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Reel Trauma: Contemporary Screenings of Northern Irish Conflict
(1996-2005)

Aileen Blaney
Declaration

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Summary

Since the first IRA ceasefire in 1994, construction of discursive memory in Northern Ireland’s cultural spheres has politicised and sanitised historical trauma. This thesis identifies audio-visual culture as being exemplary in this regard. Based on their production within a specific historical period and common address of historical trauma, the selected works are considered collectively. Although a unified body of work, these film and television texts nonetheless display great diversity in their modes of representation and discursive constellations. Analyses rely upon an extensive range of critical theories, whose multiplicity reflects the diversity of representational strategies and discursive formations across the body of work. Theories emanating from the fields of memory and trauma studies, anthropology and political philosophy conjoin with theories of discourse to serve the objective of this thesis – to precisely explicate how and why contemporary audio-visual culture remembers historical trauma. In performing this function, the thesis considers each film and television text’s idiosyncratic adaptation of the drama-documentary format and simultaneously positions the body of work in a collective relationship with historical and contemporary socio-political contexts. The press reception of these films in Northern Ireland is also considered. Analyses of film reviews of the selected works highlight the discursive persistence of historical trauma in Northern Ireland’s public sphere.
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Introduction

History isn't merely the past: it isn't even over yet.¹

The films can begin to do 'mourning work', not because they give us fictional victims or actual villains, but because like Dante's encounters in hell, they fill the mind's eye and ear with voices and presences: they will forever speak of a history for which there is neither redemption nor exorcism.²

The fundamental research question of this thesis asks: why and how do films, produced for theatrical exhibition and/or television transmission, in the decade following the first IRA ceasefire (1994) discursively construct memory of historical trauma?

Since the instigation of the peace process in Northern Ireland, noticeable debate, and frequent disagreement, concerning how the conflict should be remembered has become increasingly prevalent in academic, political and media spheres. In the aftermath of 'the troubles,' a 'memory war,'³ in which competing accounts of historical atrocities jostle for political and social primacy, has significantly altered the 'discursive formations'⁴ circulating within Northern Irish society. In an essay entitled 'History Beyond the Pleasure Principle,'⁵ Eric Santner identifies a remarkably similar discursive process which occurred in Germany during the mid-1980s, and coincided with the historikerstreit, or, 'The Historian's Debate' when members of the German intelligentsia engaged in heavily publicised disputes relating to historical remembrance of the Holocaust. Santner describes ritual and forms of historical remembrance during this period as 'a series of mnemonic readjustments and rearrangements, enacted in the framework of public rituals, narratives, and various other modes of cultural production, whereby dates, events, names, concepts, locations, institutions, and historical agents are made newly available for libidinal investment.'⁶ In a similar fashion, subsequent to the 1990s' ceasefires in Northern Ireland, fervent debate occurred in cultural and political quarters about appropriate ways to remember the conflict. These discussions frequently cited commemorative precedents in other parts of the globe. For example, politicians and journalists who suggested that the statue of the unionist leader, Edward
Carson, in Stormont Castle should be replaced by a peace sculpture cited the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in Washington DC as a precursor. Examples of commemorative public art in Germany were also invoked,

The precedent of Berlin in 1990 produced suggestions that such a memorial could be constructed from one of the now redundant peace line walls in Belfast, or by retaining some of the sentry towers overlooking border crossings and boulders which had closed minor roads. The post-communist approach to public sculpture in Eastern Europe was invoked in suggestions that the Carson statue and other unionist figures outside Belfast City Hall be removed to sculpture parks.

Censorship in the broadcast media

In her report, ‘Memorials to the Casualties of the Conflict Northern Ireland 1969 to 1997,’ Jane Leonard refers to a comment made by the late Senator Gordon Wilson, whose daughter was killed in the Enniskillen Remembrance Day atrocity, ‘... that those bereaved by the Troubles did not require a monument to be reminded of their loss but that the outside world did need this reminder.’ For Leonard, relatives of the victims and/or victim-survivors themselves require that the larger public are educated about the political conflict so that they can gain at least some degree of public recognition, and reassurance that their losses and/or suffering will not be forgotten. Similarly, Michael Beattie, former Head of News and Current Affairs at UTV, speaking about relatives of the victims of the Omagh bombing in the context of a programme about its aftermath, states:

They and other victims, wanted to talk. They hated the way that the ‘single black cloud’ of media vultures descended on them for a few days and then left for something grim elsewhere. They were trying to make some sense of what had happened. They wanted people to listen to them; they didn’t want to be forgotten. I was not putting words on something I sensed from them. It was what they actually said. And if they have something they want to say, do we not have a responsibility to listen.

Arguably, contemporary broadcasting culture in Northern Ireland is better predisposed to fulfilling remembrance goals than that it was during ‘the troubles,’ when a ‘war-wariness’ inhibited television executives and creative personnel from engaging with subjects directly related to political violence. In this regard, Liz Curtis describes the BBC’s ‘reference upwards system’ as ‘a filter, removing ‘‘undesirable’’
programmes or items at an early stage and, in theory, eliminating the need for embarrassing acts of censorship.'\textsuperscript{12} She points out that the BBC system was ‘a departure from the normal procedure because it transferred responsibility from the individual producer or editor to top management’ such that rather than being subject to external censorship, the BBC censored itself.\textsuperscript{13} Moreover, as Bill Rolston and Mary and Kelly point out, ‘the aligning of the broadcast media with the security forces “definition of events and their lack of criticism of some army and police activities,” greatly limited the viewing public’s exposure to the diversity of political perspectives in Northern Ireland.\textsuperscript{14}

Many media commentators writing about broadcasting culture on the island of Ireland, including Rolston and Kelly, agree that between the mid-1970s and 1993, Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE) - the major broadcasting organisation in the Republic of Ireland - steered further away from the subject of the conflict than its Northern counterparts.\textsuperscript{15} Nonetheless, censorship legislation - notably Section 31 of the Republic’s Broadcasting Act and the British broadcasting ban - existed in both jurisdictions, and both Irish and British governments alike demonstrated a propensity to exert pressure on broadcasters to promote their respective interests in a ‘propaganda war.’ However, despite repressive censorship laws, in comparison to classic ‘totalitarian regimes of censorship,’ their enactment in Northern Ireland and the Republic was rare.\textsuperscript{16} Additionally, these censorship laws did not refer to works of ‘pure’ fiction. Notwithstanding the relative absence of actual cases of censorship, governmental intimidation and a censorship culture more generally inhibited the creative treatment of the conflict on the part of broadcasters in both jurisdictions. For instance ‘Between 1970 and August 1989, according to data collected by the Campaign for Free Speech in Ireland and the London-based research group, the Irish Information Partnership, a total of 76 TV programmes on NI - documentaries, plays and even church services - were either banned, refashioned, cut or postponed because of either internal or external pressure. That was an average of one every three months.’\textsuperscript{17} Furthermore, ‘the majority of affected programmes since 1985, 11 out of 15, dealt with issues of concern to nationalists, such as the Stalker affair or the Birmingham Six judgement.’\textsuperscript{18} Similar broadcasting controls in the Republic gave rise to a ‘silence in Irish broadcasting’\textsuperscript{19} during the ‘troubles.’ Apart from granting the conflict limited treatment in news bulletins and current affairs programmes,
programme makers in RTE generally avoided the topic of Northern Ireland for fear of governmental disapproval and being perceived as ‘provo-lovers.’ As late as September 1992 - two years prior to the decision of Michael D. Higgins, Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, not to renew the directive under Section 31 - an RTE Staff Information Bulletin acknowledged this ‘silence’ by concluding that RTE ‘is probably the only broadcasting organisation in the world, outside of totalitarian countries, to invite censorship and a curtailment of editorial freedom in this way.’

While it be would obtuse to posit that the British and Irish governments exercised unique control of the broadcast media available to the population in Northern Ireland during ‘the troubles,’ their respective influences nonetheless pervaded both commercial and public service broadcasting institutions, and audiovisual culture more generally, and severely restricted television drama and independent film production during these years. That is not to say that provocative programmes were not being produced during this time, as Granada Television’s drama-documentary Who Bombed Birmingham? (Mike Beckham, 1990) and Yorkshire Television’s Shoot to Kill (Peter Kosminsky Liz Westbrook, 1990) – a drama-documentary about the RUC killings of six unarmed men in County Armagh in 1982 - amply demonstrate. Similarly, the 1988 Thames Television documentary Death on the Rock - about the Gibraltar rock killings, and the 1985 BBC Real Lives documentary - At the Edge of the Union - in which a senior Republican paramilitary was interviewed, challenged the British government’s consensus on and regulation of the subject of Northern Ireland. However, these programmes might be considered as anomalous examples, or, as instances of how, as Lance Pettitt points out, ‘On occasion the hegemonic views of political and cultural elites have been challenged, but effective interventions using drama from within influential cultural institutions such as the BBC have been intermittent …’ However, in the post conflict context, the appearance of programmes which challenge hegemonic viewpoints have been less intermittent than during ‘the troubles.’ In 1997, a Channel 4 news programme and a book of eyewitness reports by human rights activist Don Mullan uncovered crucial evidence relating to Bloody Sunday, which contributed to the setting up of the Saville Inquiry - established by the British government to re-examine events on the day of Bloody Sunday. Five years later, in early 2002, two high profile feature films about the event were transmitted on Channel 4 and UTV. Owing to the degree of
engagement with historical trauma exhibited by the ‘Sunday’ and other feature films produced in the decade following the first IRA ceasefire in 1994, and the collaboration of both army personnel and relatives of the dead and survivors with the filmmakers concerned, these works may be identified as being of exceptional broadcasting and cinematic significance.

Post-conflict memorial culture

It is noteworthy that since the cessation of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland, a greater propensity on the part of the broadcast media to represent historical trauma has occurred in tandem with an upsurge in memorial schemes there, and that state forces are less inclined to interfere with public acts of remembrance than during the ‘troubles’; for example, although Bloody Sunday has been commemorated annually since its occurrence in 1972, as part of a special 31st Bloody Sunday Anniversary, the Bloody Sunday Trust accelerated its commemorative efforts by organising a march which exactingly retraced the route followed by the anti-internment march in 1972. Whereas commemorative activities during the troubles unfailingly entailed massive police presence, in this instance, the re-enactment of the march was attended by large numbers of the Derry population with minimum interference from the security forces. Similarly, preservation of historical sites in Derry and elsewhere in Northern Ireland has enhanced cultural memory of political violence across multiple communities. In response to this renewed sense of historical consciousness in Northern Ireland, the Bloody Sunday Trust has campaigned for formal recognition of the Bogside in Derry city as an area of unique historical significance and recommended the construction of the Bogside History Centre. The rapid development of special interest tourism in the Bogside, as in other parts of Northern Ireland, and the increase in numbers visiting Free Derry Corner and the surrounding murals is exemplary of the degree to which a remembrance culture has prospered in Northern Ireland since the instigation of the peace process.

The politics of victimhood

Disputes regarding ownership of the past, however, have complicated and politicised issues, and acts, of remembrance. When Derry SDLP Councillor Shaun Gallagher suggested that Free Derry Wall should become the property of Derry City Council or the Department of the Environment’s Heritage Division, community
members, who had maintained the wall for over thirty years, expressed reluctance to relinquish their collective ownership of the site. The Bogside History Centre, which is responsible for collating and preserving material and ephemera pertaining to the history of the Bogside area, has met less resistance. Inspired by resource centres in the US, which archive house video recordings of the testimonies of victim-survivors of the Holocaust, the centre will fulfil its educational function by engaging in ‘the video recording of the experiences and memories of people who have lived through, or were active in the shaping of the major events that have occurred in the city.’

Documentary filmmaker Cathal McLaughlin comments that since the IRA the ceasefires in 1994, a number of victims’ and survivors’ organisations have undertaken the recording of first hand testimony as a means of addressing the traumas of the previous quarter century of violence. In an essay discussing one concrete example of this phenomenon, he describes his collaboration with the West Belfast-based Victims and Survivors Trust (VAST) in producing a short documentary with the aim of allowing survivors the opportunity to tell their story, and in building an archive in the manner of the Shoah foundation. In common other victims’ and survivors’ organisations for whom the goal of educating the larger public of their suffering motivates their activities, McLaughlin conveys VAST’s interest in making the documentary and building the archive for ‘promotional’ purposes. In this regard, McLaughlin echoes Leonard’s comment, made earlier in this chapter, that victims do not need to be reminded of their own suffering, but do need the recognition of the wider public. Likewise, members of VAST do not record their narratives for posterity purposes, but in order ‘to tell their stories to the public, to be listened to, and to be acknowledged.’ To elucidate their desire to commit their stories to the public record, McLaughlin differentiates between knowledge and acknowledgement; he points out that acknowledgment implies ‘... acting on knowledge. Acknowledgment suggests a development where healing is possible.’ In the context of judicial indifference to, or lack of acknowledgement of, their juries and losses, organisations like VAST promote their own suffering in response to the ‘public lack of closure’ on the past.

On-line remembrance

On-line organisations such as the Bloody Sunday Trust indicate the alacrity with which the past is being recuperated in the public sphere. According to their
mission statement, their objective is: ‘The advancement of the education of the
general public to raise greater awareness and understanding of their heritage and to
compile archival materials publicly accessible in the advancement of human and civil
rights, tolerance and diversity throughout the island of Ireland and internationally.’ \(^\text{33}\)
Similar to definitions of cultural memory, whose relevance to memorial culture in
Northern Ireland, and to critical analysis in this thesis will be outlined at a later stage
in this chapter, this statement reveals a commitment to ensuring the relevance of
history to the collective subjectivities of the group that is being addressed. The CAIN
Web Service also details the history of the conflict, and it, too, may be associated with
a broader trend that has witnessed discursive practices in the North operating in a
dialectical relationship with socio-cultural developments. Similarly, the objects of
analysis in this thesis exhibit a common preoccupation with historical trauma, and
indicate, at least on the level of audio-visual culture, a contemporary preoccupation
with the past.

The ‘trouble’ with Northern Irish film

The British and Irish government’s financial and political support of
commemorative artefacts and activities suggest that the discourses of history and
memory have benefited exponentially from the instigation of the peace process. By
contrast, many estimable commentators on Irish film have compared the vast majority
of feature films made about Northern Ireland during ‘the troubles’ to exercises in
amnesia, for grossly misrepresenting both the victims and perpetrators of political
violence. Most commentators agree that the limited number of feature films which
represent historical trauma tend to sanitise or sensationalise human suffering. For
failing to adequately represent historical trauma, these films might be considered as
exercises in amnesia, or compared to what Santner identifies as ‘narrative fetishism’ \(^\text{34}\)
in German film. Both Martin McLoone and John Hill variously identify similar
critical failings in their evaluations of films related to the Northern Irish conflict.
McLoone criticises a fixation in Northern Irish film with ‘oedipal dramas’ and love
stories torn asunder by the sectarian divide, one that precludes such films’
engagement in cogent political analysis. \(^\text{35}\) He also regards the recurrence of the
gangster genre as coterminous with the British government’s strategy of
criminalisation in relation to the IRA, and laments the high rate of production of films
which sensationalise violence, and thus depoliticise narrative allusions to the conflict:
Hill assumes a postcolonial perspective in his identification of the myth of atavistic violence as being at the source of the banal, humanist message of many feature films about Northern Ireland during this period. Similarly, in Ruth Barton’s denigration of audio-visual representations of the Northern Ireland conflict, she criticises a consistent elision of government responsibility and the interpretation of sectarian violence in exclusively tribal terms. She remarks that ‘Westminster has allowed itself to be represented as honest broker in a battle between two sides of warring factions.’ Similar criticism emanates from other academic perspectives, and media scholar David Butler’s observation is apposite in this regard, he writes:

In general, coverage of Northern Ireland displays a depressing dependence on second-hand motifs, visual and thematic, which mars all but the most painstaking and imaginative representations. And this is also the root of the problem for broadcasters, the makers of fiction and documentary films and academic analysis alike: how does one go about representing ‘culture and identity in Northern Ireland’ in ways which avoid depoliticizing their seamier aspects while at the same time not falling into the trap of reliance on cliché.

Writing as far back as the early 1980s from a Republican perspective, Liz Curtis decries the representation of terrorists in television drama by positing that ‘Like the “terrorists” of the popular press, and the “mindless thugs” execrated by politicians, the fictional characters bear little resemblance to their real-life counterparts.’

In terms of strategies of representation and content, the films selected as objects of analysis in the following chapters can be distinguished from the body of work being discussed above for their comparative dearth of narrative clichés and other such familiar tropes, and for, in varying degrees, the sophistication of their engagement with the subject of historical trauma. To this end, unlike the vast majority of films dealing with the conflict produced during ‘the troubles,’ many of these works realistically represent the figure of the victim and/or survivor-victim of political and state violence and foreground their historical accuracy. However, in the post conflict context, the discursive prevalence of a ‘politics of victimhood’ means that representations concerning the victims of violence are, inevitably, contentious in nature, and inevitably, challenges exist in translating an individual’s private suffering into a public register targeted at a mass audience. On a societal level, Paul Brown of The Guardian notes that ‘Catholics see themselves as victims of loyalists and the British state, loyalists see themselves as victims of republicans and now the British
state. We have to show that they are both victims and perpetrators.\textsuperscript{40} Notwithstanding the limitations of audio-visual representations, the hybrid genre of drama-documentary has emerged as a remarkably effective format through which historical trauma has been represented in the relevant period with which this thesis is concerned.\textsuperscript{41} Pettitt recognises its critical capacity when, in reference to dramas since the late 1960s, he remarks that ‘The political, security and legal apparatus of the British establishment has been most effectively critiqued at different junctures in the drama-documentary format.’\textsuperscript{42} Typically, the drama-documentary, whether emanating from the Northern Irish context or elsewhere, enacts a propensity to analyse political violence and challenge consensus viewpoints. In the Northern Irish context, David Miller describes how ‘As the ability to make factual programmes decreased journalists turned to dramatizations, which offer increased space for dramatic licence and make it easier to represent events without requiring informants to appear on television.’\textsuperscript{43} Similarly, for Derek Paget, who wrote the first full-length book on the ‘dramadoc’ and its US counterpart the ‘docudrama,’ the form enacts a ‘public service’\textsuperscript{44} role.

The drama-documentaries under investigation in the coming chapters provoked most controversy when production companies did not sufficiently collaborate with the communities concerned. Issues relating to ownership of the past surfaced for example when members of Catholic and Protestant communities in Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne expressed dissatisfaction with the usurpation of their suffering by the BBC for commercial purposes, and sought an injunction against the transmission of \textit{Holy Cross} (Mark Brozel, 2003). Revealingly, few of these works have been made on location due to the likelihood of local resistance, especially in the cases of \textit{Holy Cross} and \textit{Omagh} (Pete Travis, 2004). Understandably, such community resistance can be attributed to the brevity of the period between the historical event and its representation. Despite these and myriad other challenges, independent production companies and broadcasting institutions, in the Irish Republic and the UK, are not subject to the same degree of government surveillance as was operating during the troubles, and are subsequently empowered to more freely collaborate in the production of works which explore historical events.\textsuperscript{45}
Cultural memory and the peace process

In an article entitled *German-Jewish Identity and National Consciousness*, Micheal Geyer and Miriam Hansen argue that: 'The rise of a historicising, national consciousness comes in the midst of a breakdown of the institution of history.'\(^{46}\) Geyer and Hansen's comment reflects a widespread consensual opinion which suggests that public confidence in the traditional modes of historiography has become greatly eroded. However, because of the processes of redefinition occurring on cultural, political and administrative levels in contemporary Northern Ireland, historical linkages are needed in that society now more than ever. The mushrooming of commemorative sites and debates about the most ethically responsible ways of remembering the past suggests that the institution of history, or the writing of history, is inadequate to the task.

