film is often construed, it became a reflection upon the emotional and psychological consequences of that abuse on one woman in particular.”¹⁶² Although not an “investigative documentary,” the film still

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 40.

¹⁶¹ Tanner. 408.

¹⁶² Harvey O'Brien. *The Real Ireland: The Evolution of Ireland in Documentary Film* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004). 232. I was unable to obtain and view this work so that all description must come from secondary sources.

“portrayed a regime of daily beatings and virtual starvation of the children under the care of Sister Xaviera, the Reverend Mother.”¹⁶³ O’Brien also calls *Daughter* “the first and most important documentary to actively identify and accuse religious orders of impropriety.”¹⁶⁴

However, *Daughter* was not the first film made to look at treatment in the Church’s various institutions. In 1981, Cathal Black finished his film *Our Boys*, which looked at the last days within a Christian Brothers¹⁶⁵ school, focusing on the hot-headed Brother Mick Kelly who we see beat a student. However, it differed from *Daughters* in several, important ways. Black’s film is hard to classify as either documentary or fiction, as it uses aspects of both film types. Edited into the fiction story are on-screen interviews with former students and a priest and found footage of the 1932 Eucharistic Congress, which demonstrates the close relation between religion and civil government and “provides the context for the film’s exploration of Catholic education.”¹⁶⁶ *Boys* also differs from *Daughter* in that it targets the Christian Brothers, who are not priests, while the former looks at a facility run by the Sisters of Mercy. Lastly, audiences saw *Daughter* in 1996, shortly after its completion; *Boys*, on the other hand, was not shown in Ireland until 1991.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Tanner. 408. The Sisters of Mercy is the same order

¹⁶⁴ O’Brien. 230.

¹⁶⁵ The Christian Brothers are a Catholic order for men; they are often educators, founding and/or running schools.

¹⁶⁶ Martin McLoone. "National Cinema and Cultural Identity: Ireland and Europe." *Border Crossing: Film in Ireland, Britain and Europe*. ed. Martin McLoone John Hill, Paul Hainsworth (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1994). 166.

¹⁶⁷ Although the reason for this delay is not stated, I would suggest the conservative backlash that followed the Pope’s 1979 visit. For more details please see *Ibid*.

With *Boys and Daughter* paving the way, in 1997 Steve Humphries produced the documentary *Sex in a Cold Climate* for Britain's Channel 4. Interweaving found footage, stills, voice over, and on-screen interviews, *Sex* tells the stories of four women who were interned in Magdalene institutions. The reasons for each woman's internment differ: one woman was an unwed mother, one was raped by a cousin, and two were raised in Catholic orphanages; one of the latter women, Brigid Young, was never put into an Asylum, but her Limerick orphanage, run by the Magdalenes, was attached to an Asylum and, as a child, she had interactions with the women there. These differing pasts notwithstanding, there are several common threads through each story. All four women were young when placed in the Church's care. Each tells of abuse at the hands of "people who were God's speakers [vicars?] on Earth and they set an example to us. We were supposed to follow their footsteps and they were so cruel, they were really cruel to us."¹⁶⁸ Unlike many of their co-internees, all four women left their respective institutions, but, as each woman tells, their experiences never fully left them, affecting later relationships, emotions, and psychological well being. Phyllis Valentine spoke of fears upon leaving the Galway Asylum; she moved to Dublin but was afraid of being judged as "bad" by the general population. This feeling helps speak to the stigma attached to the Magdalene Asylums. Valentine grew up in a Catholic, County Clare orphanage; when she turned fifteen, the authorities told her they had found her work in a laundry and took her to the Galway Asylum. After her first week, Valentine asked for her pay; she recalls that the sisters laughed at

¹⁶⁸ *Sex in a Cold Climate*. 1998. DVD. Miramax. On-screen interview with Phyllis Valentine.

her and told her she was there and would stay there until someone came to fetch her – as an orphan, who would come?

The stories, information, and fears presented in *Cold Climate* helped pave the way for the first feature-length work to pull back the curtain and inspect the past's darker side. When *The Magdalene Sisters* (2003) opened, director Peter Mullan credited *Cold Climate* with giving him the impetus to create *Sisters* and, indeed, the similarities between the two are obvious. In *Sisters*, we follow three young women in 1960s County Dublin who are sent to the same Magdalene Asylum. At a wedding, Margaret is raped by her cousin while family, friends, and the local clergy celebrate downstairs. Bernadette lives in a church run orphanage and is a somewhat vain girl who flirts with the local boys through the orphanage's fence. Lastly, Rose is an unwed mother who constantly apologizes for and acknowledges the shame of her situation. After four years (a relatively short time in comparison to many real life penitents), the women leave; Margaret when her brother comes "to fetch" her, while Bernadette and Rose are able to escape.

Throughout the film, Mullan and cinematographer Nigel Willoughby use a combination of "traditional" film techniques (little, if any, hand held camera movement typically framing medium shots and close ups), low lighting, slow edits, and silence to create an oppressive, depressing atmosphere. Even those shots that take place outside the Asylum typically use a gray or muted palette. The major exception to this takes place roughly two thirds of the way through the film. A portion of the Asylum's penitents participate in a religious parade through the town culminating in

an outdoor service. The bright sunshine and blue sky that mirrors the special short capes that the girls wear, give the event a false sense of serenity or joy; during the sermon the viewer finds out that the Father leading them in prayer has been sexually misusing Crispina, a mentally challenged penitent.¹⁶⁹

While the film's stark, muted palette is striking, so too is Mullan's use of sound, or more specifically his non-use of sound. Throughout the film, silence confronts the viewer. In the beginning, as each of the three main girls are being taken or handed over to the church, the event is silent; this could be a foreshadowing of the silence that will be expected of the girls within the Asylum. For example, when the priest comes to take Margaret away, the only sounds occur when she is awoken by her father and, as the car drives away, when her brother (whom we assume is the same one who later rescues her) calls down "Da', where are they taking Margaret?"