Cultural memory theories reconfigure historical modes of analyses by advocating that ethico-political questions about the past be posed within the context of contemporary socio-political issues. Recent debate in the field of memory studies has noted how, increasingly, the obligation to 'never forget' has been supplanted by the more subtle stress on *how* to remember the past.\(^{47}\) Meanwhile, manipulation of the past in the electronic media is evident in its 'use of private memory to develop a public narrative.'\(^{48}\) Opinion in the academy is divided as to whether such activity contributes in a responsible manner to a burgeoning national consciousness. British media academic John Corner raises its positive capabilities over negative tendencies, while other experts, such as Robert Burgoyne in the US, voice concerns about the role of the media in 'reprogramming' and 'implanting' national memory.\(^{49}\)

As already mentioned, institutional and governmental factors stymied the democratic expression of historical trauma in the public sphere during 'the troubles.' By the dawn of the peace process, it had become obvious that stringent censorship laws had made little or no perceptible contribution to reducing levels of violence. As the peace process moved forward, censorship laws were relaxed, and self-censorship in the media correspondingly abated. I would argue that while audio-visual culture was subject to strict governmental and institutional surveillance during the troubles, in recent times, its democratic potential has been renewed, and both television and
cinema have acted as valves releasing personal memories of traumatic events into the public realm. John Comer extols the positive role played by television in public life,

This negative perception on the new order of public communication may be contrasted with the views of those who have seen the primary effect of television to be positive. Here, the interpretation is one which registers a greater democratization of public life, consequent upon higher levels of public accountability and a greatly increased popular understanding of, and attention to, government policies and activities.50

Corner promotes the strengths of television and places it at the centre of a new form of political organisation. He argues that television ‘... has been seen as the representational hub of a new pattern of knowledge and feeling and of new kinds of political organization, self-consciousness, and identity.’51 Corner’s commentary on the political capacities of television may be applied to audio-visual culture in post conflict Northern Ireland. From this perspective, by discursively working through historical trauma, film and television texts provide a responsible or desirable discursive memory of the past for the population. He writes that, ‘Once again, the continuing relevance of the study is underlined, for few topics are currently receiving more research attention than the ways in which television variously constructs a “personal nexus” for constructing “public” matters.’52 The personalising of historical events in the objects of analysis of this thesis reflects the implosion of personal memories into the Northern Irish public sphere, and is an inevitable consequence of the centrality of the victim in contemporary Northern Irish society and discourse. For its part, drama-documentary is suitable to the task being described, since in its ability to go beyond the constraints imposed by factual representation, it acknowledges the personal toll of political violence, while not entirely differentiating itself from the ‘discourses of sobriety.’53

The question of whether ‘ceasefire film’ constructs a ‘desirable’ memory of the past for a contemporary ‘interpretive community’ is the primary area of investigation in this thesis. As previously mentioned, increased media interest in the memory and history of the conflict in the North can, at least partly, be linked to the disbandment of strict censorship laws on both parts of the island. Considering this topic has received scholarly attention elsewhere, suffice it to say that a loss of state control over the construction and transmission of history might also explain why representations of the past have splintered into myriad, competing memories.55
This thesis comprises four sections in which the construction of public/cultural memory of four key historical events - Bloody Sunday, The 1981 Hunger Strikes, the controversy surrounding access to Holy Cross school, and the Omagh bombing, are examined, as well as the reception in the print media to these films. A reconstruction of the Robert McCartney murder in Belfast in 2005, produced by RTE, will also be examined, albeit in less depth than other works. How Bloody Sunday and the Hunger Strikes are made newly-available for 'libidinal investment' through their re-signification within a commemorative discourse and the rapidity with which the Holy Cross dispute, the Omagh bombing and Robert McCartney's murder have been recuperated in audio-visual culture will be studied. The eight audio-visual texts which comprise the objects of study were selected on the basis of their mutual preoccupation with historical trauma and their production within a specific socio-historical period - the decade that followed the first IRA ceasefire, in 1994, excepting the reconstruction of Robert McCartney's murder, which was broadcast in May 2005.

Chapter 1 provides a summary of the methodological approach and extensively outlines the range of critical theories applied over the course of the individual film analyses. In chapter two, *In Memory of Bloody Sunday*, theories of cultural memory are used to analyse the factual content and performance styles in *Bloody Sunday* (Paul Greengrass, 2002), while more specifically psychoanalytic theories are used to interpret the significance of the content and filmic devices in *Sunday* (Charles MacDougall, 2002). *Bloody Sunday's* innovative simulation of the day on which 13 innocent civilians were shot dead by British soldiers fabricates the televusal recording of a 'live event', or archival footage. Marita Sturken and Alison Landsberg have written about how modern technology has been used to achieve this 'reality effect,' and their insights have strongly informed analysis of this film. While *Sunday* is formally less adventurous, its content is more unforgiving than *Bloody Sunday* of the role of the British military and government in the atrocity and its aftermath, notably during the Widgery Inquiry. Using Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman's psychoanalytic theories relating to testimony and witnessing, the analysis proposes that the film constructs a testimonial space in which the viewer may bear belated witness to a reconstruction of the traumatic event.
Chapter 3, *Waste, Worth and Fetishism*, examines three films - *H3*, *Some Mother’s Son* and *Silent Grace*, which together represent the 1980 or 1981 hunger strikes, and inscribe the historical and socio-political legacies of these campaigns in audio-visual culture in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Although the hunger strikes received abundant attention in national and international print and broadcast media when they occurred, no feature films about the hunger strikes predated the films in question. Perhaps in the context of ongoing paramilitary violence, filmmakers considered the hunger strikes a taboo subject, and avoided it as subject matter for fear of being associated with the IRA, or undermining the legitimacy of the state. In addition to representing contentious subject matter, in varying degrees, the ‘hunger strike films’ politicize the prisoners’ campaigns. By contrast, feature films made during the troubles tended to displace political explanations of the conflict. Of the three films being considered, *H3* displays a considerable proportion of religious imagery, and imbues the suffering of the hunger strikers with religious connotations of self-sacrifice. Although the other two films do not translate the political gains of the hunger strikes as positively as *H3*, nonetheless, after an interlude of two decades, during which the subject of republican prison protests was conspicuously absent from mainstream film and television, all three films address, albeit dissimilarly, the suffering endured by political prisoners in the Maze and Armagh prisons.

Chapter 4 - *Primely-Timed Investigations* - considers the swiftness with which the traumatic past is being recuperated in the public sphere. In this section, the positive impact of the dissemination of victims’ stories will be drawn out, despite some misgivings on the part of the bereaved and victim-survivors regarding the representation of recent events of traumatic magnitude. These analyses focus primarily on the recognition afforded victims and acknowledgment of wrongdoing by perpetrators of violent acts in these works. *Omagh, Holy Cross* and the reconstruction of the Robert McCartney murder for *Prime Time* comprise the objects of study.

Chapter 5 is comparatively unique in the context of the overall thesis, since reviews of the films studied in the thesis replace the films themselves as the objects of analysis. Frequently, the reviews offer competing interpretations of the historical events on which the films are based, and discuss the politics of producing films about such events. Subsequently, or so it is argued, they neglect, to greater and lesser
degrees, the filmic, and/or televisual strategies employed in the films which are – at least ostensibly - being reviewed. Textual analysis of the reviews then is not performed with the aim of seeking greater insight into the films, but in order to clarify the identity and function of the ideological operations performed by the discursive practices operating in a given review. In this manner, the mode of analysis pinpoints textual evidence of the ideological position inhabited by a given review or reviewer to ascertain the character of the cultural memory that a review circulates in the public sphere in question.


The term ‘discursive formations’ frequently recurs throughout much of Foucault’s writing, beginning in *Discipline and Punishment.*


Lance Pettitt uses this term to refer specifically to the period 1972 – 85, which he calls ‘the long war.’ Lance Pettitt, *Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 232.


Rolston and Kelly point out that from the mid seventies to 1993, censorship ‘substantially inhibited investigation of the Northern conflict.’ Mary Kelly and Bill Rolston, ‘Broadcasting in Ireland: Issues of National Identity and Censorship,’ 574.


Ibid., 13.


Bill Rolston argues that the regime of censorship in Northern Ireland during ‘the troubles’ was no ‘the stuff of classic totalitarian censorship. [...] The laws work at a number of levels to control broadcasting. First, they are a constant backdrop, influencing consciously or otherwise decision-making and distorting professional practice.’ Bill Rolston, ‘Political Censorship,’ in *War and Words: the Northern Ireland Media Reader,* ed. Bill Rolston and David Miller (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 1996), 239.

*Who Bombed Birmingham* contributed to the instigation of a legal process which eventually, in 1991, overturned the prior conviction of 6 men for bombing two pubs in Birmingham on November 21, 1974, killing 24 people. Although the ITV network scheduled screening of *Shoot to Kill* on 3 and 4 June 1990, UTV refused to show it. Senior management claimed that after seeking legal advice, showing the drama-documentary would risk contempt of court. A Belfast based pressure group organised a screening of the film at the Queen’s Film Theatre in Belfast for an invited audience on June 17, 1990.

This 1985 BBC documentary, which looked at the lives of low Derry politicians, republican Martin McGuinness and loyalist Gregory Campbell, provoked one of the biggest broadcasting controversies in the history of the BBC. Tensions between BBC executives and the government began when executives belonging to the organisation defended it against criticisms emanating from government quarters. A couple of days following a *Sunday Times* newspaper article describing the debacle between the BBC and Thatcher’s government, the BBC’s governors held a special meeting, viewed the programme, and
subsequently banned it. Their decision was widely considered as a violation of the relationship between departments in the BBC, and prompted a the National Union of Journalists to call a 24-hour work stoppage. Owing to the extent of the industrial action, the BBC was unable to broadcast any news on 7 August. On 5 September, it was announced that the programme would be broadcast the following October with three small amendments.

24 Lance Pettitt, Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation (Manchester: MUP, 2000), 227.
25 The Bloody Sunday Trust is a history and educational project established to commemorate the events of Bloody Sunday. http://www.bloodysundaytrust.org/historycentre.htm (accessed May 19, 2005).
26 Ibid.
28 McLaughlin describes VAST as a politically non-aligned organisation which campaigns on issues of justice, and runs workshops for personal and socially therapeutic purposes. Ibid., 100.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 102.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 107
34 Eric Santner, ‘History Beyond the Pleasure Principle,’ 144.
35 Martin McLoone, Irish Film: the Emergence of Contemporary Irish Cinema (London: British film Institute, 2000).
41 References to ‘drama-documentary’ throughout the thesis refer both to films made for broadcast and/or theatrical release. A film such as Bloody Sunday was made for both television and the cinema, and for this reason is demonstrative the degree of interflow between the two institutional contexts.
42 Lance Pettitt, Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation, 245.
44 Derek Paget, No Other Way to Tell It: Dramadoc/Docudrama on Television (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 137.
45 Many media academics have written at length about the controls exercised by Irish and British governments over the broadcast media in their respective jurisdictions. Veteran reporter and terrorism expert Peter Taylor comments on the British context, noting that: 'Nowhere, in the British context, had the relationship between state, broadcasting institutions and programme makers been more sensitive and uneasy than in matters concerning Northern Ireland. Peter Taylor, ‘Reporting Northern Ireland’ in War and Words: The Northern Irish Media Reader, ed. Bill Rolston and David Miller (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 1996), 67.
47 Ibid., 176.
48 Ibid., 183.
52 Ibid., 37.
The term ‘desirable’ in this thesis refers to a public memory that engages in ethico-political judgment in the present without rehearsing a redemptive narrative that elides historical contradictions. The increasing levels of intercommunal sectarian violence reported in the media will also be related to how partisan filmmaking may further polarise already divided communities.


Hill criticises films about the troubles, beginning with films in the forties such as Odd man Out (Carol Reed, 1947) right up to films in the eighties such as Angel (Neil Jordan, 1982) and Cal (Pat O’Connor, 1984), which impose religious meanings upon and offer religious solutions to political violence, in reference to the latter two films, he writes: ‘As with so many British films before them, both Angel and Cal have proved unequal to the challenge of their subject-matter and, as a result, have obscured, as much as they have illuminated, the issues with which they have dealt.’ Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons and John Hill, Cinema and Ireland (London: Routledge, 1988), 184.
Methodology

Methodological approach

This thesis undertakes a discourse analysis of seven feature films and one investigative television news programme, which were produced during the decade following the first IRA ceasefire in 1994. It also investigates reviews of the films in Northern Ireland’s print media. Norman Fairclough’s elucidation of ‘critical discourse analysis’ crucially informs the critical methodology, which relates discursive practices in the selected works to a historically delimited social space, i.e. post-conflict Northern Ireland. A similar methodological approach characterises the critical discussion regarding the discursive significance of the film reviews. Strategies of analysis employed across the thesis are also indebted to the critical methodologies developed by John Corner, which foreground the discursive distinctiveness of television’s modes of public address. Since Fairclough’s discourse theories can be liberally applied to different media systems, his work has a more general validity to the methodological framework of this thesis than that of Corner, whose writing exclusively discusses the strategies of representation found in audio-visual culture. At a later stage in this chapter, the influence of Fairclough and Corner’s critical strategies upon the methodological approach of the thesis will be more comprehensively discussed.

Critical theory

This study draws from a wide ranging body of theory to enhance the critical discussion of how and why the selected films, and reviews, construct discursive, or cultural, memory of historical trauma, and to clarify the cultural significance of these ‘discursive formations’ in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Accordingly, diverse critical theories associated with trauma and memory studies inform the discussion of the audio-visual texts in chapters 2 to 4, and of the print media in chapter 5.

While the writings of Walter Benjamin are not consistently referred to within this
thesis, the critical thought contained in some of his essays anticipated much of the work emanating from the contemporary field of memory studies. Some of Benjamin’s insights, many of which have become regarded as touchstones in critical thought and have been subsequently amplified in contemporary theory, will be elucidated. The writings of both Alison Landsberg, who has written extensively on audio-visual representations of history as ‘prosthetic memory,’ and Marita Sturken, whose work is principally concerned with issues of commemoration in audio-visual culture, are critically indebted to Benjamin’s theories on cultural production. In turn, this study appropriates some of the critical insights of these writers, particularly Chapter 2, which looks at the ‘Sunday films.’ Landsberg and Sturken’s theoretical insights should alert the reader to the range of filmic and televisual strategies employed in audio-visual culture to represent the past in an age of ‘mechanical reproduction,’ and, indeed, one that is being swiftly supplanted by a digital one.

In common with critical explorations in the fields of trauma and memory studies, this thesis incorporates a body of concepts and strategies of analysis from psychoanalytic theory to critically engage with historical - not psychological, trauma. Seminal psychoanalytic theories, notably those of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Melanie Klein are intrinsic to analyses of the selected works, which seek to decipher the discursive significance of audio-visual expressions of historical trauma. The critical analysis of many of the films under consideration is greatly enriched by references to some of the academics and intellectuals writing in the field of ‘Holocaust studies,’ including Giorgio Agamben, Dominick LaCapra, Eric Santner, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman, whose writings, too, are crucially informed by psychoanalytic theory. Perhaps a short caveat is required in anticipation of potential criticisms of the application of critical writings deriving from ‘Holocaust studies,’ to works representing Northern Irish conflict. Without correlating the Holocaust and a protracted period of violence in Northern Ireland, selected references to Holocaust studies, and indeed other theories emanating from the areas of trauma and memory studies, are relevant to the investigation of the discursive significance of audio-visual representations of historical trauma in Northern Ireland, considering that as a society it has witnessed
historical events of a traumatic magnitude. It is worth reiterating that while the private suffering of individuals contextualises discussion of the audio-visual texts, they are not judged as representations of personal trauma. Rather, the texts are perceived as discursive or cultural responses to historical trauma. In summary, although the films might be considered to give expression to personal trauma, the exploration of a text's analogous relationship to the private, or psychological, experience of historical suffering does not motivate the engagement with trauma and memory theory in this thesis. Instead, critical analysis of these texts is concerned with how they discursively supplement historical memory of traumatic events in a post-conflict context.

Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection is employed to explicate how H3 (Les Blair, 2001) and Silent Grace (Maeve Murphy, 2001) represent the reconfiguration of power relations between ‘the oppressor,’ or the representatives of the British state, and ‘the oppressed,’ or members of the prison population, and the increased agency of political prisoners during the 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes. Critical analysis of H3 supplements Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection with René Girard’s writing on sacrifice to explicate how the prisoners reconcile their self-abjection and their effort to inscribe their struggle within nationalist and Christian traditions of self-sacrifice as part of their strategy of negating governmental efforts to criminalize the Republican movement. H3’s critical analysis borrows critical insights from Giorgio Agamben’s political philosophy to relate the British government’s attempt to depoliticise the historical struggle of the prisoners by reducing their socio-ontological status to that of ‘creaturely’ or ‘bare life’ to narrative instances when prisoners repudiate the normative rules ordinarily obeyed by the disciplined or ‘docile’ prison body by assuming a ‘boundary-subjectivity.’ Agamben’s emphasis on the governmental over parliamentary nature of contemporary democracies is played out in the film’s demonstration of how the law of brute force has replaced the law of the statute books.

By contrast, the psychoanalytic concept of ‘narrative fetishism’ is employed to discuss how Some Mother’s Son’s (Terry George, 1996) melodramatic story structure irrevocably depoliticises its historical referent. Despite this, as in H3, the film analysis
draws from Agamben's discussion of the state of exception to explore the film's oblique relationship to the biopolitical strategies pursued by the British government. Similarly, critical analysis of the film's representation of the power relations between the prisoners and prison officers benefits from a Foucauldian perspective on governmental technologies.

While Lacanian theory is implicit in much of the critical work emanating from the fields of trauma, memory and Holocaust studies, which in turn inform critical analysis at different stages of the thesis, Lacan's theory of recognition underpins the discussion of Omagh's representation of the vicissitudes of victims' subjectivity in a politically fraught environment. While Lacanian theory is relevant to the representation of subject-subject relationships across many of the works, Kleinian theory informs the analysis of Holy Cross, which links flashpoints of sectarian violence and territorial contestation to problematic object relations. Overall, psychoanalytic theories serve the strategies of critical analysis in this thesis by enlarging its conceptual scope and enhancing explication of the discursive significance of audio-visual expressions of historical trauma in a post-conflict context.

Correlative with the notion that the journalistic or discursive practice of reviewing is a socio-political, or ideological, activity, the methodological approach in chapter 5 instates the film reviews as discursive constellations held in place by the discursive practices of a 'situated' reviewer, the basic ideological delimitations of the newspaper for which the reviewer writes, and the wider social and political structures within which the newspaper circulates. For the purposes of analysis, the film 'reviews' will be situated within a common 'order of discourse,' since, regardless of whether they allude to the film or historical worlds, they commonly participate in a 'memory politics' specific to and located in post-conflict Northern Ireland. In accordance with the modes of analysis performed elsewhere in the thesis, common and/or alternative discursive practices operative in the film reviews are identified in the interests of discerning how they, in a post-conflict context, both individually and collectively, discursively contribute to cultural, or media, memory of historical trauma specific to Northern Ireland. On a whole,
the plurality of subject positions, or ideological perspectives of the reviews are aligned with either republican/nationalist or unionist standpoints. Congruently, critical analysis of the reviews pays close attention to their ideological biases, and discerns the subsequent identity of the cultural memory, which they circulate in Northern Ireland’s public - or media - sphere.

While this analysis attends to the socio-political significance of media texts, because this chapter’s critical objectives do not function in the service of a sociological project, analysis does not provide an exhaustive account of the text in its systemic context. Instead, selective use of socio-political information informs the analytic strategy, and thereby supplements the textual criticism, or content analysis, of the reviews. Fairclough identifies ideological discursive formations as most successfully operating in those instances of media discourse which have won acceptance as non-ideological or commonsense, and argues that to ‘denaturalise’ such naturalised ideologies should be the critical aim of the discourse analysis of the media. The mode of analysis in chapter 5 seeks textual evidence of ‘naturalised ideologies’ as part of an effort to discern the discursive contributions of the reviews to cultural memory of historical trauma in Northern Ireland. In this way, the critical discussion will explore the extent to which the reviews preach to the converted, i.e. their own readership, and/or question the consensus opinions belonging to the two main communities regarding the films and, perhaps more pertinently, the historical trauma with which they are concerned.

Discourse analysis

Fairclough uses Michel Foucault’s principal theoretical breakthroughs to construct the foundations of his own model of discourse analysis. He isolates the two most important elements of Foucault’s archaeological work:

(i) the constitutive nature of discourse – discourse constitutes the social, including ‘objects’ and social subjects;
(ii) the primacy of interdiscursivity and intertextuality – any discursive practice is defined by its relations with others, and draws upon others in complex ways.

He also discerns the most important elements of his genealogical work:
(iii) the discursive nature of power – the practices and techniques of modern ‘biopower’ (e.g. examination and confession) are to a significant degree discursive; 
(iv) the political nature of discourse – power struggle occurs both in and over discourse; 
(v) the discursive nature of social change – changing discursive practices are an important element in social change.\(^8\)

Considering the generic and discursive hybridity of fact-based film and television drama, intertextual analysis is indispensable to the critical activity of articulating the multiple genres and discourses circulating in a given text. Analyses of the various works reflect Fairclough’s observation that the more creative the discourse practice, or mode of representation, the more complex the analytic task becomes.\(^9\)

Two key elements in Foucauldian theory - the socio-political nature of discourse, and the discursive nature of socio-political change - which pervade Fairclough’s method of discourse analysis similarly inform the analytic strategy of this study. Foucauldian traces appear throughout Fairclough’s writings, and this is nowhere more evident than in Fairclough’s summary of his method of discourse analysis: ‘Discourse is conceptualized in terms of three dimensions or perspectives (which I have called text, discourse practice and socio-cultural practice), and a focus on discourse practice is seen as providing a way of linking textual analysis to sociocultural analysis.’\(^10\) He states that ‘... shifting language and discursive practices in the media constitute social and cultural change.’\(^11\)

Following Fairclough, this study interprets the relationship between discursive practices and socio-cultural change in dialectical terms. According to this logic, the notion that socio-cultural change breeds new types of discursive practices is equally valid. In this manner, critical discourse analysis comprehends opposing tendencies in language use, the socially shaped and socially constitutive.\(^12\) Media texts, including filmic and televisual artefacts, can be considered as ‘... sensitive barometers of cultural change which manifest in their heterogeneity and contradictoriness the often tentative, unfinished and messy nature of change.’\(^13\) Arguably, the drama-documentary, which has increased in popularity on both television and cinema screens since the first IRA ceasefire in 1994, is one such ‘sensitive barometer’ of the socio-political changes which have recently occurred in Northern Ireland.
Fairclough argues that language use is always simultaneously constitutive of 'social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief.' This thesis adapts Fairclough’s theories about language use to consider how audio-visual representation or language constructs 'systems of knowledge or belief,' of political conflict. Fairclough’s citation of the twin foci of all discourse as 'the communicative event' and 'the order of discourse' is central to the critical analysis executed in the following chapters which employ Fairclough’s notion of the social significance of media discourse and the discursive significance of a medium’s mode of representation to analyse audio-visual culture in Northern Ireland.

Corner emphasises the public nature of television as a provider of information and a common cultural resource, the nature of which he argues is a matter of public scrutiny and concern. The following extract, in which John Corner describes the discursive strength of the media and emphasises the facility with which it circulates knowledge in the public sphere, bears remarkable similarity to Fairclough’s fascination with ‘the communicative event’ and ‘the order of discourse.’

... the bearing of media upon consciousness is seen as significantly a matter of the kind of stories being told and the values that specific sets of images, phrases and descriptions exert on the way in which people perceive, and feel about, public matters. It therefore has an interest in the narrative aspects of knowledge – the way in which story structures project relations of value, entailment and causality – also found elsewhere in recent studies.

In this observation, Corner recognises the facility with which visual media convey cultural memory to the public. Although Corner works in the area of television studies, the hybrid aesthetic that characterises the selected works in this thesis - they owe as much to televisual as cinematic traditions - renders his observation equally relevant to the films not made specifically for television. Similarly, his description of television as a representational hub of a new pattern of knowledge may be readily applied to cinema, which, too, acts as a receptacle and purveyor of cultural memory. In some cases, the film’s theatrical exhibition and television transmission even overlapped. Corner’s emphasis upon television as a cultural process, rather than its influence per se – a concern
that might dictate a social science approach,\textsuperscript{20} is shared by the analytic strategy pursued in this thesis.

Although film and television are associated with different visual and narrative conventions, they similarly mediate historical worlds through their common recourse to proximate characters, situations, images, and metaphors.\textsuperscript{21} Corner describes how television's mode of address seeks to ‘... exercise viewers as parasocial participants rather than fictionalize them as such,’\textsuperscript{22} and in this way attempts to ‘extend political community.’\textsuperscript{23} In other words, television is addressed to an informed viewer, proficient at reading a programme’s historical and political details. Noting the profusion of televisual realities in the social world, Corner argues that ‘... the separation out of the ‘non-televisual’ aspects of political, social and private affairs is a good deal less easy than it might appear to be.’\textsuperscript{24} In their remediation of an already intensely mediated event, \textit{Bloody Sunday} and \textit{Sunday} refashion pre-existing, documentary, televisual, and photographic evidence, which would be familiar to an informed viewer, and thus insert themselves in a ‘discourse of sobriety’\textsuperscript{25} about Bloody Sunday, an event which has been a matter of political and judicial concern on the island of Ireland and in Great Britain since its occurrence.

Critical analysis repeatedly identifies how representations of historical events which strongly rely on personification sanitise political issues. From this perspective, Corner argues that television formats address the personal realm to elicit a ‘... highly subjectivised and emphatic viewing position, making it more difficult for them to get back to the objective distance necessary for assessment.’\textsuperscript{26} While in \textit{Bloody Sunday} for instance an array of sympathetic characters invites viewer identification with them, the affective dimensions of these screen constructions do not automatically annul the film’s analytic strengths. This analysis posits a converse argument that serious political and historical issues that might be considered ‘taboo’, or, as ‘... events the outer world have not yet come to terms with,’\textsuperscript{27} can be represented via dramatic personae, allowing issues which might otherwise have been neglected to become newly subject to examination. Similar to Derek Paget, Corner considers the etymological ramifications of the collapsing
together of previously distinct spheres of knowledge, commenting that: "... few topics are currently receiving more research attention than the ways in which television variously constructs a 'personal nexus' for construing 'public' matters." Although Corner refers specifically to non-fiction programming, he expresses fear that a growing preoccupation with the entertainment value of serious journalism and the rapid infiltration of personalising strategies in the broadcast media will lead to viewers being addressed more and more as consumers, rather than as citizens.

Both Fairclough and Corner identify an increase in the range of media discourses practised in the public domain and similarly invoke Habermas's concept of the public sphere in this regard. Fairclough writes that 'The crucial insight, however, in Habermas's analysis of the bourgeois public sphere was that a public sphere is constituted as a particular way of using language in public, and the proliferation of public spheres is a proliferation of ways of using language in public.' Corner quotes Gerbner, who remarked that '... publics are created and maintained through publication,' to indicate television's impact upon public spheres in contemporary Western societies. In the wake of the paramilitary ceasefires, the selected film and television texts epitomise new ways of using language in the North's public sphere(s), and as mentioned earlier these texts or discursive practices may be located within an 'order of discourse' specific to Northern Ireland's contemporary public sphere(s).

In early writings, Jurgen Habermas cautiously observed the corrosive effects of mass communication in the public sphere(s). His main concern related to a perceived reduction in the democratic character of contemporary society. In his major work, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, he identifies the negative effects of mass communications in modern day society. Corner does not adopt such a pessimistic line, and instead wonders how television might be responsible for extending the sphere of democratic action and 'positively transformed the conventions by which political life is conducted?' Corner remarks that by creating '... a sense of dialogue through its routine modes of address,' viewers are exercised as parasocial participants. Although the qualification of the political agency of individuals living in Northern Ireland is beyond
the remit of this thesis, the selected audio-visual texts are regarded as sites where historical trauma is discursively worked-through. Of course, the ability of audio-visual media to discursively work-through the past has been greatly enhanced by certain transformations on legislative and political levels in Northern Ireland, not least the relaxing of censorship laws and reduction in levels of self-censorship among filmmakers themselves. Diversification in audio-visual culture in Northern Ireland, or in the number and type of 'orders of discourses,' there has nurtured the growth of healthy public spheres, which satisfy the criteria stipulated by Corner exhibited by a healthy public sphere in the following extract:

It is the organization, scale and communicative character of a society's public sphere that Habermas assesses its democratic health. The public sphere is the space within a society, independent both of state power and of private, corporate influence, within which information can freely flow and debate on matters of public, civic concern can openly proceed. The concept is therefore central to Habermas's ideas of the rights and duties of citizenship.

In the context of this study, these films may be considered, along with other discursive practices, as operating in a dialectical relationship with newly emerging public spheres in Northern Ireland.

A genealogy of cultural memory

Two of Walter Benjamin's most critically acclaimed, and indeed prophetic, essays - 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' and 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' - contain some of the earliest reflections on cultural memory. Although neither essay elaborates a complete critical theory as such, nuggets of theoretical revelation, which have become touchstones for academics working in the area of cultural studies today, are embedded in both works. The longevity of Benjamin's critical thought is evident in the density of references to his writing in contemporary theories of cultural memory.

Although the films in this thesis represent historical events, their mode of analysis eschews the procedures of traditional historiography. Instead, their method of historical analysis bears similarity to that of Benjamin, who united historical and psychoanalytic
concerns, when he wrote that 'Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger.' Benjamin maintained that there was no 'document of civilization' that was not at the same time 'a document of barbarism,' insomuch as history could never be re-presented in its originary form. Instead, Benjamin sought a type of analysis which would productively brush ‘history against the grain.’ In Benjaminian fashion, cultural memory is frequently concerned with bearing witness to a version of the past which has been occluded by mainstream historical accounts, or of one that could have been, but of which no ontological verification exists. Regardless of whether technological developments in the audio-visual sphere positively or negatively alter social and cultural worlds, they have, undoubtedly, given rise to new forms of cultural memory. Habermas has contributed at length to a polemical debate regarding the centrality of theories relating to the holocaust in contemporary historical discourses. These insights illuminate issues relating to how the past is dealt with in present day Northern Ireland. He argues that a public use of history has little to do with determining guilty perpetrators or innocent victims, tropes that readily lend themselves to a politics of blame or discourses of victimisation. He writes:

... as citizens, members of subsequent generations take a public interest in the darkest chapter of their national history with regard to themselves. They are not pointing a figure of blame at anyone else. They are trying to bring about some clarity concerning the cultural matrix of a burdened inheritance, to recognize what they themselves are collectively liable for, and what is to be continued, and what revised, of those traditions that once formed such disastrous motivational background. An awareness of collective liability emerges from the widespread guilty conduct of individuals in the past. This has nothing to do with the ascription of collective guilt, a notion that is simply incoherent on conceptual grounds alone. 41

However, the films in this study unequally engage in such a progressive exercise, and subsequently, many have been branded as republican propaganda. Nonetheless, all of these works represent historical trauma in a volatile socio-cultural climate, which has only recently been characterised by a degree of stability provided by the peace process.

Nachtraglichkeit

The theory of nachtraglichkeit prevails in the majority of film analyses which compose this study. The rate at which this thesis employs the notion of nachtraglichkeit
reflects its popularity in the area of memory studies more generally. Consistent with memory discourses, which dispense with notions of historical objectivity, *nachtraglichkeit* defines, in psychoanalytic language, the primacy of contemporary socio-political and cultural forces in the construction of historical narrative.

Like many others in the field of memory studies, Susannah Radstone refers to Jean Laplanche and J.B Pontalis' revision of the Freudian definition of the term. Radstone concurs with their rejection of the linear, cause and effect model of history and with their prioritisation of the present circumstances in which a given historical account is constructed. In this way, she explicates the irreconcilability between psychoanalysis and teleological interpretations of history. She advocates the reversal of history's model of cause and effect by exploring the multiple versions or cultural revisions of an event which occur subsequent to that event.

In the context of this study, there is much to be gained by using psychoanalytic theory to interpret the memory work or historical representations in these films, since, unlike conventional historiography, these theories attend to the imaginary dimensions of narrative explorations of the past, and to the ethical challenges of reconstructing the past for an interpretive community in the present. Bill Nichols has even noted the prevalence of *nachtraglichkeit* in theories of modernism and postmodernism. For Nichols, the concept is most useful as a term, which succinctly refers to how the past is understood according to the 'deferred effects of later knowledge.'

The theory of *nachtraglichkeit* provides a theoretical explanation of why these films revisit historical trauma. LaPlanche and Pontalis' discussion of how trauma accrues from an unassimilated experience, one that was not 'fully lived' and as a result of which has not been incorporated into a meaningful context is equally relevant to this study. The peace process, which for the purposes of this study is considered as beginning with the first IRA ceasefire in 1994, has provoked changes in political and social realms, which, arguably, demonstrate how 'Experiences, impressions and memory-traces may be revisited at a later date to fit in with fresh circumstances or to fit in with a
new stage of development.\textsuperscript{47} The peace process constitutes such a 'new stage of development' and has both enabled and shaped the type of cultural memory constructed in popular representations of historical trauma.

Marita Sturken’s theoretical propositions regarding cultural memory resemble some of the insights offered by proponents of the psychoanalytic theory of nachtraglichkeit. However, although Sturken emphasises the cultural dimensions of memory, she does not entirely efface the individual’s perspective and is interested in how interactions among individuals produce cultural meaning.\textsuperscript{48} Despite this emphasis upon the individual, which are irrelevant to the theoretical concerns of this study, like other writers discussed, she considers the significance of contexts in which memory occurs. She writes that ‘We need to ask not whether a memory is true but rather what its telling reveals about how the past affects the present.’\textsuperscript{49} In Bloody Sunday for instance, by granting Ivan Cooper more agency than he possessed on the actual day, the film personifies the theme of non-sectarianism and constitutes an ethico-political intervention in the discursive realm. Sturken’s observation that there is nothing politically prescribed in the application of cultural memory as a theoretical tool is relevant to this project in so far as while all these films mobilise some form of political commentary, their political and ethical allegiances vary.\textsuperscript{50}

Alison Landsberg ponders the phenomenological implications for the role of memory in an age of mass communication, coining the term ‘prosthetic memory’ to describe an artificial form of memory that occurs at the interface between individuals and technology. Through this process, she argues, individuals either acquire ‘prosthetic memories’ of events that they did not themselves live through, or gain new memories which replace previously existing ones derived from an actual, historical experience.\textsuperscript{51} While it is important not to overstate technology’s ability to engender political formations and subjectivities, a tendency to which Landsberg frequently falls foul, ‘prosthetic memory’ is nonetheless an animating concept in the context of this study. Through the mass media, multiple public spheres are created through which representations of the past are made widely available.\textsuperscript{52} Landsberg’s observation that ‘technologies’ of memory
have altered the way in which people acquire knowledge is pertinent to how this thesis elucidates the manner in which the past has been commemorated and converted into cultural memory through film since the cessation of paramilitary activities.\(^{53}\)

**Working through**

In different ways, these films work through the past as an exercise in mourning. In a clinical context, Laplanche and Pontalis lucidly define how the process of mourning or working through enables the individual to confront repressed elements from the past and to halt mechanisms of repetition. While admitting that working through is itself a form of repetition, they argue that interpretive activity counters and cauterises the harmful elements of such repetition.\(^{54}\) Critical discussion in this thesis extrapolates their insights, and relates them to how cultural artefacts work through or interpret historical trauma.

Aspects of LaCapra’s theoretical work on mourning can be traced back to the 1980s ‘Historian’s Debate,’ or *Historikerstreit*, which occurred in Germany during these years. He asserts that the public discussion ‘[…] provides a test case of the role of psychoanalytic concepts in illuminating both historiographical issues and social problems.’\(^{55}\) His discourse resembles that of Jurgen Habermas, who engaged in heated public exchanges with the revisionist historian Ernest Nolte. Both leading intellectuals, these men became embroiled in a debate played out in popular journals and newspapers concerning the health and role of history as an academic discipline. LaCapra commends one of Habermas’s more convincing arguments, in which Habermas identifies how the workings of memory, replete with is lapses and repressions, delineate the limitations of historical research and criticism, in that both are equally vulnerable to the ‘ideological lures’\(^{56}\) which greatly determine what gets passed on as historical knowledge.

While LaCapra argues that the ‘historian’s debate’ failed to offer new, historical insights into the Holocaust, he argues that it redefined the academic agenda by problematising the historian’s relationship to the past, and stresses the implications of this for present and future historical study. LaCapra’s discussion of the significance of the
‘positionality of the historian, the bearing of present contexts on the activity of research, the nature of language used by the historian in his or her accounts, the limits and possibilities of historical discourse, and the relation of historical discourse to such processes as transference, acting-out, and working-through, including the role of mourning’ echo the predominate debates in the area of memory studies which were discussed earlier in the chapter. The films, which are examined in this thesis, uniformly assimilate historical discourses in their filmic narratives, and in varying degrees, discursively work-through and/or act-out a given traumatic event.