Other instances of silence occur once action is confined to the Asylum. As mentioned previously, in real life the Asylums Sisters imposed silence on their charges for much of the day; this aspect is not neglected in *Sisters* and helps create both a more realistic and oppressive atmosphere. At meals the only non-eating sounds are of a penitent reading aloud from the Bible and of the Sisters talking amongst themselves. One further occurrence adds to the realism and helps to tie the film's fictional world to reality. During the religious parade already mentioned a great crowd is gathered, cheering, clapping, and calling to the marchers; when the girls

¹⁶⁹ Shortly thereafter, Crispina is sent to Mt. Vernon Hospital, a psychiatric facility; Sister Bridget tells her that, "they can look after you better there." We never know if Father Fitzroy is punished for his actions.

round a corner and come into full view, the crowd's noises die down as the townspeople gaze at the girls in silence and several of the faces show a marked disdain. The force of the change is not lost on the girls, who to this point had been laughing and talking amongst themselves. The way in which the townspeople look at the girls mirrors the stigma that the Asylums bestowed upon their inhabitants.

In presenting elements that call to mind the real experiences of Magdalene penitents, such as silence and stigmatization, Mullan creates a world closer to that known by members of the collective. As with films such as *Bloody Sunday*, Mullan both called on members of the collective to actively participate in the film's creation and drew on specific memories already within the collective. Two of the women in the film are not actresses but are instead Asylum "experts," having both lived in Asylums. One, Phyllis McMahon, is a former nun from the Galway Magdalene Asylum; the other, Fran Healey, is a former penitent. Ironically, both women portray nuns. The information these women provided was put to use in various ways. For example, one of the film's penitents, Una, attempts to escape and is brought brutally back by her father. She later gives herself to the Order; although her reasoning is never explained, the viewer feels that she sees it as her only option. In an interview, Mullan says that McMahon told him "about the ceremony whereby a girl could give herself to the Magdalenes. You wouldn't be a nun, but you wouldn't remain just a Maggie [penitent]. You were kind of a lay nun, or a holier Maggie."¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Gary Crowds. "The Sisters of No Mercy: An Interview with Peter Mullan." *Cineaste* 28.4 (Fall 2003). 29.

Although Margaret, Bernadette, Rose and most of the other characters are fictional, Mullan asserts that what “happens in the film is true, the incidents that informed the film are all factual,”¹⁷¹ an assertion that other, known information appears to support. This basis in truth was one element of the film that the Church challenged. The Vatican even challenged “the film’s historical veracity...[causing] a number of investigative journalists [to seek] out former Magdalene penitents who recounted their own experiences, which echoed and amplified the horror stories related in *The Magdalene Sisters*. Indeed, according to many of the former detainees, Mullan’s film wasn’t grim enough, because the oppression and physical abuse they experienced was much worse.”¹⁷²

This attack on the film’s historical basis was but one of the Church’s arguments. Although it is arguable that the Church could benefit from the cathartic function that creating a collective memory can create, that organization was not supportive of Mullan’s efforts; however, perhaps, a slow thaw is underway. When *Sisters* first opened at the Venice Film Festival, the Vatican attacked Mullan as a “liar;” however, by the time the film opened in Ireland there were no comments and the Archbishop in Scotland “took out a half-page ad that recommended the film to all Catholics” when it opened in that country.¹⁷³ Raymond Blake, who reviewed *Sisters* for the Catholic publication *America*, also condemned the film; he noted that “even if the facts might be selected unfairly and then embellished to serve the dramatic

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 28.

¹⁷² Ibid. 27.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 33. According to this same article, when the film won the festival’s Best Film Golden Lion Award “the Vatican then condemned both the film and the festival, suggesting that the jury had honored the film principally for its ‘anti-Catholic’ content.” 26.

purposes of a film, the message provides the occasion for reflection for Catholics....”¹⁷⁴ These exhortations for Catholics not to shy away from the film might be at least the Church’s precursory step in acknowledging its role in the collective’s past and, therefore, in the creation of the collective’s memory.

Due to how recently Asylums existed, there is still a portion of the collective for whom the memories shown in *Sisters* are fresh and raw. It is not only for the former penitents that *Sisters* can perform a cathartic function. It also allows those in the general public to come to terms with what occurred in their midst. Some community members have argued that they were unaware of what happened within the Asylum walls. While it is difficult to gauge what knowledge the communities held, as hindsight colors what one knew in the past, confronting what occurred can serve a dual purpose within the general community. First, it can help combat the stereotypes and labels with which former penitents must contend. By addressing the fact that the “sins” for which the penitents were repenting were, at times, not the women’s fault, perhaps the community can be more accepting of the penitents. Secondly, confronting the traumas experienced within the Asylum can help the community to make changes and move on; to, as Halbwachs’ claims, create memory in direct relation to the present so that the collective can “come to terms with the past” in a way that bears meaning on its current life.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Richard A. Blake. "Gulag Erin." *America* 29 Sept. 2003. 21.

¹⁷⁵ John Storey. "The Articulation of Memory and Desire: From Vietnam to the War in the Persian Gulf." *Memory and Popular Film*. ed. Paul Grainge. Inside Popular Film Series (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003). In other words, so that the present can remember and forget “in order to act in the present and the future.” John Lechte. "Memory." *Key Contemporary Concepts: From Abjection to Zeno's Paradox* (London: Sage, 2003). 152.