In response to the notion that historical consciousness has expanded in the social world, while historiographical enterprise within the academy has become enfeebled, LaCapra asks two questions, firstly: ‘... does modern society have suitable public rituals that would help one to come to terms with melancholia and engage in possibly regenerative processes of mourning?’ and, secondly: ‘... who is it that mourns and how can one specify the object of mourning in ways that are both ethicopolitically desirable and effective in reducing anxiety to tolerable limits?’

In many respects, the films referred to in this thesis resemble forms of modern ritual, which discursively work-through, or mourn, the past. Relieved of the sanctions imposed through regimes of censorship, the electronic media has made available cultural memory that is ‘illuminated by historical understanding and subject to informed analyses’ of traumatic events. In this way, they achieve what LaCapra would like to have seen in the German context, which he describes as: ‘Some combination of critical historical investigation, ethicopolitical judgment, and social ritual ... In so far as historiographical discourse could itself nurture a ritual dimension without sacrificing its critical strength, it too might assist in some small way in facilitating warranted public processes of mourning.’ While the ritual function of these films should not be overstated, as sociological evidence of such is not available to this study, in best case scenarios, their filmic and televisual narratives reveal how they discursively work-through trauma by remembering the past in a desirable way. As in LaCapra’s work, psychoanalytic theory is selectively used in this thesis to interpret the preponderance of
trauma related discourses prevailing in these films, and their relationship to the socio-cultural context at the time of their exhibition. The manner in which this thesis draws from psychoanalytic theory emulates LaCapra’s theoretical approach, which is ‘nontechnical and does not strictly conform to the principles of any given school.’ Psychoanalytic theory, judged appropriate, is selectively employed to explicate the operation of historical narratives in the filmic and televisual representations.

**Narrative fetishism**

In Eric Santner’s essay ‘History Beyond the Pleasure Principle,’ he signals the importance of mourning for both group and individual identity and implies that failure to do so results in social apathy among groups and demoralisation for the individual. Although qualitatively different, he describes how the social process of mourning and the representational strategy of narrative fetishism are commonly instigated by a traumatic event. However, he differentiates them by writing that ‘The crucial difference between the two modes of repair has to do with the willingness or capacity to include the traumatic event in one’s efforts to reformulate and reconstitute identity.’ Essential to the activity of mourning, unlike narrative fetishism, he argues, is ‘The dosing out of a certain negative - a thanatotic – element as a strategy of mastering a real and traumatic loss is a fundamentally homeopathic procedure.’ It will be argued that by constructing anxiety on a narrative level, film enacts a process of mourning or working through, which, at least on a discursive level, acknowledges an unassimilated past. Santner draws on Freudian theory to elaborate the centrality of anxiety to modes of working-through the past.

This mode of attention is one which, to paraphrase Freud, though it may not always contradict the pleasure principle, is nevertheless independent of it and is addressed to issues that are more primitive than the purpose, narrative or otherwise, of gaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure. It is furthermore a mode of attention that requires a capacity and willingness to work through anxiety.

By contrast, ‘narrative fetishism’ simulates a ‘position of intactness,’ or a narrative in which formal and thematic examples of anxiety are entirely absent. Ideally, these films do not construct narrative fantasies which cover over or deny historical anxiety. ‘Cultural amnesia’ and ‘depoliticisation,’ which have become frequently used terms in the print
media, may be considered as synonymous with ‘narrative fetishism.’

**Film, testimony and belated witnessing**

Psychoanalytic theory informs the analysis of how both film and psychoanalysis commonly instigate a testimonial process, which is dependent on the presence of a listener, who Dori Laub regards as vital to the speech act performed during the testimony, and without whom the testimonial process cannot occur. In this regard, she writes that ‘Testimonies are not monologue; they cannot take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to somebody they have been waiting for ….’

The testimonial voice enunciated in the courtroom scenes in *Sunday* addresses two sets of listeners: those listening within the diegesis, and the viewers or off-screen listeners, who constitute an extra-diegetic interpretive community. Cathy Caruth, who also employs psychoanalytic theory to interpret cultural processes and artefacts, recognises the common strategies by which film and psychoanalysis investigate historical trauma by focusing on their similarity in terms of procedure as opposed to content. She perceives a correlation between psychoanalysis and film in so far as both are involved in a complex relationship between knowing and not knowing, she also identifies the figure of the listener as an irreplaceable element in both practices, one who sits on a couch, the other in front of a screen. Through testimony, the listener bears belated witness to historical trauma. *Sunday* enunciates the testimonial process in its courtroom scenes and employs the narrative device of the flashbacks to visualise the traumatic content of the testimonial voice.

In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Shoshana and Dori Laub also discuss how film functions as a site which is hospitable to the testimonial process. Felman compares film to a transferential site, and regards its function as being more performative than representational. Accordingly, a relationship is set up between the off-screen listener and the on-screen character who testifies. She describes testimony as it is practised in legal and clinical settings as a ‘… discursive practice, as opposed to a pure theory.’ Similarly, audio-visual representation of the
survivor-victim's testimony situates the viewer in a position in which they can bear 'belated witness' to historical trauma, and as such constitutes an effective discursive practice.

Chapter 2's analysis of Sunday explores how the testimonial process operates in film, and compares its representation of historical trauma to what Felman and Laub describe as '... the liberation of testimony from the bondage of the secret.' The 'bondage' in the Northern Irish context relates to governmental command over the channels of communication, which admittedly has been greatly reduced since the beginning of the peace process. Their concern with how '... art inscribes (artistically bears witness to) what we do not yet know of our lived historical relation to events of our times' is shared in the analysis, which commends the film's discursive address of Bloody Sunday, and of its cover-up by the British establishment. Felman's assertion that testimony should be understood not as '... a mode of statement of, but rather as a mode of access to, that truth' is particularly apt in this regard.

In Diana Taylor's consideration of the issue of collective trauma in 'Staging Social Memory,' she asks 'How can genocidal violence and political atrocity be remembered and restaged without witnesses or a written record?' Felman, who is similarly concerned with the uniqueness of the witness's speech, asserts that testimony becomes devalued by being narrated by someone other than the witness. Although Sunday uses actors in its representation of the witness's speech, its verisimilitude to the original statements made by the historical witnesses of Bloody Sunday is guaranteed by stringent adherence to the intensive research, performed by its filmmaking team. During the preproduction period, researchers interviewed members of the families concerned, many of whom were continuously consulted during filming. Furthermore, the real Leo Young, his family was chosen as the film's dramatic conduit, was consulted throughout the film's period of production. Other historical figures, such as Fr. Edward Daly, also assisted the filmmakers.
Legitimate testimony

Of course, witnessing historical trauma through filmic reconstruction produced after the traumatic event bears little comparison to listening to eyewitness accounts submitted immediately after the event. Accordingly, *Sunday*’s reconstruction of the event is intimately related to socio-political considerations which prevailed at the moment of its production. Rather than considering *Sunday* as a depository of historical facts, it might be more useful to perceive of it as a ‘lieu de memoire.’ As an audio-visual site of memory, *Sunday* discursively remembers the historical event.

Taylor discusses how different art forms construct witnesses to events of which they were not present, she says that: ‘... witnessing is transferable – the theater, like the testimony, like the photograph, film or report, can make witnesses of others. The (eye) witness sustains both the archive and the repertoire.’ Her description of the individual, who bears witness through representation, as being subject to ‘performative contagion,’ might be applied to the viewer of *Sunday*, who is subject to discursive contagion, which, admittedly, may be embraced or rejected. Gregory L. Ulmer, also working in a US context, discusses the suitability of the electronic media in transmitting traumatic memory, and compares film’s transfer of memories to the manner in which the nation-state capitalised on the collective appeal of the modern novel, which in turn, he compares to the Greek’s use of theatre. Ulmer describes the status of knowledge transferred through electronic media when he argues that ‘... within electracy, monumentality could become a primary site of self-knowledge both individual and collective.’ The analysis of *Sunday* considers the type of knowledge, or historical argument, which it presents to the viewer, and the representational strategies through which it cajoles the viewer into believing the factuality of its historical content.

Resistance and abjection

Kristeva’s theoretical elaboration of abjection informs analysis of the bodily inscription of republican protests in *H3*, and, to a lesser extent, in *Silent Grace*. In *H3* for example, scenes that foreground the body to disclose both the prisoners’ self-abjection and the abjection imposed upon them by prison officers exemplify some of the
characteristics of abjection which, according to Kristeva, are indicative of a narrative's preoccupation with abjection. Her specification in this regard of a '... crying-out theme of suffering horror' coexisting with '... the incandescent states of a boundary-subjectivity,' are variously manifest in _H3_ and _Silent Grace_ 's visual and performance texts. Referring to republican prisoners' inscription of political messages on the surfaces of their bodies, Allen Feldman also recognises the political expediency of the body in its abject state, in the context of the prison protests in Northern Ireland in the 70s and early 80s. He comments that: 'The sandwich man, the placard-bearing Jew, and those bodies violently staged as political texts in Northern Ireland share a uniform genesis: the process by which an entity violently expelled from the social order is transformed into an emissary, a cultural donor and bearer of seminal political messages.'

In Northern Irish prisons, the body became the primary site of both abject and state power. The magnitude of the prisoner's body's political potential is succinctly summarised in Feldman's observation that:

*The performance of torture does not apply power; rather it manifests it from the 'raw' ingredient of the captive's body. The surface of the body is the stage where the state is made to appear as an effective material force.* Two metaphysical intangibles collide, intersect, and synthesize in the body of the captive - the force of disorder and the force of the state. The captive's body encapsulates both. It becomes a political orifice, a dual passageway into the state and its Other(s). For Foucault (1979) and Poulantzas (1980), the primary productive enterprise of the state is the body as political institution.

Kristeva's theory of abjection is used to interpret the symbolic efficacy of the hunger strikers' and the blanket men's manipulation of their bodies into recalcitrant surfaces, as depicted in the films.

By reversing Freud's theory of repression, Kristeva arrives at an understanding of abjection, or defilement, as occurring during those instances when man strays on the territories of animal, thus exposing the fragility of the symbolic order. Following from Georges Bataille, Kristeva regards the abject as revealing itself in subject/object relationships, rather than in subject/subject ones. She argues that if the imperative act of excluding the abject object is not accomplished, the border between identity and non-identity will be disrupted. Not belonging to an acceptable classificatory system, the
abject object threatens the identity of recognized social entities, and as such is disruptive and potentially transformative. Kristeva recognizes its subversive scope when she writes that ‘It lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter’s rules of the game’ adding ‘... and yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master.’

In H3, more so than in Silent Grace and Some Mother’s Son, the prisoners demonstrate their determination to resist a governmental attempt to criminalize political prisoners as part of a larger strategy of depoliticizing the republican movement. By including waste and filth in their collective existence, the prisoners assume control over their own abjection, which they use to mount a challenge against the state authority’s symbolic control of their socio-political identity. Writing about the material enactment of political violence in Northern Ireland, Feldman concludes similarly, ‘The inability of formal political rationalities to codify their fetishization of the body by violence meant that embodiment became the site for surrogate codes, for censored and excess experience.’

Kristeva correlates the abject and the perverse, and describes their strategic merits: ‘The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them.’ Analyses of H3 and Silent Grace in chapter 3 employ Kristeva’s notion of the abject to elucidate the symbolic significance of the films’ representations of the prisoners’ bodily resistance of the British state’s mechanisms of control, and the concomitant diminishing of the British government’s biopolitical power.

‘The state of exception’

Film analysis of H3 also draws from Giorgio Agamben’s writings to explore how the representation of the prisoners’ bodies alludes to the historical struggle of the real hunger strikers to disrupt the symbolic law of the prison system, and resist the state’s efforts to abject them, or reduce them to ‘bare life.’ The following insight is apposite in this regard:
On of the most persistent features of Foucault’s work is its decisive abandonment of the traditional approach to the problem of power, which is based on juridico-institutional models (the definition of sovereignty, the theory of the State), in favour of an unprejudiced analysis of the concrete ways in which power penetrates subjects’ very bodies and forms of life. Based on the analogies between the British state’s management of the Northern Irish prison population and Agamben’s theory of the governmental administration of bare life, the film analysis incorporates his interpretation of the ‘state of exception’ into an investigation of the film’s representation of the ‘state of emergency,’ which has persistently characterised the rule of government in Northern Ireland since its inception. It is noteworthy that Walter Benjamin’s perspicacious observation that the state of emergency has become the rule in modern states foreshadowed Agamben’s theoretical exploration of the state of exception. Agamben defines the state of exception not as ‘the chaos that precedes legal order but the situation resulting from its suspension. In this sense the exception is not simply excluded but is rather truly ‘taken outside’, as is implied by the word’s etymological root (ex-capare).’ The almost interminable ‘state of emergency’ in the North, in which the security of the state was perceived as threatened, provided the British government with the necessary pretext to employ the Special Powers Acts. Widespread abuses of detainees during this period provided alarming confirmation of the biopolitical stakes of the British state’s involvement in Northern Ireland. Agamben notes how ‘... placing biological life at the centre of its calculations, the modern State therefore does nothing other than bring to life the secret tie uniting power and bare life.’ Emergency measures such as internment without trial revealed the ‘...hidden point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power’ in Northern Ireland. Although internment was deemed a political failure and as such was abandoned in 1975, the state’s efforts to neutralise the republican movement continued under different guises. H3’s depiction of the lack of civility shown by prison officers towards the prisoners, and the impunity with which they perform violent acts upon them represents the historical extension of the British state’s biopolitical leverage and the diminution in the human dignity of republican prisoners in Northern Ireland.

Arguably, H3’s representation of the Maze prison corresponds to Agamben’s
notion of the ‘figure of the camp,’ a term he uses, as both a primary metaphor and concrete example, to describe the administration of human life in western liberal democracies. He selects the Nazi concentration camp as a prototypical example of how individuals, although recognised as human beings, are excluded from the political community by a democratically elected government. Agamben identifies the figure of the camp as ‘... the pure, absolute, and impassable biopolitical space (insofar as it is founded solely on the state of exception)’, adding that it ‘... will appear as the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity, whose metamorphoses and disguises we will have to learn to recognise.’ As the ‘...hidden matrix of the politics in which we are still living,’ he stresses the political urgency of recognising the camp in all of its ‘... metamorphoses into the zones d’attentes of our airports and certain outskirts of our cities.’ Agamben argues that ‘the camp’ is present wherever the state of exception materialises. According to this logic, the ‘Long Kesh cages,’ erected during internment, can be equated with the figure of the camp, and indeed, they were even regarded in many sections of the international media of the day as comprising a concentration camp. Historically, the H-Blocks, which are represented in H3, were built as a top security prison on the grounds of Long Kesh as part of the British government’s strategy of ‘normalising the Northern Irish problem,’ so that republican prisoners would eventually become undifferentiated from ordinary criminals. In an act designed to resist the depoliticisation of republican prisoners, prisoners refused to refer to the new penal institution by its official name of HMP Maze, and continued to call it Long Kesh, after the prison camp that had previously occupied the site. Throughout H3, prisoners are shown enacting daily rituals of resistance aimed at retaining their political status and resisting strategies of ‘normalisation.’ Agamben’s insights into the exercise of political power will be used to enrich the discussion of how H3’s narrative and mise en scène allude to the British state’s exercise of juridical and biopolitical power in Northern Ireland.

Idealised objects

Kleinian theory prioritises object relations, and posits that psychic activity arises from an individual’s position in relation to the object world. Object relations are central
to the defence mechanism of ‘projective identification,’ which according to Kleinian theory, occurs during the ‘persecutory position.’ Klein describes ‘projective identification’ in the following terms: ‘Much of the hatred against parts of the self is now directed towards the mother. This leads to a particular form of identification which establishes the prototype of an aggressive object relation.’ In *Holy Cross*, members of both communities negatively perceive the other community, even if the narrative addresses the Protestant community’s regard of the Catholic community as the ‘hated object’ more fully than the Catholic nationalist community’s sectarian proclivities. Kleinian theory suggests that such an aggressive object relation derives from the persecutory fear of the individual who believes that he or she will be harmed by the hated object. Its emphasis upon the destructive effect of persecutory anxiety upon relationships with those who differ from, and therefore pose a threat to the group norm, perfectly compliments the investigation of *Holy Cross’s* depiction of highly rigidified communal identities and of the physical structures, such as ‘peace lines’, which are constructed in order to preserve communal groupings.

Feldman too notes the importance of the object world in an unstable society such as Northern Ireland, and perceives an upsurge in symbolic activity as prompted by the destabilization of spatial or object relations: ‘The destabilization of topos insitgates the concentration of its value form in symbolic performances directed at the reordering of persons and place’. Referring specifically to Belfast, he says that:

... the urban interface zone is in symbiosis with the pattern of sectarian residential extension, mixing, and contraction. During periods of residential retrenchment along sectarian lines, the proliferation of interfaces, the dissemination of margins, the formalization of boundaries can be expected.

The film analysis of *Holy Cross* will draw predominantly from Kleinian theory to extrapolate the significance of the film’s representation of a sectarian topography through its *mise en scène* and of intercommunal relationships enacted by its cast.

**Desire of the desire of the other**

Narrative activity in both *Omagh* and the Robert McCartney reconstruction RTE’s
Prime Time is concentrated upon the desire of those who are victims of political conflict for recognition by the greater public. The social forces propelling this desire for recognition, and its vital importance for the victims of political violence in the real and film worlds, may be clarified somewhat through recourse to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Firstly, however, I will mention some relevant insights by Hegelian disciple Alexandre Kojève, whose work profoundly impacted upon the development of Lacan's critical thought. Kojève's succinct presentation of Hegelian thought rendered the latter theorist's work accessible to a larger and more wide ranging audience than was previously the case. Kojève identified the individual's desire for recognition by the other as the basis on which a human, non-biological 'I' was formed, and maintained that without both the granting of recognition by the other and the desire for such by the 'I', no social reality could succeed that of primordial biological concerns. In the following extract, Kojève summarises how desire of the desire of the other functions in the social world,

Therefore, to desire the Desire of another is in the final analysis to desire that the value that I am or that I 'represent' be the value desired by the other: I want him to 'recognise' my value as his. I want him to 'recognise' me as an autonomous value. In other words, all human, anthropogenetic Desire – the Desire that generates self-consciousness, the human reality – is, finally, a function of the desire for 'recognition.' And the risk of life by which the human reality 'comes to light' is a risk for the sake of such a Desire. Therefore, to speak of the 'origin' of Self-Consciousness is necessarily to speak of a fight to the death for 'recognition'.