CHAPTER 5:
**NONFICTION PRESENTATIONS: *12 DAYS IN JULY* (MARGO HARKIN) &
MOTHER IRELAND (ANNE CRILLY, 1988)**

As we have seen, there are a number of fictional feature-length works that both examine Ireland's recent past and are steeped in the island's history. Perhaps unsurprisingly, such areas also have been the purview of documentary works. It is to these non-fiction narratives that we now turn. In this chapter we will look at two works, one dealing with a modern aspect of the Troubles and one dealing with the image of Irish women, especially as relates to their participation in the nationalist movement. Let us first turn to recent events in Northern Ireland.

Conflict in the Street: *12 Days in July*

“There has to be a time when the beatin’ has to stop and the talkin’ has to start.” – Unidentified interviewee, *12 Days in July*

At 3:30 a.m. 6 July 1997, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the British Army sealed off the Garvaghy Road Catholic housing in Portadown, County Armagh, removing sit-in protesters and continuing the third year of confrontations concerning the Drumcree Orange Order parade. It is this event, the 1997 parade, its history, players, and presentation, on which we here focus our sights. Before turning to the event on screen, however, let us look at its origin.

In 1795, after the sectarian County Armagh Battle of the Diamond, a small group of Portadown Protestants formed the Loyal Orange Order. The group took their name from William of Orange who, in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, unseated

Britain's King James II and claimed the throne as William III.¹⁷⁶ The group felt that, as William fought despotism, so too did they. Today the Order not only "opposes tyranny and despotism in Church and State" but also desires to maintain both Protestantism and the Union in Ulster.¹⁷⁷ While the Order presents itself as a religious organization it is also highly active in Ulster politics. It helped lead opposition to the Home Rule Bill of the late 1800s, giving "the Orange Order a level of 'political respectability'"; there has always been a very close relationship between the Ulster Unionist Party and the Order.¹⁷⁸

Since its inception, the Order has held parades to commemorate a variety of events, such as the Battles of the Somme and of the Boyne; the latter commemoration, which is the high point of Order parades, occurs annually on 12 July. Of these parades, the parade to Portadown's Drumcree Parish Church claims the distinction of being "the oldest Orange parade in the entire world;"¹⁷⁹ the parade traditionally moves along Obins Street to Drumcree and back along Garvaghy Road to Carleton Street. Over time, the population along Garvaghy Road shifted so that it is mainly Nationalist and Catholic, helping lead to increased tensions surrounding the parade.

¹⁷⁶ After a number of acts, such as the birth of an heir and the Declaration of Indulgence, which gave both Nonconformists and Catholics freedom of worship, leading magnates wrote to Holland calling William to come "save their land from Catholic domination." In 1689, William and his wife Mary (sister to James II), gained recognition as joint monarchs. Lacey Baldwin Smith. *This Realm of England: 1399-1688*. A History of England. ed. Lacey Baldwin Smith. 7th ed. (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath & Co., 1996). 333-338.

¹⁷⁷ "The Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland." 2006. 4 Nov 2006. Available: <http://www.grandorange.org.uk/>.

¹⁷⁸ "CAIN Web Service (Conflict Archive on the Internet): Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968 to the Present)." University of Ulster and ARK (Northern Ireland Social and Political Archive). 2005-2006. Available: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/index.html>.

¹⁷⁹ "The Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland."

Tensions boiled on 9 July 1995 when, for the first time since the early 1800s, the RUC blocked marchers returning from Drumcree in an attempt to prevent sectarian confrontation along Garvaghy Road. The resulting two day standoff led to a compromise allowing the parade to continue with the stipulation that no bands would proceed down Garvaghy.¹⁸⁰

The following year relations worsened. At that time the RUC Chief Constable had the authority to reroute any parade that he felt had the possibility of causing public disorder. Therefore, in light of the 1995 events, Chief Constable Hugh Annesley decided to reroute the Order's parade away from Garvaghy Road. As marchers gathered on 7 July, the Orange Grand Master, Reverend Martin Smyth, "announced that there could be no compromise," beginning not only a four day standoff but also rioting throughout Northern Ireland.¹⁸¹ The next day more Loyalists arrived, violence increased, and Loyalist and Orange supporters blocked major routes. Due to the escalating violence, on 9 July the British Army sent 1000 troops to Northern Ireland. By 11 July, following over 100 injuries and one death¹⁸², Annesley reversed his decision and allowed the Order to march along Garvaghy. Nationalists, not only in the Garvaghy area but also in Derry, Armagh, and parts of Belfast, responded with rioting that lasted a week.

¹⁸⁰ Fionnuala McKenna and Martin Melaugh point out the irony that the Drumcree troubles began during the first year of Republican/Loyalist paramilitary ceasefires. They note that "some writers have suggested that because of the ceasefires the issue of parades became, for some, an alternative means to displaying and mobilizing behind their traditional political demands. Fionnuala McKenna and Martin Melaugh. "Developments at Drumcree, 1995-2000." 27 Jan 2006, CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet): Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968-2000). 13 Feb 2006. Available: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/parade/develop.htm>.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² There were 90 civilian injuries, 50 RUC injuries, 758 attacks on the police, and 156 arrests made. Catholic taxi driver Michael McGoldrick died. Ibid.