Through their public awareness raising activities, the McCartney sisters and the Omagh Support and Self Help Group perform Kojève's notion that '... real and true man is the result of his inter-action with others; his I and the idea he has of himself are 'mediated' by recognition obtained as a result of his action.' In the films being studied, both party's appeal to the public for recognition corresponds to the moment when, according to Lacan, 'Desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand becomes separated from need: this margin being that which is opened up by demand, the appeal of which can be unconditional only in regard to the Other.' Lacan also recognized '... the Omnipotence, not of the subject, but of the Other in which his demand is installed ...,' an omnipotence which is wielded in the film worlds by the authorities who are representative of the state, and in whom the general public, as represented in the films, vest authority in and from whom they seek guidance. Therefore the recognition secured by either the support group or the sisters is largely dependent on their ability to mobilize
the support of the state, who can in turn train the attention of the larger public on their cause. Lacan’s notion that “Desire is essentially ‘desire of the Other’s desire,’” will illuminate the film analysis of Omagh, and to a lesser extent, of the Prime Time reconstruction. Dylan Evans interprets Lacan’s most quoted phrase as meaning both the ‘... desire to be the object of another’s desire, and desire for recognition by another’ and regards as the most important insight of Lacan’s phrase the notion that desire is a social product, ‘Desire is not the private affair it appears to be but is always constituted in dialectical relationship with the perceived desires of other subjects.’ This formulation will be used to elucidate some of the driving forces spurring the campaigning efforts of the real historical individuals, as well as the logic of its translation into the relevant film and television programme.

While the methodological approach of discourse analysis is uniformly applied throughout this thesis, the disparate range of theories summarised in this chapter respond directly to the diverse narrative content and strategies across the works.
In Memory of Bloody Sunday

Historical context

On Sunday, 30 January 1972, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association organised an anti-internment march through the Bogside area of Derry city. The British Army strongly opposed the march and prevented marchers from entering the city centre. When young men began throwing objects at soldiers in William Street, members of the Parachute Regiment - an elite regiment of the British Army - moved into the Bogside in an arrest operation. During the next 30 minutes, British soldiers shot dead 13 men, chiefly by single gunshots to the head and chest. The soldiers insisted that they fired only after they themselves came under fire. Witness statements, however, contradicted the army’s defence.

Shortly after the atrocity, the British government established the Widgery Inquiry to investigate the exact sequence of events on the day. Lord Widgery, who presided over the inquiry, declined from considering the bulk of eyewitness statements submitted by members of the Derry community. Although he was counselled against disregarding these statements, he protested that they were not made available to him within an adequate time frame. The Inquiry concluded without making a single conviction against a soldier or a commanding officer, and Widgery described the loss of life as an unfortunate by-product of a volatile security situation. The Irish media quickly dubbed the inquiry ‘the Widgery whitewash.’ For the nationalist community, Widgery’s commendation of the bravery and quick thinking of the Paras, betrayed an unashamed bias in favour of the British military. In his report, he stated that while the Paras’ training had made them aggressive, they behaved in accordance with the law at all times. Widgery also concluded, despite lack of supporting evidence, that there was a strong likelihood that some of the victims were members of the IRA.

In a statement issued shortly after the event, Major Hubert O’Neill, then Coroner of the inquest into the deaths on Bloody Sunday, offered a remarkably different version of the event to that provided by Widgery. He stated:
This Sunday became known as Bloody Sunday and bloody it was. It was quite unnecessary. It strikes me that the Army ran amok that day and shot without thinking what they were doing. They were shooting innocent people. These people may have been taking part in a march that was banned but that does not justify the troops coming in and firing live rounds indiscriminately. I would say without hesitation that it was sheer, unadulterated murder. It was murder.  

In the following years, the British establishment ignored successive appeals by friends and relatives of the victims for a fresh inquiry. In response to one such request in 1996, Prince Charles’s private secretary responded by letter that it was ‘... necessary to move on, rather than dwell on past tragedies.’ However, new evidence eventually emerged which suggested that certain soldiers were shooting from the top of the Derry walls, and not just at ground level, as had been officially maintained. In his book Eyewitness Bloody Sunday: The Truth, Don Mullan contends that at least three of the Bloody Sunday victims were shot from the Derry walls. If Lord Widgery had considered this information, and it was available to him at the time, the integrity of his report would have immediately disintegrated, as these soldiers were not acting in self-defence, but rather, were engaged in sniper firing. Under pressure from the Irish government, on 29 January 1998, British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that there would be a new inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday. This new inquiry, which became known as the Saville Inquiry, revisited the afternoon of Bloody Sunday, and unlike the Widgery Inquiry, considered the testimonies of both civilians and members of the British army. Since this chapter examines Bloody Sunday’s and Sunday’s dialectical relationship with their socio-political context, the Saville Inquiry is a pertinent extra-diegetic corollary to those films.

**Commemorative art**

Since the first IRA ceasefire in 1994, a growing number of artists have been generating collective memory of some of Northern Ireland’s traumatic events through commemorative works of art. In the lead up to the 30th anniversary of Bloody Sunday in 2002, an eclectic range of artists created commemorative works aimed at both eliciting and constructing memory of the ‘political’ atrocity. Over three days during Easter 1996, Hillary Gilligan, an art student at the University of Ulster, chalked the names of 3,300 victims of ‘the troubles’ on a pavement on Royal Avenue in central Belfast. As she crouched over a pavement writing in chalk, Gilligan encouraged passers-by, including
policemen, shoppers, and local business people, to offer their assistance in transcribing and remembering victims’ names. The network of commemorative activities which have taken place in the visual arts has been mirrored in audio-visual culture, as filmmakers also responded to the stimulus of the anniversary. The Granada produced film *Bloody Sunday* (Paul Greengrass, 2002) resulted from a collaborative enterprise between filmmakers and members of the Derry community, who operated in a consultative capacity during the film’s pre-production stages and performed in front of the camera during filming. Similarly, the Channel 4 film *Sunday* (Charles MacDougall, 2002), written by acclaimed screen-writer Jimmy McGovern, was produced after an intensive research period conducted primarily in the communities concerned. Consistent with the varying degrees of research invested in a given work, the qualitative nature of commemorative art works pertaining to a single historical event vary considerably. Despite their manifold differences, in terms of research, narrative and style, the ‘Sunday’ films commonly construct cultural memory of historical trauma in response to contemporary socio-political and historical concerns.

Unshackled by restrictive censorship laws, or the pervasive culture of censorship, which operated throughout much of the ‘troubles’ in both the Republic and Northern Ireland, *Bloody Sunday* and *Sunday*, which are consecutively analysed in this chapter, enact the historical remembrance of Bloody Sunday. Furthermore, the highly publicised nature of the ‘Sunday films’ theatrical exhibition and television transmission enhances their discursive significance in the public sphere. Although numerous parallels invite the joint consideration of the ‘Sunday films,’ it is important to note that while *Sunday* adopts a popular genre format to convey the historical event, *Bloody Sunday’s cinema verite* style is formally less conventional. By mobilising contrasting modes of narration, these films re-inscribe the Bloody Sunday narrative in the public imaginary in diverse ways.

(i)

*Bloody Sunday*

John Corner identifies three categories according to which television mediates its subject matter – sophisticated knowledge management, realism, and strategic
personalisation." "Bloody Sunday's mode of addressing the historical event reflects the narrative strategies outlined by Corner. ‘Knowledge management’ is evident in re-enactments, which portray the killing of civilians, while the film’s principal characters personalise some of the political issues at stake. Notwithstanding the mimetic exactitude of the certain segments of Bloody Sunday visual text to archival images, both still and moving, which innovatively convey the event’s televisuality, its narrative also relies on the traditional conventions of social realism to encourage the viewer to identify with its characters.

Although based on scrupulous historical research, as a feature film, Bloody Sunday’s narrative format renders it incompatible with the standard conventions to which traditional exercises in historiography subscribe. Many media critics have become alarmed by an upshot in the number of popular analyses of history, and how they tend to blur the distinction between drama and documentary. Derek Paget writes: ‘Popular genre formats can make dramas more accessible to audiences but complicate documentary claims. The “tidying up” of plots and compositing of characters demonstrate the incapacity of drama to accommodate to at least some of the complexities of “real history” and “real sociology.”' Rather than devaluing the drama-documentary for failing to represent ‘the real,’ or compete with the truth claims of the traditional documentary, its critical strengths, notably the manner and complexity of its engagement with ‘real history,’ might be appreciated. Despite Paget’s reservations about the deluge of hybrid film genres, notably ‘low-concept' docudramas in the US context, and even though in reference to the British ‘Granada dramadoc tradition,’ he cautions that with “the new dispensation the shift to filmic discourse carries the danger of edging out discursive documentary elements,” his argument does not preclude the discursive or suggestive potential of more successful or ‘high concept’ hybrid films genres. Speaking about the production of the drama-documentary Hillborough (Charles MacDougall, 1996), which is set during the Thatcher era in Britain, he says ‘In this kind of political context the new-form dramadoc/docudrama thrives and continues to exercise (or at any rate to claim) the historic function of a “public service” broadcasting institution.”
Similar to Paget, Desmond Bell identifies the advancement within the academy of anxieties relating to the audio-visual representation of historical events,

In an age of postmodern skepticism (and of digital manipulation) the traditional claims of the documentary to provide objective knowledge of the social world have come under scrutiny. The relationship between, on the one hand, the indexical and evidential basis of the documentary film, and on the other, between figurative and fictive has often been seen as a conflicting one. Admittedly, narrative strategies specific to Bloody Sunday, particularly those of re-enactment and personalisation, constitute subjective modes of historical analysis which possibly satisfy entertainment more than information purposes. Nonetheless, regardless of its popular kudos and its informational inferiority as compared to written historiography, or even to the traditional documentary, Bloody Sunday’s labile narrative strategies disseminate a persuasive cultural memory of the historical event in the public sphere.

This analysis of Bloody Sunday argues that far from depoliticising the historical event, the film’s fictive and plotted elements engender an alternative, collective memory of the day. Although many commentators argue that drama-documentaries and other popular genre formats concerned with history compromise political issues, or as Paget argues ‘complicate documentary claims,’ this analysis argues that Bloody Sunday soberly addresses historical and political concerns. From this perspective, Bloody Sunday is considered as an exemplary example of a type of film which neither ‘instructs nor absorbs.’ Bloody Sunday controls knowledge of the past through a mode of address that appeals to the viewers’ historical knowledge of the event, rather than one which didactically instructs them how to view that past. In this way, Bloody Sunday constitutes an audio-visual site where the past is remembered, and, ideally, discursively ‘worked-through.’ In a reworking of Freud’s argument that the absence of anxiety produces trauma, Dominick LaCapra lionises a type of memory work which if performed successfully works through historical trauma. The following analysis posits that Bloody Sunday discursively works through the anxiety provoked by the outpouring of state violence on Bloody Sunday through re-enactments, performed by professional actors and members of the Derry community, of some of the scenes which occurred on the day, as recounted by eyewitnesses and preserved in archival images.
In film historian Robert Rosenstone’s examination of the relationship between film and history, he asks: ‘How does film construct a historical world? What are the rules, codes, and strategies by which it brings the past to life? What does that historical construction mean to us?’ For Rosenstone, three categories of fact-based drama share primary status: representations that vision, contest or revision history. A film’s relationship to one of the above categories might indicate the degree to which a given narrative representation intersects with or altogether rejects official history. These categories commodiously classify how the following characters operate as sites through which historical arguments are filtered. For example, as a Protestant, Ivan Cooper’s role as one of the leaders of the civil rights movement revisions a non-sectarian history; General Ford visions the commonly held perception of army culpability and embodies the film’s unyielding, anti-state mode of address; while the ‘reluctant Para’ contests a commonly accepted view, at least within nationalist communities, that the Paras unanimously disregarded Catholic life.

In the opening moments of Bloody Sunday, two concurrent press conferences, punctuated by the frenetic clicking and flash photography of press cameras, discordantly inter-cut each other. One conference has been organised by the Northern Ireland’s Civil Rights Association (NICRA), the other, by the British army. An intertitle reads – ‘January 31 1971,’ a date marking a watershed in Northern Irish history when British security forces opened fire on a civilian march, killing 13 and wounding a further 14. The civil rights anthem ‘We Shall Overcome’ jars both acoustically and politically with the sound of military drums beating to the rhythm of the army press conference. Amid this din, the film’s two major protagonists - Ivan Cooper and General Ford of the British army, are presented. The following paragraphs discuss how these characters embody their respective political positions, and how Ford’s vilification and Ivan Cooper’s heroisation far exceed their dramatic functions. The broader political and historical issues, which are crystallised through their characterisations, will also be discussed.

**General (Ford) villainy**

For the nationalist community of Derry, the real General Ford embodied the human face of Britain’s apparent disregard for Catholic life subsequent to Bloody Sunday.
Following Ford’s infamously disingenuous defence of the Paras during a widely disseminated televised interview on the day in question, he became familiar to the greater public. Accordingly, *Bloody Sunday* portrays Ford in an unsympathetic fashion. The reconstruction of the historic press conference which occurred on the morning of Bloody Sunday, during which Ford firmly articulated the British government’s line, not least their firm disapproval of the march, profits from the availability of transcripts and televised recordings of the real press conference. In the reconstruction, Ford’s unambiguous warning to the nationalist community about the consequences of participating in the march uncannily doubles the real speech delivered by Ford on that morning. In addition to its representation of Ford, depictions of individual Paras during several of its early scenes convey the British army’s determination not to endure military emasculation.127

In *Bloody Sunday*’s opening moments, Ford voices a series of clipped statements to a crowd of journalists attending a military press conference. Through his curt comments regarding the illegality of the march, he does little to justify or argue convincingly in defence of the deployment of British troops on the streets of Derry, not to mention that of the parachute regiment - an army force trained in highly aggressive tactics and deployed ordinarily in situations of acute conflict. Using filmic artifice to assume a documentary mode of address, the reconstruction competently elicits public memory of the televised press conference attended by the real General Ford. The accuracy with which the screen play regurgitates Ford’s original statements and a highly convincing performance by the actor playing Ford greatly enhances the scene’s credibility. The dramatic irony of Ford’s army rhetoric when he says that ‘The law is the law and must be respected,’ resonates strongly for the informed viewer, who is aware of how flagrantly such ‘law’ was in reality flouted.

Extra-diegetic information corroborates Ford’s unsympathetic characterisation. Around the time of the film’s release, certain sections of the media expressed strong criticisms of his professional conduct. Prompted by disclosures made in the Saville Inquiry, one article stated that ‘When one puts into this melange all of the different tensions, when one goes through the documents, one eventually sees that by mid-January,
General Ford had come to the conclusion that the stage had then been reached where the only solution was to shoot and to shoot-to-kill those persons who were involved in rioting. According to such an analysis, the military hierarchy firmly favoured inflicting casualties on the civilian population. In a scene in which Ford goads his men to come down hard on the young Derry ‘hooligans,’ the fictive Ford corroborates extra-diegetic criticisms of the real Ford. Little restraint is evident in the commands issued by Ford at army headquarters, in which he carelessly conflates the marchers with the IRA, and thereby completely disregards the legitimacy and pacifist ethos of the civil rights movement. In a scene in which Brigadier McLellan seeks a guarantee that the army take steps ‘only if there is violence and only if there is a clear separation between [the] march proper and hooligans,’ Ford ignores McLellan’s interjection and wonders aloud whether all the men have been ‘issued with rubber bullets.’ McLellan’s query extends beyond the scene’s fictionalised setting and recalls real life civilians who died from injuries inflicted by rubber bullets, both prior and subsequent to Bloody Sunday.

Importantly, *Bloody Sunday* does not rely solely upon pathologising unsympathetic characters in order to represent historical injustices and state culpability. Although the film’s narrative address of the event strongly condemns Ford’s conduct, it does not displace complete responsibility for the atrocity on to him. In such a fashion, the narrative enacts LaCapra’s objective ‘... to articulate the relationship between history and psychoanalysis in a manner that does not eventuate in a dubious pathologising of historical processes or personalities but instead links historical inquiry to explicit ethical and ethicopolitical concerns bearing on the present and future.’ When Ford states that ‘Downing street has had enough’ during an army briefing, he implicates the British government in his military stratagems. As a broker for the British government, Ford’s announcement presupposes his government’s compliance with the military tactics adopted on that afternoon. Rather than depicting Ford as the sole architect of the tragedy, he functions as a channel through which the larger institutional factors within whose framework the state violence occurred can be discussed. Edward Heath, the British prime minister at the time, frequently stated in public that his administration was fighting a propaganda war in Northern Ireland. In the film, Ford invokes an infamous phrase of
Heath’s when he announces that ‘winning the propaganda war is absolutely vital.’ By parroting Prime Minister Heath’s immortal line, he enmeshes himself in a representative role for the British government, an administration that was determined to control ‘the hearts and minds’ of its citizens. Rather than vilifying General Ford for dramatic effect, his characterisation measures the interference on the part of the British government in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

Cooper and nachtraglichkeit

The Freudian concept *nachtraglichkeit* describes how a personal memory of a past event is informed by circumstances at the moment of recollection. Susannah Radstone specifies how *nachtraglichkeit* defines the ‘... irreconcilability between psychoanalysis and theories and methods grounded in historical time, narrative and causation.’ In addition to lamenting what verifiably happened in Derry on Bloody Sunday, more radically, *Bloody Sunday* allows the ‘... deferred effects of later knowledge’ to suggest an alternative and even reconciliatory narrative, prompted by contemporary political concerns. In this regard, the film does not adhere to the stipulations of conventional narrative representations of historical events. Rather than aspiring to historiographical standards, its narrative reflects the process of *nachtraglichkeit*. The prominence accorded Ivan Cooper, a local MP and peace activist, over his Catholic counterparts, who were as central if not more so than Cooper, might be considered as an example of how such a process is manifest at the level of character. As such, inaccurate memory and/or nostalgia for a non-sectarian version of the past that may or may not have empirically occurred may be identified as an example of *nachtraglichkeit* in the film.

Nicola King, too, confers much importance upon the theory of *nactraglichkeit*. Drawing on LaCapra’s interpretation of the term, she contends that ‘... the idea that events might have turned out differently, might still be capable of changing the subject’s understanding of her life and her self.’ The following character analysis of Cooper interprets the narrative attention accorded him as a member of the SDLP party and active member of Northern Ireland’s Civil Rights Association as an example of *nactraglichkeit* in so far as his characterisation constitutes the deferred knowledge of the vital importance
of interdenominational co-operation. However, *Bloody Sunday* has attracted much criticism in the print media for its historical inaccuracies, and its privileging of Cooper at the expense of certain members of the organisation such as journalist, Eamonn McCann, and political activist, Bernadette Devlin, who, it is argued, were more central figures in NICRA than Cooper, is exemplary in this regard. However, *Bloody Sunday*’s factual inaccuracies serve ethico-political purposes, and its reconfiguration of the roles played by the individuals concerned advances a non-sectarian theme. Richard Kelly, of *Sight & Sound*, commends the narrative centrality accorded Cooper, describing the film’s emphasis upon him as ‘cannier’ than according attention to ‘... the firebrand figures of Eamonn McCann and Bernadette Devlin.’¹³³ By selecting Cooper as the leading protagonist, the film addresses the vital importance of intercommunal cooperation and appeals to its audience to appreciate a reconciliatory narrative. Through misremembering, or creatively recollecting the event, the film enacts a responsibility, inspired by the peace process, to remember a positive history of cooperation between two historically antagonistic communities, by emphasising the commonality between these ethnic communities.

A scene in which the camera barely succeeds in keeping apace with Cooper as he strides confidently through Derry’s inner city streets conveys nostalgia for a time when intercommunal relations were not riven by sectarianism. By inserting Cooper – a Protestant - in the ‘Bogside’, which was then and remains a Catholic enclave, the film elides a narrative emphasis, which is evident in many other representations of the Northern conflict, upon the polarisation between Catholic and Protestant communities. Greeted with handshakes at every turn, Cooper appears unperturbed by the volatile security of an IRA controlled area which was, by and large, off limits to the security forces. His swiftness of step as he hurriedly moves through streets, or shortcuts down a back alley, conveys his familiarity with the terrain. Cooper’s integration in the community concerned is aurally and visually presented: we hear him greeting Catholic residents by name and see him in a visual landscape from which Protestants are typically absent in Northern Irish films. When, in a light-hearted exchange, two Catholic women poke fun at him, asking if he has attended mass that morning, he quips in quick response,
'a good protestant like me?' A small and almost insignificant exchange, this scene nonetheless effectively dramatises the reality of positive, intercommunal relations before the ‘troubles.’ Kelly identifies Cooper’s positive, narrative function: ‘Cooper roves the Bogside, glad-handing and trouble-shooting, joking with old ladies who invite him to Mass, spreading the gospel of peaceful protest.'

Celebrity ghosting

The real life identity of actor James Nesbitt as a national celebrity ‘double voices’ his performance as Ivan Cooper, and thereby enhances the impact and extends the breath of the film’s mode of address. According to the notion of ‘double voicing,’ an actor’s familiarity to the public interferes with their interpretation of the actor’s performance. Nesbitt’s popularity extends to both sides of the sectarian divide, and his casting marked an astute stroke in cementing the film’s non-sectarian mode of address. In a highly convincing performance, his real life Protestant identity blends easily with that of Ivan Cooper. Indeed, the real Cooper was even cross-examined in the Saville Inquiry in relation to his depiction in one of the film’s scenes, indicating the serious attention afforded the film by the legal establishment. In his comments to the media, Nesbitt attempted to resolve his criticisms of the British establishment with loyalty to his Protestant heritage. As a protestant, Nesbitt was castigated by members of his own ethnic community for publicly denouncing the security forces operating at the time of Bloody Sunday, and, it was argued, for subsequently boosting the film’s republican propagandist merit. In a question and answer session following a screening of Bloody Sunday in the Curzon Theatre, in Soho, London, Nesbitt promoted the ideal of working-through the past by stating how mistakes made, especially by the British state, on the afternoon of Bloody Sunday must be unanimously acknowledged in all of Northern Ireland’s communities in order to instigate intercommunal reconciliation.

Averting ‘narrative fetishism’

In this film analysis, the ‘reluctant Para’ refers to a member of the parachute regiment depicted in Bloody Sunday who strongly resembles Mike Edwards Private 027 who, during the Saville Inquiry, expressed his disapproval of his regiment’s behaviour on
the afternoon of Bloody Sunday. By including Edwards in the narrative, the film avoids becoming a ‘conspiracy theory,’ which would deliver a univocal version of events. Through such narrative complexity, the film avoids the perils of ‘narrative fetishism,’ lucidly defined by Santner as:

... a strategy whereby one seeks volunataristically to reinstate the pleasure principle without addressing and working through those other tasks which, as Freud insists ‘must be accomplished before the dominance of the pleasure principle can even begin.’ Far from providing a symbolic space in which anxiety can be produced, narrative fetishism directly, or indirectly, offers reassurances that there was no need for anxiety in the first place.\(^{137}\)

By eliciting confusion regarding the provenance of the first shots, the film does not preclude IRA responsibility, and so, rather than uniquely representing the brutality of the British army, it admits the possibility of alternative sources of violence. A scene demonstrating its avoidance of ‘narrative fetishism’ dramatises one of the Saville Inquiry’s most contentious revelations, when a soldier claimed that he was pressurised by his superiors to withhold information from Lord Widgery. The ‘reluctant Para’ communicates the divisions existing within the army’s ranks, and suggests that not all members of the parachute regiment acquiesced in the murderous tactics pursued by certain Paras, or in the unyielding military stratagems as enunciated by certain senior army officers in the film. Edward’s troubled mien may be differentiated from those of other psyched-up Paras; throughout numerous scenes depicting Paras shooting indiscriminately at civilians, his demeanour conveys earnest disapproval of their behaviour. Time and again, the camera cuts to close-ups of his face; on successive occasions, point of view shots and an amplified sound track convey his observance of his compatriots as he listens to words steeped in anger and hatred trip from their tongues. Angrily, he interrupts a group of Paras huddled together spitting invectives against the ‘enemy,’ and reminds them that the rioters are mere kids. After a Para returns from a killing spree boasting about how many targets he took out, Edwards, visibly in a distressed state, confronts him, ‘I saw you shoot civies. I saw what happened.’ Unconvincingly, the accused Para retorts that he was returning fire at a gunman. By presenting alternating representations of the Paras, the film extends its range of address, and in so doing, dramatises the complexity of historical forces, which culminated in the
day of violence, and resists a convenient recourse to narrative fetishism which would have presented violence solely as the preserve of the British military.

**Performing authenticity**

Overall, performance styles in *Bloody Sunday* falsify a sense of unmediated reality. Like fellow British directors Ken Loach and Mike Leigh, Greengrass casts non-professional actors and improvises many of the film’s scenes to attain styles of performance which command the belief of the viewer. The use of real soldiers, alongside professional actors further imbues the performance text with a sense of authenticity. The considerable advantages commanded by actual soldiers, compared to professional actors, are evident in the intense credibility of the scenes in which they feature, aided, unquestionably, by their ability to draw from personal experience when simulating army manoeuvres. During several scenes, ‘flickers of authenticity’ are discernible when real life soldiers slip out of character, revealing a look or gesture, which extends beyond the limits of representation, and thereby establishes a tenuous connection with the real military world, which they ordinarily inhabit. At the time of the film’s exhibition, the participation of real soldiers in the film was heavily publicised. Such publicity in combination with the variance between the screen presence of real soldiers as opposed to that of actors appeals to the viewer to believe in the accuracy of the re-enactments. Similar to the appearance of relatives of victims or survivors themselves in crime and rescue programs, *Bloody Sunday* uses real soldiers to enhance the historical credibility of its reconstructions. Other moments of authenticity are constructed in scenes when soldiers and actors alike were filmed without prior knowledge of how a given scene would unfold, in order to recreate the confusion, which might have been experienced by actual soldiers on the day, who were expected to act upon confusing instructions emitted by their superiors via radio on the afternoon of Bloody Sunday.

The real identity and criminal activities of Simon Mann, who plays Colonel Wilford Commander of Land Forces, ghosts his performance in the film. An SAS veteran and living in South Africa at the time of filming, his involvement in the project was a surprise to many who knew him. Mann’s ambivalent attitude to the subject - he indicated
that he hoped to be able to defend the army while also admitting publicly that Bloody Sunday was a ‘cock-up’ - feebly announces his reluctance to condone British military action. Coincidentally just after the film’s release, he was arrested on two charges: for allegedly conspiring to overthrow an African dictator, and for illegitimate business dealings concerning mercenary armies in South Africa. Commentary in the media noted the coincidence between the disrepute brought upon both the actor and the character played by him in the film. Serendipitously, the film’s damming portrayal of Colonel Ford is somewhat authenticated by Mann’s off-screen activities.

Televisual trauma

The mechanics of authenticity that operate in the film’s performance aesthetic are equally evident at the level of cinematography. Framing and composition in scenes showing violent exchanges between angry protestors and army personnel imitate the visual style of material broadcast as news, and as a result, the scenes are strongly reminiscent of violent clashes, which were captured on camera and distributed as television news at the time. Richard Kilborn has commented on the role played by a ‘...staging device which provides the bridge back to the historical events the documentarist is seeking to reinvoke.’ Shaky camera work and poor composition simulate the difficult shooting conditions of a real life, violent event. Slavoj Zizek notes how the mass media responds to the public appetite for the ‘reality effect’ in providing representations of factual stories:

The authentic twentieth-century passion for penetrating the Real Thing (ultimately the destructive void) through the cobweb of semblances which constitutes our reality thus culminates in the thrill of the Real as the ultimate ‘effect’, sought after from digitalized special effects, through reality TV and amateur pornography, up to snuff movies.

In this case, the film’s reproduction of the ‘thrill of the Real’ should impress upon the viewer not only the film’s relationship to the historical event, but also that of the historical event’s own ‘televisuality,’ since, in reality, Bloody Sunday was a highly mediated event. At the time of Bloody Sunday, the majority of people living on the island of Ireland were granted the opportunity to at least partially witness the atrocity, or its reality ‘effect’ on their television screens. Digital, handheld cameras recording high-speed, ‘televisual’ sequences closely monitor the Paras. Ironically, television cameras in
the early 1970s would not have been sufficiently mobile to record such fast paced scenes, and so the film benefits from current advances in filmmaking equipment to replicate the look of dated, television news footage. During post-production, the film’s overall vintage appearance was enhanced. Giles Livesey, senior colourist at Pandora Production Company, describes how in order to maximise the film’s 1970s appearance, he used stock footage of the time as a grade against which he altered the chemistry of the film through bleach bypass processing. He also corrected brightly coloured clothing worn by extras, which were inharmonious with the dominant, shaded tones of many of the scenes, and inconsistent with the muted colour quality of television and photographic images of the period. By availing of up-to-date post-production technology, Bloody Sunday artfully reproduces the quality of old news footage.

**Prosthetic memory**

Marita Sturken has written extensively about the relationship between the visual media and national, historical memory. She observes that cultural memory and ‘history’ coalesce in instances of national remembrance: ‘Camera images - photographic, cinematic, televisual, documentary, and docudrama – play a vital role in the development of national meaning by creating a shared participation and experience in the nation.’ The verisimilitude displayed in Bloody Sunday’s re-enactments is especially effective, in a film style that self-consciously mimics the look of found footage and reportage type filming, it presents itself as a counterfeit historical document, and thereby encourages the viewer to experience it as a cultural or ‘prosthetic’ memory. Regardless of the lack of consensus as to the merits of ‘prosthetic memory’ – from a negative perspective, it erases historical memory and sanitizes history, while more positively, it is seen as remembering a past which might have been suppressed by official history - Bloody Sunday attains the status of a cultural memory of the historical event by filming re-enactments in a style that suggests their ‘liveness’ and mediation via television cameras.

Owing to the skilful synthesis of many of Bloody Sunday’s most iconic images into the filmic narrative, ‘informed’ and ‘uninformed viewers’ alike should recognise that numerous scenes simulate actuality footage of the event. For both constituencies of viewers, Bloody Sunday’s *cinema verité* film style replicates archival imagery and cues a
special kind of viewing relation, even if important distinctions separate the kind of viewing relation experienced by an informed from that of an uninformed viewer. Through a re-enactment sequence, Bloody Sunday releases an archival image of one of the victims - Barney McGuigan - from its capture within the photographic frame, and mobilises the iconic image in an unfolding narrative. The image of McGuigan is one of the most iconographic photographs of Bloody Sunday, and shows him waving a white hanky in an effort to reach an injured man, just moments before he himself was indiscriminately shot. By incorporating the familiar image of McGuigan in a series of shots representing the moments leading up to and following his famous gesture with the white hankerchief, for a community of informed viewers, the archival image of McGuigan ghosts the representation and so bolsters its historical authority. For uninformed viewers, the film style communicates the scene’s basis in history.

Sturken’s explanation of how images of historical trauma operate in the US context bears at least some relevance to how the narrative re-enactment of McGuigan’s death aligns itself with the historical record as a means of discursively working through the circumstances surrounding his death:

Ironically, though, the image that allows the public to feel as though it participated in the event does not aid us in mourning. Rather, we invest it with a truth it cannot reveal. It is the reenactment, the replaying, the fantasizing of the story that allow the mourning process to proceed and the event to acquire meaning.

Through their incorporation of familiar footage, dramatic re-enactments bear an ‘aura of facticity’ and generate a ‘thanotic dose,’ or narrative imprint, of anxiety. Bloody Sunday solemnly alludes to the state’s culpability in the loss of life on Bloody Sunday by explicitly showing the murder of McGuigan by the Paras, a truth which the archival photograph of his death cannot reveal. If, as LaCapra suggests, trauma is characterised by an absence of anxiety, Bloody Sunday’s selective incorporation of violence, or, of ‘tolerable, nonparanoid doses’ of anxiety are visual and narrative evidence of the film’s discursive strategy of working through historical trauma. While it could be argued that the ‘uninformed viewer’ will not recognise that the film discursively works through the past, as Corner notes, ‘it is instructive to note how questions of knowledge and pleasure variously relate to genericity, taking television as an example.’ Bloody
Sunday’s ‘genericity’, or *cinema verité* style, persuasively conveys the factuality of the re-enactment incorporating the image of McGuigan, in a manner that a viewer-ship extending beyond that which recognises the image is informed of its historicity.

**Conclusion**

In the wake of the historical event, images of Bloody Sunday swiftly acquired iconic dimensions, due, at least partly, to ubiquitous news coverage of the atrocity. In another context, the modern media has been criticised for its propensity of endlessly reproducing almost identical news stories, while doing little to augment viewers’ understanding of a given event or situation. From this perspective, the relay of repetitive arguments in news coverage is antithetical to working through historical trauma on a discursive level. Consequently, factual formats are often perceived as sacrificing ethical responsibility to work through the past in favour of ‘fair and balanced’ reporting. Perhaps *Bloody Sunday* demonstrates how drama documentary or audio-visual formats can overcome some of the perceived shortcomings of investigative journalism, which in the case of Northern Ireland was considerably hampered by censorship restrictions prior to the peace process. A steady rise in the dramatisation of political issues has provoked Corner’s comment that ‘In Britain, the United States and Europe, dramatic reconstruction has been assimilated within many different genres to become an accepted if sometimes controversial, component of public television.’ Until the establishment of the Saville Inquiry, the Widgery Report was generally accepted as the official account of the circumstances surrounding the killing of 13 civilians on Bloody Sunday. Critics of the report denounced it as a whitewash for its abject failure to investigate the role played by the British government and of the inexcusable comportment of its armed forces on the day. *Bloody Sunday* disseminates a cultural memory of Bloody Sunday to television and cinema audiences which in spite of selective historical inaccuracies discursively works-through historical trauma.
(ii)

**Sunday**

**Production history**

In 1999, Channel 4 commissioned Derry based Gaslight Productions, established the previous year, to research the events of Bloody Sunday and the Widgery Inquiry in the aim of writing a screenplay. The company’s directors - Stephen Gargan, Jim Keys and Tony Doherty each had vested interests in the project. Prior to this, Gargan and Keys were members of the Bloody Sunday Organising Committee, while Doherty is the son of Patrick Doherty, one of the Bloody Sunday victims. In 1998, Gargan had already begun a process of research by consulting relatives of the dead, the surviving wounded, and relatives of those wounded who had since passed on. For the purposes of the Channel 4 project, McGovern and Gargan pursued a campaign of intensive interviewing, including interviews with a member of each of bereaved families. In addition to this fieldwork, the production team consulted a wide range of Bloody Sunday related archives, which included photographic and audiovisual material, transcripts of the Widgery Inquiry, and submissions made to the Saville Inquiry.

Bloody Sunday and the Widgery Inquiry engendered a ‘transvaluation’ in attitudes among Northern Ireland’s public toward the British government. During the first Inquiry into Bloody Sunday, Widgery, acting as the sole representative of the British judiciary in Northern Ireland, actively sought to exonerate the perpetrators of unlawful violence by dismissing the eyewitness statements of members of the nationalist community. Unlike *Bloody Sunday*, which focuses uniquely on the day of the march, *Sunday* restages events leading up to, and including, Bloody Sunday, and the Widgery Inquiry. *Sunday’s* screenplay, written by Jimmy McGovern, uses eyewitness accounts from the revelatory book *Eyewitness Bloody Sunday* by Don Mullan to redress some of the Widgery Report’s omissions. Accenting the realism of narrative devices such as the re-enactment and flashback, *Sunday* simulates the Paras’ violent actions on Bloody Sunday, and positions viewers as ‘belated witnesses’ of the historical event. In this way, viewers can re-evaluate, or, as the case may be, consider for the first time, their own position vis-à-vis the event and the official verdict relating to that event, as enshrined in...
the Widgery Report. The coincidence of the film’s transmission with the 30th anniversary of Bloody Sunday meant that viewer-ship, or ‘belated witnessing’ of the event, occurred in a context of collective remembrance.

A truth crisis

During the Inquiry, Lord Widgery disregarded hundreds of eyewitness statements submitted by members of the Derry community. The civilians who were permitted to give their courtroom testimony competed with members of the army for the juridical recognition of their respective testimonies. Despite publication of the Widgery Report into the sequence of events on Bloody Sunday, lack of conclusive evidence and the disregard of civilian eyewitness accounts continued to obscure their precise unfolding. Felman describes why testimony persists at sites of historical contestation:

In its most traditional, routine use in the legal context - in the courtroom situation - testimony is provided, and is called for, when the facts upon which justice must pronounce its verdict are not clear, when historical accuracy is in doubt and when both the truth and its supporting elements of evidence are called into question. The legal model of the trial dramatizes, in this way, a contained, and culturally channelled, institutionalized, crisis of truth. The trial both derives from and proceeds by, a crisis of evidence, which the verdict must resolve.

By including scenes depicting stages of the Inquiry, Sunday represents the channelling of army testimonies into a juridical narrative as an institutional mode of managing a ‘crisis of truth.’ In reality, gross discrepancies between the Paras’ accounts and those of civilian eyewitnesses further fuelled a crisis of truth, which the Inquiry, far from judiciously managing, gravely inflamed. Ultimately, the Widgery Report burdened nationalist communities with a narrative with which they could not identify; various campaigns launched subsequent to the report demanding truth and justice are indicative of dissatisfaction within nationalist communities, and the persistence of a ‘crisis of truth’ in Northern Irish society.

Sunday revisits the genesis of the truth crisis, and by re-enacting televisual scenes from the march, reconstructing the Inquiry’s courtroom drama, and inserting flashbacks, whose overlapping content portrays a civilian’s and a soldier’s common memory of the shootings, the film invites viewers to belatedly witness the event and to critically assess
the verdict pronounced by the British government’s legal emissary in his report, which became a watershed in Northern Irish history.

As outlined in chapter 1, in their co-written book, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, a literary psychoanalyst and practicing clinical psychoanalyst respectively, examine how testimony, in both individual and societal instances, facilitates the working-through of historical trauma. This analysis of Sunday adapts the insights of Felman and Laub to discuss how particular scenes dramatise survivors’ testimonies, and in so doing, discursively work-through historical trauma. The therapeutic value of testimony for, as the case may be, individual being represented, or the viewer, since such theoretical speculation extends beyond the remit of this study, which is exclusively concerned with discursive, audio-visual formations of historical trauma. Felman explains how testimony engenders collective understanding of events of public significance: ‘To testify is ... not merely to narrate but to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative, to others: to take responsibility – in speech – for history or for the truth of an occurrence, for something which by definition goes beyond the personal, in having general validity and consequences.’ As the official, historical account of Bloody Sunday, the Widgery Report failed spectacularly in its judicial responsibility to the people of Derry by disseminating a narrative that excluded the testimonies of the civilian population, and thereby compounded the trauma of the original event in the historical consciousness of the public.