Annesley's reversal (known as the "U-Turn decision) helped lead to a breakdown in Nationalist faith in the RUC as an impartial police force, due to what many saw as differential treatment of Loyalist and Nationalist protesters.¹⁸³ Following the July 1996 march and protests, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, announced he would set up an independent body to review policies and arrangements for handling parades and marches and to make recommendations for future events. The review body delivered the North Report on 29 January 1997, in which it recommended the establishment of an independent body to review and monitor parade disputes. By July 1997, however, this body was not yet in place and events surrounding the year's Drumcree Parade mirrored those of previous years.

It is at this point in Portadown's sectarian relations that life intersects with our chosen documentary. Following the events of 1995 and 1996, Derry-based Besom Productions decided to address the 1997 parade. Following participants on both sides of the dispute as they make parade preparations, await decisions, and, finally, participate or witness the parade, *12 Days in July* (Margo Harkin, 1997) provides an inside look into the issues and crisis in Drumcree.

By June 1997, the Order and Garvaghy residents had not reached a compromise. The decision to reroute was then taken to Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam. As late as 5 July, Mowlam still had announced no final decision. Troops flew into Northern Ireland with hundreds specifically moved into

¹⁸³ For example, of 6002 rubber bullets the RUC fired between 7 and 15 July, over 5000 were used against Nationalists. Ibid.

Portadown; on 4 July the British Army and RUC established checkpoints around the area. At 3:30 a.m. on Sunday 6 July, 1500 British troops and RUC officers moved into and sealed off the Garvaghy Road housing estates.¹⁸⁴ At 5:30 a.m. the RUC began forcibly removing sit-down protestors who managed to break through to the road and residents were blocked from the local Catholic Church. After the Order marched, as security began to withdraw, a riot developed that spread over other Northern nationalist areas. Two days later a leaked document showed that Mowlam had, in fact, decided in June to allow the parade to continue along its traditional route, despite her assurances of no decision on 5 July.

In order to shoot a multi-sided piece (rather than one in which only one side of the conflict was examined) filmmaker Margo Harkin¹⁸⁵ successfully gained access to both parties, the Garvaghy Road Resident's Coalition (GRRC) and the Portadown Orange Order. Gaining such trust did not occur easily, especially as Harkin is a native Derry Catholic. In an interview about *12 Days*, Harkin noted that "it took a long, long time to negotiate access and I would almost go as far as to say that it was as difficult on the Garvaghy Road as it was on the Orange Order side."¹⁸⁶ She continued that both sides were reluctant due to perceived questions of safety:

"It was very difficult to get people to agree to appear in front of a camera

because Portadown is a very dangerous place and if you raise your head in any

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ The project had three directors: producer/director Margo Harkin and location directors Michael Hewitt and Dearbhla Walsh. Since Harkin was involved with the project from the beginning while Hewitt and Walsh were brought in mainly due to the fast turnaround required, unless otherwise indicated or required I will focus mainly on Harkin as the director.

¹⁸⁶ Noreen Collins. "12 Days in July: An Interview with Margo Harkin." *Film West* 34. 1 Feb 2007. Available: <http://www.iol.ie/~galfilm/filmwest/34margo.htm>.

public way; if you give yourself a profile; then, for Catholic people going up Portadown, they can be targeted fairly ruthlessly....Because they made a fuss about the issue of the road and the Orange Order marching down it, they claim that they are – and they are – being continually harassed.”¹⁸⁷

By using an observational style and editing the piece in a basic cross-cutting manner, *12 Days* places the viewer within both the Order and the Garvaghy Road community. With the use of a highly mobile camera, which at times is handheld and at times moves smoothly, and natural lighting Harkin allows the viewer into the action. While some interviews are set up as standard medium close-ups with the interviewee speaking to someone slightly off camera, others are less formal. For example, in the first portion of the film, we are on the bus of a band marching in a mini-12th parade.¹⁸⁸ Here Harkin uses a mix of medium close-ups, close-ups, and extreme close-ups of the band members, highlighting speakers who often are in shadow, due to sunlight coming in the windows creating a strong backlight.

Other elements also add to *12 Days*' observational tone. In the days leading to the parade, the film shows two meetings, one a GRRC public meeting and the other a Youth Meeting. In both instances the camera typically is at the back of the meeting space, with occasionally low sound quality highlighting this placement, and there is little additional lighting used. In the latter meeting, GRRC spokesman and local Councilor Breandán Mac Cionnaith warns local youth to stay away from certain areas in an effort to limit confrontation possibilities; after agreeing the area is dangerous,

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ A pre-12 July parade that is somewhat larger than what will march to Drumcree.

several of the young people begin to argue over why they should have to limit where they go. As the cinematographer uses quick, blurring pans to focus on the different speakers the viewer feels a sense of chaos and disorder.

In only a few instances is the film's observational quality broken. During the program's middle portion, Cionnaith and the filmmakers are driving to the proximity meetings called by Secretary Mowlam. At several points while in the car one can hear the filmmaker asking questions, reminding the viewer that there is a mediator between us and the speaker. Also, in each portion of *12 Days*, Harkin occasionally uses a crawler at the bottom of the screen to provide information. In one such instance, text informing the viewer that "at 1.00 am [on 6 July] a news report suggests that the security forces are preparing to re-route the parade" is imposed over footage of Clifford Forbes, a specific Order member we have followed throughout, waiting with his family for a decision.