The Widgery Report’s scarce resemblance to the nationalist community’s collective memory of the atrocity compounded their socio-political alienation in the years following Bloody Sunday. Cathy Caruth describes, albeit in relation to the individual, how trauma accrues in severity through the passage of time by suggesting that ‘... trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance returns to haunt the victim later on.’ This analysis contends that by collating previously suppressed, ‘not known,’ personal accounts of the atrocity, Sunday challenges the dominant, official history of the event, and thereby participates in the ‘politics’ of
remembering historical trauma.

In *Sunday*'s courtroom scenes, flashbacks and spoken testimony foreground personal memories of suffering. Laub stresses the indomitable importance of mechanisms, which enable trauma victims to externalize their suffering:

This re-externalization of the event can occur and take effect only when one can articulate and transmit the story, literally transfer it to another outside oneself and then take it back again, inside. Telling thus entails reassertion of the hegemony of reality and a re-externalization of the evil that affected and contaminated the trauma victim. 

Although Laub’s theories derive from a clinical context, in which the individual’s traumatic experiences are considered, she discusses the importance of publicising personal narratives of traumatic events in the social world. In some regards, her insights inform how *Sunday*'s narrative alignment with personal memory grants previously suppressed accounts of a historical trauma, which, in actuality, was experienced by a limited number of individuals, but which imprinted social and political life in Northern Ireland, discursive existence in Northern Irish society and beyond. In order to arrest the repetition or ‘acting out’ of the trauma in public consciousness, *Sunday*'s filmic narrative re-externalises the event through its narrative address of the injustices committed under the auspices of the British government as public history, and of previously ignored civilian eyewitness accounts as personal memory, and seeks to fully remember, and thus work-through the historical trauma.

In societies elsewhere, processes enabling a historical event to be remembered collectively through diverse, autobiographical accounts have been enthusiastically received. One such pertinent example, the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale, was initiated by Laub herself, who comments on how the Yale testimonies

... set in motion a testimonial process similar in nature to the psychoanalytical process, in that it is yet another medium which provides a listener to trauma, another medium of re-externalization – and thus historicization – of the event. As such the testimonial enterprise is yet another mode of struggle against the victims’ entrapment in trauma repetition, against their enslavement to the fate of their victimization.

In Northern Ireland, plans for the establishment of a memorial museum, housing personal testimonies, were inaugurated in 1997 when an organization called *An Crann/The Tree*
opened a Belfast office. Following the Yale example, *An Crann/The Tree* has collected 4,500 testimonies since December 1994. Using the flashback to supplement characters’ courtroom testimonies, *Sunday* similarly externalises personal memories of the event, and although, as a feature film, it creatively remembers the event, the historical integrity of its speculation distinguishes it from a purely fictional work. This analysis discusses the many formal strategies which *Sunday* mobilises in order to remind the viewer of the relative factuality of its content, and how it convincingly inscribes an alternative narrative of Bloody Sunday, to that expounded by the British government, in public discourse.

**Televisual history**

Following the opening credits, a short sequence, which shows a civil rights march, saturated in bluish hues and marked by sweeping camera pans, departs from the visual conventions of social realism in television drama, and artfully imitates the visual style of an investigative television news programme. Additional, formal promiscuity characterises ensuing scenes, for instance, its use of voice-over narration, in which Leo Young synopsises the stages of the civil rights movement from its inception in 1968, aligns the film’s mode of address, at least temporarily, with that of a traditional, historical documentary. A documentary film style is especially evident when, after Young states ‘and this is what the world saw on its television screens,’ archive footage showing the RUC using their batons to attack peaceful demonstrators is inserted. Leo’s informative account of how the RUC attacked Sammy Devaney, his subsequent death and the introduction of internment is illustrated by a combination of real footage, in both black and white, and colour, and of reconstructed footage, whose visual texture is imitative of the film stock used in television and amateur cameras of the time. By amalgamating actual, television footage of civil rights marches and reconstructions of the march, which similarly foreground banners displaying civil rights slogans such as ‘one man, one vote,’ *Sunday* refers to the ubiquity with which such visual motifs appeared on television screens at the time of the civil rights movement as a historical reality, and to the centrality of the civil rights campaign within the film world.
If it is accepted that viewers in Northern Ireland are more likely to corroborate the scene with their own prior knowledge relating to the screen events, these representational strategies cue an alternative viewing relationship with them as compared to viewers with less or no knowledge about Northern Irish history. In an empirical study of the relationship between media content and public belief in relation to Northern Ireland and its political conflict, David Miller points out that ‘In groups where people did not have strong political views on Northern Ireland or alternative political identities, official information could structure how people thought about the killings.' In the context of Sunday, the framing scenes’ incorporation of actuality footage and documentary style associate them with the ‘official information’ associated with factual discourse. In this way, the film offers several points of entry for potential viewers. For viewers with little or no historical knowledge about the event – such as younger and older generations living in Northern Ireland or viewers situated in other geographical locations - the ‘factuality’ of the framing device offers a degree of reassurance of its ‘official status.’ For informed viewers situated in Northern Ireland, who, to begin with, tend to be less enamoured with official information - Miller says that his findings in this regard ‘supports other research, which has found that people in Northern Ireland are more resistant to media coverage about Northern Ireland than people who live in Britain,’ the framing device does not so much convince them of the truth status of the scenes, as, depending on the accuracy of the reconstruction, simulate their own memories of the event, or at the very least of their witnessing of it via news coverage contemporaneous and subsequent to Bloody Sunday. Although representational strategies in Sunday do not predetermine the film’s reception, in a Channel 4 post TX studio discussion of Sunday, the majority of the pre selected ‘representative’ audience believed Sunday’s version of events, with the notable exception of an audience member who was confused by the framing device. On this basis and in spite of attracting negative critical attention for using a crude framing device that in mere minutes of screen time documents the historical context of Bloody Sunday, it could be argued that Sunday capitalises on the centrality of ‘information management activities in shaping public belief and facilitating the exercise of power in one direction or another’ to portray the Catholic population of Northern Ireland as victims of both British and unionist domination.
Noticeable alterations in the textural appearance of the film’s visual text formally denote its preoccupation with the televisual nature of Bloody Sunday. Additionally, a scene in which General Ford, speaking into an audio recording device, says that a statement should be released in the media, which would ‘prepare the public for violent scenes on television,’ directly alludes to television’s role as a witness of historical atrocity. The film world and historical reality merge when real footage of the rioting, which preceded the outbreak of state violence, is played on a television in the protagonist’s family home. In reality, television constituted a site where television viewers witnessed the traumatic event, and simultaneously became historical observers of Bloody Sunday. A scene in the film, which specifically represents television’s accommodation of such witnessing, shows one of the survivors, confined to a hospital bed, ruefully dismissing a police officer, who is badgering him with questions, so that he can witness his son’s funeral on television. In another scene, which refers to the ubiquity of television cameras at the event and in its immediate aftermath, an RUC employee, and uncle of one of the victims, complains about the imminent presence of the cameras at his nephew’s funeral, and the unsolicited publicity which being a pallbearer he would attract. This character even tries to abdicate his responsibility of carrying his nephew’s coffin, until his sister’s insistence that he fulfil his familial duty convinces him otherwise. A later scene, which incorporates archival, black and white footage of the funeral of some of the victims, and that of a coffin being lowered into the ground, witnessed by scores of grieving onlookers, justifies his fear of the media, while at the same time, reminding viewers of the extra-diegetic reality of the media’s pervasiveness. Also, by replaying archival news footage of the burning of the British embassy and damaged British owned commercial premises in Dublin, such as the Thomas Cook travel agency, *Sunday* shows the immediate aftermath of the event as broadcast on television and witnessed by international television audiences at the time. Similarly, the reconstruction of Fr. Daly’s interview on the afternoon of Bloody Sunday, in which he condemns the actions of the Paras, is included because of its media ubiquity at the time, and its continuing familiarity to many viewers.
Further indication of the intensely mediated nature of Bloody Sunday is evident in multiple shots which frame a single cameraman at the scene of the atrocity. Considering that he is consistently viewed in focus, in mid close-up, and supporting a distinctive, vintage, seventies camera on his shoulder, it is unsurprising that the cameraman’s idiosyncratic image is prominent in the scenes in which he features. Furthermore, by appearing in both the film’s present tense and in some of its flashback sequences, his recurrent image becomes a visual motif in the film. In a related manner, on several occasions, a camera viewfinder, which superimposes itself on the screen, interrupts the conventions of realism being observed by the reconstruction. By foregrounding the viewfinder, the film positions the viewer at the helm of a, albeit fictional, recording apparatus, and simulates the activity of filming a live event. A Saracen spraying copious amounts of orange liquid into the crowd, represents the mounting aggression between the army and protesters, and convincingly conveys the tense atmosphere. The event’s ‘liveness’ is simulated when the camera lens framing the action is splashed with this same orange liquid, and it audibly hits against a camera’s glass lens. The cameraman’s reappearance in a later scene reinforces the notion of the media’s pervasiveness at the historical event. On this occasion, he plays the interviewer in a reconstruction of the famous interview in which Fr. Daly recounted his eyewitness account of the atrocity.

While obvious, formal disparities differentiate actual, archival news footage from scenes which yoke historical reconstruction to the aesthetics of social realism or television drama, glitches in the photographic texture, mainly composed of out of focus shots, in some of the reconstructions simulate the amateur recording of the historical event by individuals attending the march, and blur the boundaries between archival and fictional images. Owing to their inferior image quality, resulting from the awkward zooms and pans of a super 8 camera, many of these sequences set at the march closely resemble amateur footage of a live event. As one such scene unfolds, its visual texture vacillates between that of a ‘home movie’ and that of a professionally filmed realistic drama, combining the liveness of ‘unmanipulated,’ amateur filming with the emotional strength of realism. By utilising two distinct modes of address, Sunday artfully positions
itself in relationship to archival documentation, without foregoing the narrative possibilities afforded by dramatic realism.

**Truth ethics and television**

With many of the film’s characters, the actual existence of a historical individual ghosts a given actor’s performance of that character, and thus, in those instances in which a character offers their testimony of what they witnessed on Bloody Sunday, the discursive amplitude of what they describe, provided it resembles the historical version, is enhanced. The real Fr. Daly is exemplary in this regard, and although he was already a relatively well-known public figure prior to Bloody Sunday, domestic and international transmission of a televised interview, in which he gave a news reporter an eyewitness account of the day and vehemently condemned the murderous actions of the Paras, greatly increased his international and domestic renown. *Sunday’s* reconstruction of Daly’s interview mobilises a type of ‘truth ethics’ specific to television, and whose successful operation in this narrative instance relies upon the viewer’s televisual knowledge of Daly’s public denunciation of the British army’s behaviour on the day of Bloody Sunday, and his subsequent campaigning efforts to vindicate the victims of the atrocity following the ‘Widgery whitewash.’ In a highly convincing performance, an actor exactingly impersonates Fr. Daly’s expression of indignation at the army in the original televised interview, and in such a way aligns itself with the ‘truth ethics’ of television.

In one scene, Daly, in a voice choked with emotion, describes what he witnessed on the afternoon of Bloody Sunday: ‘There was nothing fired at them, I can speak about this without any difficulty whatsoever. I was there. I was just standing at the flats when the Saracens moved in. There was no provocation … its disgraceful, there was positively nothing fired at them whatsoever.’ In another scene, the same interview is replayed on a television, seen in close-up, in a pub occupied by a large contingent of the Paras, the most vocal of whom disrespectfully comments ‘this guy’s poetry in motion/ We’ll be here all night,’ to which another para rejoins ‘Can they not take a fuckin joke?’ In real life, Daly tended to Jack Duddy as he lay dying on a cold pavement. A vocal spokesperson on
behalf of the bereaved, he publicly described Duddy’s final moments: ‘I saw him look at me. He was kind of smiling … you know, a mixture of fear and laughter. He gasped simultaneously with the shot and he fell.’ Daly’s emotive testimony rejoins a question posed by Laub and Felman: ‘Why is it that the witness’s speech is so uniquely, literally irreplaceable? … What does it mean that a story – or a history- cannot be told by someone else?’ Although the aforementioned scene is reconstructed, owing to Fr. Daly’s fame, and the familiarity of a general-public with his statements on Bloody Sunday, and which are painstakingly reproduced in the screenplay, for an informed viewer, the scene exhibits characteristics of a non-fiction account. The accuracy of the reconstruction’s representation of the real Fr. Daly’s interview satisfies the ‘truth ethics’ of television, and so aligns itself with the real Daly’s ‘irreplaceable’ speech.

The flashback: a site of memory

Writing in the US context, Diana Taylor comments on how various art forms position viewers as witnesses to restaged, historical events. She writes: ‘… and witnessing is transferable – the theater, like the testimony, like the photograph, film or report, can make witnesses of others. The (eye) witness sustains both the archive and the repertoire.’ Taylor describes the person to whom a reconstructed event is communicated, and who therefore bears ‘witness’ to it, as being subject to ‘performative contagion.’ From the perspective of psychoanalysis, Freud theorised a similar phenomenon, which he named transference, to describe how the analyst could become the recipient of trauma transferred, or communicated by the analysand. While the ascertainment of whether or not Sunday transfers its trauma to the viewer is not pursued in this film analysis, Sunday indubitably constitutes the site of a double ‘belated witnessing’: the trial scenes use flashbacks to dramatise the characters’ memory of what they witnessed on the day, while the viewer witnesses both those characters’ flashbacks and their courtroom testimonies almost thirty years subsequent to the historical event. Taylor discusses how belated witnessing operates through dramatic representations:

Like performance, the recounting involves bracketing, framing, setting up the scene. ‘Listen to this,’ says the victim, the narrator, the testimonial writer. ‘Look at this,’ say the survivors who return to the place, the lieu de memoire, or the photographers, playwrights and film makers who need us to recognize something with our minds eye, if not first-hand with the eye itself. In trauma,
the past is replayed in the present – both as a symptom of distress (as in flashbacks), and as part of the healing process (reclaiming the experience).

In *Sunday*, a ‘lieu de memoire,’ the past is also replayed, and the flashback can be interpreted as both a ‘symptom of distress,’ and as ‘part of the healing process,’ in so far as it discursively works-through the historical trauma.

Felman and Laub discuss how film, as a visual medium, presents eyewitness testimony both as evidence of its own art and as a historical argument. In *Sunday*, the flashback fulfils this dual function – it capitalises upon the mediating strengths of the camera to effectively represent subjective, traumatic memory, and, on a narrative level, indicts the behaviour of the Paras on the afternoon of Bloody Sunday. The flashback’s formal and narrative strengths predispose it to proficiently representing public history from a personal perspective, or in Maureen Turim’s words: ‘... flashbacks in film often merge the two levels of remembering the past, giving large-scale social and political history the subjective mode of a single, fictional individual’s remembered experience’ and balances emotional, or dramatic, elements and the historical exactitude of the narrative.

*Sunday* capitalises on the flashback’s dual function, as a specifically filmic, and more general narrative device, to represent the subjective memory of Geraldine McBride, a civilian who in reality attended the NICRA march and who was subsequently called upon as a witness by the Widgery Inquiry, and the memory of an unnamed member of the parachute regiment. The Para’s flashback, however, differs from that of Geraldine, in so far as it is less focalised through his subjectivity, as a result of which, it cannot be automatically assumed that it exclusively represents his memory, even if, as this analysis demonstrates, it can reasonably be linked to it. Through its ambiguous mode of address, the latter flashback, belonging, it can be reasonably assumed, to the para, represents a version of the past which, although associated with an individual character, cannot be reduced to its memory alone, and thus is situated between a subjective memory and objective, or historical, record.
Eyewitness account

A mid close-up of Geraldine’s torso as she sits in the witness stand during the moments preceding her testimony initially blocks viewer identification with her, by not revealing her face, however, somewhat contradictorily, the close-up also establishes a degree of intimacy between the viewer and the character being viewed. After slowing tilting upward, framing, in close-up, a side profile of her face, the camera rests perfectly still as it observes Geraldine commencing her testimony. As she recounts how she and the rest of those who were gathered at the scene of the event ‘could hear this man squealing’ an image of a man, visibly in pain, lying on a pavement instantaneously appears, before Geraldine’s close-up reoccupies the screen. By inserting an image, or flashback, which perfectly illustrates Geraldine’s verbal account of her memory, the film presents the flashback as her personal memory, and constructs character interiority.

After briefly cutting to the court audience, who appear unanimously riveted by her testimony, the screen returns a close-up shot of Geraldine, and she, in a voice betraying emotional distress, quotes the words spoken by the man as he lay on the pavement, ‘I don’t want to die on me own.’ Another brief flashback, which again only fleetingly replaces Geraldine’s image, shows several men trying to restrain a man from moving, while her speech, overlaying the image, verbally describes what the images show, she says: ‘And Mr. Guigan, he said, I can’t stand this any longer. If I go out waving a white hanky, they won’t shoot me.’ As she continues her account, four brief, traumatic flashbacks, all of which exactly correspond to her spoken testimony, periodically replace her image in the courtroom, representing her interior traumatic memory of the shooting dead of Mr. McGuigan. As she describes how he inched away from the group, a brief image shows him cautiously moving in the direction of the injured man, her comment that he was ‘waving his white hanky’ is likewise illustrated, and an extreme close-up of the hanky accompanied by a heightened sound-track recreating the sound of cloth being whipped by the wind, precedes a shot which frames both Geraldine and Widgery, but who, unlike Geraldine, quickly goes out of focus and recedes from the shot. As she announces ‘and then he got shot,’ the image, once more abruptly cuts to a flashback, which, on this occasion,
shows McGuigan falling to the ground with a gunshot wound. Bridging the soundtrack of the courtroom scene and that of the flashback, the sound of gunshot aurally communicates how Geraldine not only remembers the traumatic event, but represents her reliving of it in the present tense of the film’s narrative. A straight-on mid shot of Geraldine, which has replaced the close-up, side profile, gradually moves into a close up once more as she emotionally intimates the final details of her testimony, assuring the audience that ‘neither Mr Gilmore nor Mr McGuigan had any weapons. Mr McGuigan was only going to see if he could find the man that was crying.’ Before the next witness takes the stand, a visually foregrounded shot of Widgery sitting rigidly, his expression blank, and fingers knitted together, foreshadows the indifference towards Geraldine’s eyewitness account, which he subsequently demonstrates in his report. Significantly, during the courtroom scenes, the viewer is entreated solely to Geraldine’s interiority, represented through her flashbacks, while the testimony of other witnesses, including Paras, General Ford, and Leo Young, who take the stand, are unaccompanied by supporting flashback imagery. In this way, Geraldine’s eyewitness account is privileged, and the viewer is encouraged to identify with her and, and the past, which her memory frames.