Unlike fictional representations of events that help create a memory of an event at least several years in the past, *12 Days* was a more immediate work. It aired on Channel Four Television (C4) on 21 July, barely two weeks after the events depicted occurred. While this may beg questions concerning the amount/type of trauma surrounding the event, such questions are needless. Throughout, *12 Days* subjects' comments clearly indicate a fear of confrontation and violence; Forbes' daughter, a member of one of the parade's bands, comments that she is afraid because during the previous year's parade an onlooker throwing rocks hit another band member. The film even opens with statements regarding the stress caused by the

situation. In a mid-shot, we see Claire Dignam watching a television program; in shot-reverse shot we go between Dignam and the television as it shows 1996s events and her verbally confronting an RUC officer. She then states that she does not want to feel like that again since she's pregnant but that everyone along the Garvaghy Road at the time felt like that. Through her body language the viewer senses that she is tensely waiting, worried, and frustrated that it all seems to be happening again.

There is also a much higher level of participation by the collective. As opposed to fictionalized accounts of events, where members of the collective may be able to influence or assist the filmmakers but more often than not are absent in the film, in *12 Days* members of the collective are immediately present throughout the piece. Not only does Harkin follow specific members of the community, such as Cionnaith and Forbes, she also widens the scope to the broader community with the inclusion of "momentary glances" at other participants, such as the mini-12th parade band.

By using the collective's participation to such a high degree, Harkin provides the viewer with a live demonstration of how parades are "political acts, rhetorical means by which performers attempt to accomplish practical and symbolic goals."¹⁸⁹ In this case, the Orange Order is not only commemorating the past but also presenting a symbolic reminder of that past for those in opposition (the Nationalist Garvaghy residents). Through the collective's participation we also see how that collective actively defines its past. As Davis notes "parades and ceremonies are media that

¹⁸⁹ Susan G. Davis. *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1986). 5.

shape how history and the future are understood.”¹⁹⁰ We the viewer are privy to the Order’s vision of its past (as heroic and grand) and how it parades both to help bolster that vision and to place it in contrast to the Catholic, Nationalist past. The parade and the film also highlight the nature of the sectarian conflict both along Garvaghy and within the larger sphere of Portadown and Ulster itself.

One might hope that by allowing for both sides to participate in the cinematic presentation of events, a certain amount of understanding could form not only within each side present but also by the greater audience. The larger hope that allowing for the formation of a mutual understanding would decrease the likelihood of future confrontation has been realized only slightly. As *12 Days* closes, in voice over, we hear that rioting occurred following the parade and, in response, the Order canceled other contentious parades and the IRA announced a new ceasefire. In medium shots, various community members (including some not seen previously in the film) state that things need to change but that there will continue to be issues of contention. This latter sentiment, along with muted lighting and the closing shot of Drumcree at sunset, leaves the viewer with a feeling of uncertainty that change will occur.

Later in 1997, the North Report’s recommended independent body began work. The Parade Commission is charged with two main roles: mediating between marchers and their opposition and arbitrating when the two parties can not reach an agreement. Although the Commission can make decisions regarding parades, the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland retains the right to overturn

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 22.

Commission decisions “on public order grounds.”¹⁹¹ The other major change issuing from the North Report was the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act, which became law on 16 February 1998. The Act “recognises [sic] the importance of individuals rights, both to march and to protest against marches, and stresses the need for accommodation and tolerance at a local level.”¹⁹² When the parties are unable to reach an agreement, the Act shifts rerouting and parade conditions decision making to the Commission, rather than the RUC, although that body still “retain[s] the power to take necessary steps on the day to preserve public order if need be.”¹⁹³

The Commission’s first decisions affected the 1998 parade. With no agreement between the local residents and the Order, the Commission decided to reroute the parade. Displeased by this announcement, the Order countered that they would ignore the decision, march along their traditional route, and, if stopped, stand their ground for as long as necessary.¹⁹⁴

As in 1997, the government increased troop numbers in the area, deploying 1000 men each from the British Army and the RUC. These troops took extensive measures in an attempt to ensure a peaceful march; they barricaded the road linking

¹⁹¹ Martin Melaugh. "Abstracts on Organizations." 4 Jan 2007, CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet): Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968-2000). 12 Jan 2007. Available: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/organ/porgan.htm>.

¹⁹² Fionnuala McKenna. "Parades and Marches - Independent Review of Parades and Marches in Northern Ireland." 4 Jan 2007, CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet): Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968-2000). 12 Jan 2007. Available: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/parade/north.htm>.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ In an open letter to the people of Ulster in which the Order put forward their case, they note that they will not talk with terrorist groups (meaning the Nationalists). It seems ironic, then, that they would then take a stance that, for all intents and purposes, is not far removed from terroristic threats: we shall do as we see fit and, if you try and stop us, we will do as we see fit. Full text of the 1998 letter can be found on both the Portadown Orange Order website (<http://www.portadowndistrictolno1.co.uk/>) and the CAIN website (<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/parade/docs/goli2798.htm>).

Garvaghy Road and Drumcree and “dug a trench, which was then lined with barbed-wire, through adjoining fields.”¹⁹⁵ Sunday, 5 July 1998, upon leaving the service at Drumcree, the Order marched as far as the barricade before returning to the church, beginning a long lasting standoff. That evening, supporters joined the men at Drumcree and rioting spread through a number of Northern Ireland’s Protestant areas.

In an effort to by-pass the Commission’s decision, Order representatives met with Prime Minister Tony Blair in London on 9 July 1998. Blair, however “repeated its [the British government’s] statement that the decision of the Parades Commission will be enforced.”¹⁹⁶ Subsequently the RUC recorded hundreds of acts of violence and a number of illegal Order parades and the blocking of roads throughout the area. Public opinion turned drastically against the Order when, on 12 July 1998, Loyalists firebombed a Catholic home, burning to death three young boys aged ten and under.¹⁹⁷ Despite numerous calls to end their protest, the Portadown Orange Order continued their standoff but with decreased numbers. The Order maintained a token demonstration at Drumcree until July 1999; during that time, the Order also held marches and demonstrations across Northern Ireland and the level of violence increased, with Catholic homes attacked almost daily.¹⁹⁸

The Parades Commission has rerouted subsequent parades but, generally, to less violent responses. As of this 2007 writing, the Order’s Drumcree protest

¹⁹⁵ McKenna. "Developments at Drumcree, 1995-2000."

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ The Order has argued “that there is no connection between” the firebomb that killed Jason, Mark, and Richard Quinn “(and indeed all the other acts of violence) and the situation at Drumcree.” Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

continues, with the Portadown Orange Order protesting at police lines along the bottom of Drumcree Hill each week after Sunday church services.¹⁹⁹

It is perhaps unsurprising that the majority of women seen in *12 Days* do not hold leading roles. It is to questions of gender that our second film turns.

A Picture of Ireland's Women: *Mother Ireland*

“Mother Ireland get off our back...we’ve moved away from that and will not go back to that.” – Mairead Farrell, Interviewee, *Mother Ireland*

In the late 1980s Anne Crilly finished a documentary investigating the portrayal of Ireland as female through history, focusing especially on the period of and since Ireland's partition. Using interviews, found footage, shots of still photographs and artwork, combined with a soothing voice over and music, *Mother Ireland* (1988) weaves together themes of the Church, the Troubles, and womanhood. This film compares with the other films previously considered due to its discussion of trauma and it works within the vein of attempting to create a common memory and idea. *Mother* also has played a larger role within the Anglo-Irish relationship due to its central place within controversy surrounding a 1988 English broadcasting ban.

On 19 October 1988 the British Home Secretary Douglas Hurd signed a notice regarding what could not be aired on television and radio. Under this notice, broadcasters could not air matter in which “any words spoken, whether in the course of an interview or discussion or otherwise, by a person who appears or is heard on the

¹⁹⁹ Press releases on the Portadown Orange Order website include at least one article pertaining to the Drumcree protest every year since 1998. "Portadown District LOL No. 1." 6 Feb 2006. 13 Feb 2006. Available: <http://www.portadowndistrictlolno1.co.uk/>.

programme [sic] in which the matter is broadcast” who (purportedly) represents or requests support for “(a) any organization which is for the time being a proscribed organization for the purposes of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 or the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978; and (b) Sinn Féin, Republican Sinn Féin and the Ulster Defence [sic] Association.”²⁰⁰ Hurd argued that “the ban would ‘remove from the men of violence an extra weapon which the existence of direct access to the media has provided for them’.” He also stated that as the ban “does not deal with or prohibit the reporting of events,” it “is not censorship.”²⁰¹

Although research showed that during the year following the ban, British television’s broadcasting of Sinn Féin member interviews fell by 63 percent,²⁰² the ban was problematic in a number of ways. First, there is no “cut off” date, meaning that it would cover pieces made prior to 19 October. As C4’s Don Christopher notes “it would cover any such material recorded at any time in the past – for example, newsreel footage shot before the creation of the Republic of Ireland.”²⁰³ Secondly, the ban does not denote words spoken by someone with ties to specific organizations who

²⁰⁰ Don Christopher. "The Government Ban on Terrorist Statements on Radio and Television." Letter to Producers. Channel Four Television. 24 Oct 1988. Hurd’s notice fell under section 29.3 of the Broadcasting Act 1981 (c. 68), which states “Subject to subsection (4), the Secretary of State may at any time by notice in writing require the Authority to refrain from broadcasting any matter or classes of matter specified in the notice; and it shall be the duty of the Authority to comply with the notice.” "Broadcasting Act 1981 (C 68)." 1981. 7 Feb 2007. Available: <http://www.statutelaw.gov.uk/legResults.aspx?LegType=All+Legislation&title=Broadcasting+Act&Year=1981&searchEnacted=0&extentMatchOnly=0&confersPower=0&blanketAmendment=0&TYPE=QS&NavFrom=0&activeTextDocId=1697537&PageNumber=1&SortAlpha=0>.

²⁰¹ David Owen and Jimmy Burns. "Living with a Six-Year Silence." *Financial Times* [London] 17 Sept 1994.

²⁰² Quoted in Michael Foley. "Dubbing SF Voices Becomes the Stuff of History." *Irish Times* 17 Sept 1994.

²⁰³ Christopher.

is not speaking about that organization, its aims, or even necessarily politics. Thirdly, there would appear to be no caveat for words/statements that are then contradicted, or “even if the offending words are accompanied by opposing statements from the same or another speaker or source.”²⁰⁴

Crilly, in conjunction with the Derry Film and Video Co-op (DFV), originally made the documentary for C4 as part of a series focusing on Ireland. As DFV advertising notes “*Mother Ireland* explores the development and use of images and music which personify Ireland as a woman in Irish culture and nationalism.”²⁰⁵ The interview/dialogue heavy film opens with a montage of Irish women portrayed in paintings, statues, and photographs overlaid with audio of a woman singing; it then moves into a sequence of short, “traditional” interview shots (which show the interviewee in three-quarter, medium close-ups, typically on the frame’s left side looking slightly to the camera’s right) of women discussing what the phrase “Mother Ireland” means. After a brief discussion of pre-twentieth century images and ideas, the remainder of the film focuses on women within the twentieth century, especially as relates to nationalism.

Although women had roles in nationalist groups such as the Ladies Land League²⁰⁶ and in events such as the 1916 Easter Rising, the island’s partition and the Republic’s subsequent constitution shifted the women’s sphere away from politics

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ "Derry Film and Video Present World Premiere of 'Mother Ireland'." *Derry Journal* [Derry] 28 Oct 1988.

²⁰⁶ The narrator makes an interesting point that, although part of the Republican movement and begun when Parnell and other male leaders were imprisoned, when those leaders returned they disbanded the Ladies Land League on the ground that it was “too radical.”

and back into the home. It is at this point that the film focuses on the modern Catholic Church. Crilly uses found footage of the 1987 pilgrimage to Knock overlaid with audio of children singing about Mary, to highlight the point that the Church's strong position within Ireland helped facilitate the shifting of women more firmly into the home. Historian Margaret MacCurtain tells the viewer that, in contrast with pre-famine (pre-1846) Ireland, during and after the famine the idea of the sorrowful Mother strengthened and only began to wane in the 1980s.

Echoing sentiments portrayed in other works (both fictive and non) the role of both the Church proper and its disciples in the form of nuns are examined. In a tight close up journalist Nell McCafferty remembers how the nuns in her school²⁰⁷ taught that the "place of women" was either as a spinster teacher or nurse or, for the "really lucky," as a married woman. Imelda Peppard specifically recalls being told that women "should have as much [sic] children as you can in order to provide the Church with more followers." Ironically in almost every clip of the interview with Peppard, there is at least one child present; in fact, at one point, a small girl obscures Peppard to such a degree that the viewer only sees roughly a quarter of the speaker. This arrangement does not feel planned, as one young girl, who seems both shy in front of the camera and desirous to be there, enters the frame only when the baby already present starts to fuss. McCafferty does comment that the choices of mother or

²⁰⁷ McCafferty notes that this occurred in "primary education to grammar school;" current Irish education documents indicate that primary education is equivalent to 1-6 grades in the U.S. These documents do not note a grammar school level, however there is a "Junior Cycle" of Second Level education (approximately equivalent to 7-10 grades U.S.).

teacher/nurse slowly began to change during the 1970s, as reality diverged more and more from the Church's literature and teachings.

Using a large amount of found footage and an ironic, specifically Northern Ireland-centric version of "What a Wonderful World," the documentary turns to the Nationalist issues of the late 1960s through the 1980s. Bernadette McAliskey (nee Devlin) discusses the case for civil rights in Derry, likening the two sides through the inequality of women. In a medium close-up, Mairead Farrell echoes McAliskey. Farrell discusses growing up in Belfast and her participation with the Republican movement. She tells how in 1976 she was arrested and charged with causing three explosions, possession of a firearm, and membership in the IRA; she was sentenced to 14 years in prison and served eleven years.

A brief montage follows consisting of both stills and found footage of women within the modern Republican movement (which is in stark contrast to the overwhelmingly serene images of women with which the film opened) accompanied by the same audio track of a woman singing as was the opening montage. *Mother* closes with the same women who have been interviewed throughout the film discussing why/why not "Mother Ireland" fits with ideas of contemporary Irish women.

Crilly completed *Mother Ireland* 1 March 1988 and sent it to C4 the next day.²⁰⁸ Four days later, on 6 March, the British Secret Air Service (SAS) in Gibraltar

²⁰⁸ Anne Crilly. "Putting a Muzzle on Dear Mother Ireland." *Irish America Magazine* Nov. 1989. 18.

shot and killed three IRA members; Mairead Farrell was one of those killed.²⁰⁹ C4 felt that nothing within *Mother* needed to be cut and passed the film on to the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) “which monitors and approves all programs” C4 broadcasts.²¹⁰ The IBA deliberated from May to October 1988, only releasing their opinion after the Gibraltar inquest. In their opinion, Mairead Farrell would need to be “replaced by ‘someone of her stance and experience’.”²¹¹ However, on the afternoon of the same day DFV met with C4 to discuss the IBA’s decision, Hurd announced the new broadcasting ban.

With the new ban in place, Mairead Farrell was not the only point of contention within *Mother*. Other interviewees would also fall within Hurd’s restrictions; three of the women were Cumann na mBan²¹² veterans and a fourth, *An Phoblacht/Republican News* editor Rita O’Hare, was a Sinn Féin member. Due to the ban’s retroactive nature, newsreel footage used in *Mother* would also be excluded. There were two options to choose between in order to show the film on television: cut and/or replace the footage in question or, since the ban prevented the broadcast of words and not images, she could replace the women’s dialogue with subtitles.²¹³ In

²⁰⁹ While the SAS claimed the three members were about to set off a bomb, witnesses to the event claim that the SAS gave no warning. Controversy and a number of deaths followed the Gibraltar shootings. "CAIN Web Service (Conflict Archive on the Internet): Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland (1968 to the Present)."

²¹⁰ Crilly. 18

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² The women’s wing of the IRA.

²¹³ Later, filmmaker’s would dub actor’s voices over the interviewee’s voice.

the long run, C4 chose the latter option, running a dubbed version in its 1991 Banned season.²¹⁴

C4's decision does not mean that audiences have not seen Crilly's original version. Groups throughout Ulster and the Republic, as well as Scotland and England, have shown the film in auditoriums and halls.²¹⁵ Uncensored versions aired on television stations in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Germany; it also played at the 1989 International Women's Film and Video Festival of Montreal.

Since 1994, television audiences within both the Republic and Ulster were able to see the original version. After the 1992 banning of the Ulster Defence Association, Sinn Féin and the Republican Sinn Féin were the only legal organizations the ban continued to cover.²¹⁶ This singling out did not assist attempts at peace. It was with an eye toward peace that then Prime Minister John Major announced the ban's end on 16 September 1994. The timing of Major's announcement coincided with the ceasefire announced earlier that year; "it [was] the first gesture the Government [made] to Sinn Féin, and therefore the IRA, since the declaration."²¹⁷

Although, unlike the other works discussed here, *Mother* does not look at a specific event, it does work with members of the collective to create a common

²¹⁴ According to C4, this 11 April 1991 airing was *Mother's* only C4 air date. Jessicka Burton. "Re: Viewer Enquiry Contact Us Submission (Kmm501336i19660l0km)." E-mail to the author. Channel 4 Television. 19 Mar 2007.

²¹⁵ RTÉ could not air *Mother* as, from 1971 (updated in 1976) to January 1994, it worked under a ban (known as Section 31 of the Broadcasting Authority Act 1960) similar to that enacted by Secretary Hurd. Conor Cruise O'Brien. "Blacking out the IRA; Ban to Bar Terrorist from Access to Broadcasting." *Times* [London] 19 Oct 1988.

²¹⁶ Foley.

²¹⁷ Stephen McGregor. "Broadcasting Move and Referendum Pledge Puts Pressure on Terrorists Major's Double-Edged Gauntlet Major in Referendum Pledge." *Herald* [Glasgow] 17 Sept 1994.

memory (and in this case feelings) of the past. Although the documentary directly uses only a portion of the collective in retelling history, it is aimed at the entire collective. *Mother* demonstrates the increasing gulf between ideas (and, subsequently, images and representations) about women and the country's bodies of power. As with features such as *The Magdalene Sisters*, *Mother* can help combat stereotypes about women (and their places in society), demonstrates their active participation in political movements, as well as help the whole community move on and discontinue the perpetuation of outdated ideas.

While neither *Mother Ireland* nor *12 Days in July* are feature length, the two documentaries still allow for the investigation of Ireland's past (from the distant to the recent). They also both work with the collective to help formulate a common memory and history and, in so doing, allow for more inclusive discussion and, possibly, increased understanding.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Over the last several chapters, we have had an in-depth look at four films in an effort to answer a handful of questions. The main questions were how did they (the films) present history? And, how did/do they assist in creating a collective memory? In order to answer the former question, we first looked at each event or way of life's history. None of these events narratives emerged out of a vacuum; they each had a grounding in the past and, in order to more fully understand the presented narratives, we should have a more complete picture of the history in question. We also examined the films technical aspects; for example, the cinéma vérité-like qualities of *Bloody Sunday* and the use of color and sound in *The Magdalene Sisters*, all of which affected both the viewer's perception/understanding and the accuracy of history.

The second question, that of creating a collective memory, itself gave rise to various questions. First, what/who is the collective in question? In each case we saw that it included not only those with a direct link to the past but also the larger community. For *12 Days in July* the collective included both the two sides the documentary features (the Garvaghy Road residents and the Orange Order) as well as the larger Portadown and Ulster communities. Secondly, in what way did the collective participate in the memory creation? Each film used collective members as sources of information or consultants; in *Sisters* we saw that women formerly involved in the Asylum system informed the Asylum in question's portrayal. They also each used members of the collective within the films, either as actors (*Sunday*

and *Sisters*) or interviewees (*12 Days* and *Mother Ireland*). Thirdly, what purpose(s) do/es the memory created serve? Also, what purpose did the filmmakers appear to have for creating these films and, therefore, these memories? The filmmakers of *Sunday* and *12 Days* both appear desirous for a move towards reconciliation, at least within the areas of Ulster depicted. *Sisters* and *Mother Ireland*, on the other hand, seems more desirous of providing an arena for voices that have been muffled; in both cases, the voices are those of women. Again, with all the film's there is a sense of catharsis; there is also the sense that the memories can assist in a better understanding and, therefore, a greater ability to heal.

There were also "smaller" questions throughout, such as: how do these works relate to others? I mainly answered this question in relation to the two fiction works, placing each in a dialogue already begun by earlier works and scholarship. Although I did not explicitly place the documentaries within similar discussions, this could be done easily; *12 Days* would fit neatly into the same discourse as does *Sunday* (as it similarly looks at an element of the Troubles) and *Mother* could be placed within discourses about the Church, the Troubles, and feminism.

Each film provided slightly different answers to the question of how do they interact/what are their relations with institutions such as the Church or government? Another way to think of this latter question is: how did those bodies affect the films? In some cases the institutions handling of the various events directly influenced the film's creation; for *Sunday* the government's new investigation helped prompt the film while for *Sisters* the Church's silence regarding an abusive system spurred

production. *Mother* had something of a unique interaction with the government, coming as it did in direct conflict with the British government's 1988 broadcasting ban. In almost all cases, the critiques provided prompted a negative reaction from these institutions; *12 Days* being the exception to this, as I did not find any indication that the government took issue the work.

By choosing both works of fiction and non-fiction, I hoped to create more rounded answers to the above questions as well as to show that presenting history to create a collective memory is not the exclusive domain of one form over the other. In the case of the documentaries *12 Days* and *Mother* my decision to use those specific films was guided by availability as much as by the film's fitting squarely within my set parameters of topic and time span. However, I do not feel that the lack of a wide variety of choices was a negative; both pieces worked in providing different takes on issues raised in the fiction features.

In conclusion, we have seen that films offer an easily accessible, more compact presentation of history; in our context, a history typically fraught with trauma. I have also shown that, by presenting history, films, especially the four discussed herein, present a fertile arena for assisting in the creation of a collective memory. That memory, in turn, can serve a number of purposes, including assisting in the healing process and providing voice for a formerly silenced portion of society.

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