Following the fragmented flashbacks representing Geraldine’s memory, one continuous flashback which unfolds in a sequence of consecutive shots, shows three civilian shootings: a youth running alongside Fr Daly is indiscriminately shot, another male, of similar age, is shot as he runs alongside Geraldine, and a man is shot as he goes to the aid of his son who is lying on the ground with a gunshot wound. Because these scenes are not, at least initially, focalised through an easily identified character, the viewer receives no forewarning that they belong to a flashback. However, the repetition of images and dialogue from scenes, which occurred earlier in the film indicate that they belong to an anterior narrative temporality. Correspondences between different narrative segments - such as when a line of dialogue which played on the soundtrack earlier in the film during a ‘real time’ sequence is repeated, with the distinction that on the second occasion, the viewer sees a Para sadistically directing the phrase in question to an emergency worker: ‘your white coat makes a good target, your red heart even better,’
bridge the subjective flashback with the ‘facts’ – as they are represented in the impersonal reconstruction of Bloody Sunday. Likewise, the identical content of Geraldine and the ‘good Para’s’ memory of Mr. McGuigan’s ordeal allows their flashbacks to mutually reinforce their veracity. However, unlike Geraldine’s memory, the Para’s flashback, which includes Geraldine as a participant in the scene, which she earlier recounted, unfolds in a long, uninterrupted sequence. Although his flashback contains images identical to those of Geraldine’s, it differs from hers in so far as it delivers a less subjectively circumscribed version of the event. In contrast to Geraldine’s personal memory, the content of ‘his flashback’ supplements his recollection of the event as a character by encompassing a vision, which extends beyond a single point of view. Furthermore, since the Para’s voice does not occur on the sound track to the flashback, he does not assume ownership of the flashback through speech, and therefore it is difficult to definitively associate it with his memory of the event. Notwithstanding these ambiguities, two short sequences in which a helicopter leaving Derry, carrying the Para, who is visually differentiated from the soldiers in his company by uniquely appearing in close-up shots, frame the flashback, and on this basis, it may be inferred that the flashback belongs, at least partially, to the Para, who, presumably, is reflecting upon what he has witnessed in Derry before leaving the town. Also, earlier in the film, after the Para has described his version of the event, he displeases his superior to such an extent that he is informed that his evidence will not be required in court, which suggests that his memory of the event, as the flashback demonstrates, is not compromised by national allegiances, and while his memory, as represented in the flashback, is inescapably subjective, its negligible ideological colouring, invites the viewer to consider it as an unbiased historical argument.

**Personal histories**

Although scenes representing the memories of Geraldine and the ‘good Para’ subjectively frame Bloody Sunday, both characters’ flashbacks contain familiar, televisual images, and thus position themselves in relationship to archival footage of the historical event. In each case, the mode of addressing the past is not limited to its focalisation through a single character, since both flashbacks similarly mobilise iconographic imagery of the media’s coverage of the historical event. In varying
degrees, *Sunday*'s flashbacks resemble collective memories of the event by using familiar imagery of Bloody Sunday to dramatise characters’ personal recollections of the event. Without neglecting factual evidence, the flashbacks’ narrative mode of focalising history through a character’s memory allows it to supplement factual content with a personal, subjective perspective of the event. For instance, both flashbacks’ reconstruction of Mr McGuigan’s shooting use the familiar image of the white hanky being waved at the Paras, its incorporation reminds the viewer of archival images of the Paras’ indifference to the peaceful protests of civilians on Bloody Sunday, while dramatic details in the flashbacks, notably in the Para’s recollection, supplement archival images of McGuigan’s indiscriminate shooting. Strongly informed by factual sources, *Sunday*'s narrative address of historical trauma does not breach the acceptable standards of historical speculation observed in public discourse, and its ‘creative treatment’ of the facts, or narrative and personalising strategies, does not deform its historical integrity, even if they it operates at some remove from the criteria of professional historiography.

**Conclusion**

In a Channel 4 debate, broadcast immediately after the film’s first television transmission, which focused specifically on the victims, their families, and the legacy of the atrocity in present day Northern Ireland, an audience member asked Jimmy McGovern why he and his team could not wait until after the Inquiry to make their film. Without hesitation, McGovern replied that the film could only help the Inquiry. From such a perspective, *Sunday* provides an audio-visual channel, which allows a testimonial voice, based on genuine, eyewitness accounts, to be transmitted, and the event to be reconstructed, offering viewers an opportunity to belatedly witness the historical trauma. By publicising personal suffering, the narrative politicises loss, and seeks accountability for the disrespect of civilian life. In reality, the British establishment condoned the military manoeuvres of the Paras on Bloody Sunday, the film refers to this state endorsement in a scene depicting a ceremony in which the Queen bestows military honours upon General Ford. By inserting this scene within close proximity to one in which the sounding of the Angelus precedes the slow,
panning movement of the camera as it covers an area of ground dotted with dead bodies, the film effects a critical commentary on the state’s culpability regarding the tragedy, and the bitter legacy bequeathed to the people of Derry.
Historical Context

Throughout the 20th century, Irish political prisoners employed the hunger strike as a form of political protest. Historically, the hunger strike fulfilled a symbolic rather than an instrumental function. Historian George Sweeney describes how the association of the hunger strike with ‘religio-political martyrdom’ and ‘the pantheon of Irish heroes’, who participated in them, fortified their symbolic strength. Sweeney describes the socio-political climate at the beginning of the twentieth century as one in which there was a ‘reawakening of both religious practice and nationalism together with a militant republicanism.’ He concludes that ‘One manifestation of this religio-political fusion was the satisfying of societal and psychic needs through self-sacrifice.’ Analogously, self-starvation on the part of prisoners in the Irish Free State and later in the Republic, as well as those held in Northern Irish prisons, has historically been considered in the context of self-sacrifice. In many regards, the hunger strike was the pre-eminent method of resisting state power available to prisoners. For instance, when the Free State government decided to amend the Emergency Powers Act, enabling them to intern suspected terrorists without trial or charge in 1940, instances of hunger strike among IRA prisoners in the South escalated.

Admittedly, some instances of self-starvation garnered more recognition than others, even if martyrdom was unreservedly bestowed on all those who endured a hunger strike to the death. The Lord Mayor of Cork in 1920, Terence MacSwiney, became immortalised in Republican history after he died in Brixton prison on day 74 of his hunger strike. The recalling of a section from his inauguration speech during the 1981 hunger strike in the H-Block of the Maze Prison indicates the level of esteem in which he was remembered. In this speech, he stated: ‘It is not those who can inflict the most, but those who can suffer the most who will conquer.’ Political prisoners redeployed these words in a calculated effort to extend the parameters of support for their campaign by
tapping into nationalist consciousness and loyalties. By the 1980s, it had become apparent that an ability to effectively publicize the act of self-immolation had supplanted any intrinsic worth of the individual’s willingness to suffer on behalf of a political cause.

Since the early 1970s, the British government had been waging a propaganda war in the media aimed at depoliticizing the IRA by emphasising the criminal activities of militant republicans. Terminology borrowed from popular culture, such as ‘the Godfathers of crime,’ became quotidian political parlance. The British government’s weaponry however was not limited to rhetoric alone. Aside from their participation in a propaganda war, under Direct Rule, they passed legislation in the British Parliament aimed at weakening the political worth of Republicanism. In 1976, for example, they removed the category of political prisoner from the statute books. By abolishing ‘special status,’ which previously applied to individuals imprisoned for engaging in political violence, they nullified, legislatively, the distinction between political and criminal prisoners. This plan conspired to stymie IRA prisoners’ endeavours to correlate their struggle with that of their republican forefathers, not least those who died during the 1916 Rising, and to hinder them from projecting themselves as part of a historical continuum to the wider nationalist community. Maud Ellmann identified the strategy adopted by hunger strikers as one in which they would “… transform their bodies into the ‘quotations’ of their forebears and reinscribe the cause of Irish nationalism in the spectacle of starving flesh.”

The Northern Irish and British governments underestimated republican prisoners’ resolve to retain their political status. After years ‘on the blanket,’ and undertaking the infamous dirty protest, the unenviable practice of self-starvation was perceived by prisoners as the sole viable method of resisting the state’s political and juridical power. In October 1980, seven Republican prisoners in the Maze began a hunger strike. Several weeks later, three women in the female wing of Armagh prison organised a concurrent hunger strike. Towards the end of December, the strike was called off owing to overtures by the British authorities that the strikers’ demands would be conceded. However, another hunger strike was planned after the British government reneged on its promises,
by distributing prison issue, civilian style, clothes, and not allowing them to wear their own clothes. Meanwhile, the IRA prohibited female prisoners in Armagh from participating in the 1981 hunger strike so as not to distract from the H-Blocks campaign. Sweeney describes the significance of the historical context of the 1981 hunger strikes, 'The hunger strike, perhaps a less dramatic continuance of the blood sacrifice, is best understood within the context of the Irish cult of self-sacrifice; its latest legacy being the 1981 hunger strikes and deaths of ten republican prisoners in the Maze prison.'184 While the British government tried to deracinate the IRA from the official narrative of Irish history, they underestimated the historical resonance of the tradition of self-sacrifice that had been resuscitated during the 1981 hunger strikes. International responses to the 1981 hunger strikes, especially the overwhelming reaction of the Irish diaspora in the US, indicated the alacrity with which public support for the strikes could be mobilised.

The wholly unprecedented scale on which those suspected of IRA involvement were interned in the early 1970s was symptomatic of the British government's determination, even prior to the criminalisation of political prisoners in 1976, to depoliticise the republican movement. Using outdated intelligence on 9 August 1971, the British government ordered the arrest of 450 men and apprehended 342.185 Few if any of these were senior IRA officials, since their intelligence sources provided them with advance information about the military operation and allowed them to go into hiding. 116 men were released within 48 hours, while 226 men were detained. While the majority of these men were held in the C wing of Crumlin Road Jail, the overspill were held aboard the Maidstone, which had been hurriedly converted into a prison ship. Two prison camps, Long Kesh and Magilligan, would soon be erected to accommodate the growing number of internees. Without supporting evidence, Prime Minister Brian Faulkner erroneously announced that everyone arrested was either 'a terrorist or a member of the IRA.'186 In reality, many of those detained had no links whatsoever to the IRA, while in many others cases those accused were inactive members. Six months after the preliminary dawn swoop of August 1971, 2,357 had been arrested, 598 had been detained, and 1,600, who even the government considered as completely innocent, had been released after 'interrogation.' By the time internment was aborted, 5 December
1975, 1,981 had been detained, 1,874 of whom were Catholic/Republican, while only 107 were Protestant/Loyalist. Although, British and Unionist politicians denied that any torture took place, the Irish government was confident that it had sufficient evidence to bring a case of torture against the British government to the European Commission on Human Rights on 2 May 1974. An Amnesty International report stated that: ‘In short, the allegations are of such nature as to provide a prima facie case of brutality and torture in contravention of Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

‘Positions of discomfort’ and ‘physical ill-treatment’ were just two of the euphemisms used by unionist politicians to describe the interrogation procedures that detainees underwent. A lack of consensus as to whether these procedures constituted ‘discomfort and hardship’ or ‘physical and mental torture’ resulted in the matter being fudged at the level of political discourse. Overcrowding, poor hygiene and ‘punishment diets’ – it was not unusual to find human hair, dirt and even pieces of glass in the food - became daily features of life in all of the prison camps. By May 1972, ten cages, or compounds, had been erected in Long Kesh, which was located just outside Lisburn. Each cage, delimited by 12-foot-high wire fences, was fortified by coils of meshed wire and enclosed four huts. Although each hut measured only 120 feet by 24 feet, they were designed to house 40 men. Conditions were perhaps harshest aboard the Maidstone. Initially, 142 men were interned aboard the prison ship, however this number quickly rose. Inmates were allowed no more than four hours on deck, less if it was raining. The poor quality of meals that were provided precipitated several hunger strikes. However, low morale and lack of organisation curtailed all of the strikes. The no-jury Diplock courts were set up when the British government realized it needed to replace internment with a more refined and sanitised method of facilitating what British counter-insurgency strategist Brigadier Frank Kitson called ‘... the disposal of unwanted members of the public.’
Commemoration

As mentioned in the introduction and preceding chapters, the relative political stability provoked by the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 has been largely responsible for engendering an exponential increase in the production of feature films pertaining to violence and loss since that date. That is not to say that various outlets of the media in Northern Ireland during ‘troubles’ did not act as conduits through which the past was commemorated or historical events reflected on. Indeed, unionist commentators bitterly argued that the broadcast and print media’s coverage of the hunger strikes was far in excess of its newsworthiness at the time. However, the culture of censorship in and around Northern Ireland during this period inhibited investment in the production of feature films and television drama of this nature. Despite narrative dissimilarities, the hunger strike films examined in this chapter commonly enact a memorial function, in so far as they each reflect upon the loss of life, which occurred during the republican prison campaigns. According to Gregory Ulmer, memorials function in societies when the losses that they commemorate are recognised as sacrifices on behalf of a public, collective value. Ulmer describes the function of ‘peripheral’ memorials in the US context as ones which ‘make a case for losses of life (or other kinds of loss) whose public collective relevance as ‘sacrifice’ is not yet recognized.’ Owing to the lack of political consensus in Northern Ireland more generally, and the prevalence of ideologically divided interpretations of the hunger strikes, *H3* and *Silent Grace*, to a much greater degree than *Some Mother’s Son*, since it devotes greater attention to the mothers’ emotional journey than to the prisoners’ ordeal, resemble ‘peripheral,’ audio-visual memorials of the H-Block campaigns. Previously, media and academic discourse in and about Northern Ireland sidestepped discussion of the sacrificial dimension of the hunger strikes for fear of partaking in republican propaganda. As a sanitised representation of the hunger strikes, which displaces the prisoners’ plight onto a voyage of self-discovery undertaken by two of the prisoners’ mothers’ as they seek to come to terms with their sons’ incarceration, *Some Mother’s Son*, produced on the cusp of the peace process, internalises this fear in its narrative. The respective analyses highlight the divergent narrative address of the hunger strikes exhibited by *Some Mother’s Son*, *H3* and *Silent Grace*.
H3’s narrative proposes that political prisoners in the H-Blocks of the Maze prison purposefully modulated the significance of their campaigns - notably the dirty protest and the hunger strikes, to instigate the transformation, from waste to worth, of their socio-symbolic status within the prison. As one of the first examples of a feature film that forges a relationship between the self-abjection of prisoners during the dirty protest and the self-sacrifice of the hunger strikers, H3’s mise en scène alludes to the squalid nature of living conditions endured by actual prisoners inside the Maze, and skilfully deploys religious imagery, replete with sacrificial connotations, to communicate their suffering. The scenes of nudity, which significantly contribute to the film’s visual schema, allow its principal themes of abjection and sacrifice to be inscribed onto the actors’ bodies. As already discussed in chapter 1, by aligning the representation of the prisoners with the positive elements of Kristeva’s notion of abjection, and considering the prison regime in accordance with Georgio Agamben’s notion of the administration of biological life, it will be argued that H3 represents and politicises the prison protests as a concerted, constructive effort to disrupt socio-symbolic order within the prison. Also, by referring to René Girard’s writing on sacrifice, and decoding the film’s references to Christian iconography, analysis explicates how H3’s narrative addresses the real prisoners’ struggle, and unfavourably interprets the measures adopted by the British state in its effort to depoliticise the republican struggle during the no wash campaign, dirty protest and the 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes.

Although H3’s vilification of prison officers as violent rogues, and portrayal of prisoners as passionately committed to the exercise of self-sacrifice may be considered as designed to generate viewer sympathy with the prisoners, historical records nonetheless corroborate its biased version of prison life in the H-Blocks. In a historical work on the period, one internee remembers a prison officer’s rebuke when he dared to recall his citizen’s rights, “... ‘Listen, you smarty bastard, under the Special Powers Act we can keep you here as long as we like. You can't see anyone. No one will know where you are
and we don't have to charge you with anything. If one of those soldiers happens to shoot you, there'll be no inquest either, you bastard.’ Having read the SP Acts I knew this to be unfortunately all too true.’ While the film’s emphasis of the brutality of prison life arguably serves dramatic and ideological purposes, the special powers were still in effect during the period in which the film was set. The Special Powers Acts instated a legal vacuum in which the state’s representatives could perform inhuman practices upon prisoners. \(H3\) alludes to the violence performed in this legal vacuum through its representation of the psychological humiliation and physical degradation of political prisoners by prison officers. Furthermore, by representing prisoners at the mercy of predominantly sadistic prison officers, \(H3\) dramatises Agamben’s observation that when ‘the normal order is de facto suspended and in which whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign.’ Accordingly, aggressive behaviour largely characterises actors’ performances as prison officers, while a scene showing the internal bodily searches of prisoners performed by prison officers, dramatises an extreme example of the violent treatment of prisoners.

**State violence**

The temporal coincidence of \(H3\)’s production with post 9/11 debates regarding terrorism provokes comparison between \(H3\)’s representation of prisoners and Slavoj Zizek’s discussion of how the US administration presents Islamic terrorists as being neither enemy soldiers nor common criminals, but unlawful combatants.\(^{197}\) Although the British government criminalised political prisoners in Northern Ireland, the treatment of prisoners in the prison and the legislative measures enacted in relation to them suggests that they resembled ‘unlawful combatants,’\(^{198}\) a category popularised by the US President George Bush in speeches referring to the attacks on the Twin Towers, more than ordinary criminals. In this regard, the disciplinary punishment to which prisoners in Northern Irish prisons were subject could be compared to the disciplinary codes reserved by the US military for ‘… political Enemies, foreclosed from the political space proper.’\(^{199}\) \(H3\)’s representation of the violence performed upon republican prisoners suggests that the relationship between republican prisoners and the prison officers differs significantly
from that of ordinary prisoners and these same officers. In a scene in which the services of a large contingent of riot police are enlisted, republican prisoners are dragged naked from their cells, some already bleeding, while others receive liberal bashes from the police, who are wielding black rubber batons. A scene later, a naked prisoner despondently sits on the floor of his cell as blood streams from his nose down his chest.

The anti-republican rhetoric, which accompanies the administration of violent acts against republican prisoners in these scenes, betrays the extent of political antagonisms between the prison officers and IRA prisoners. One prison officer jeers a higher-ranking officer, who is known for demonstrating civility towards the prisoners, regardless of their religious or political creed, for being a ‘provie lover’ [Provisional IRA]. When the latter officer attempts to reprimand him for his comment by asking him to repeat what he has said, the officer unrepentantly states: ‘I said provie lover sir.’ This dutiful officer uniquely demonstrates a non-hostile attitude, and without exception, all other prison officers ill-treat the republican prisoners. Whether or not prisoners as represented in 

are subject to torture, or, to degrading treatment, remains a moot point, since, conveniently, for the state authorities, the legal distinction between torture and inhuman and degrading treatment is almost negligible. For its part, H3 represents a prison system in which prison officers degrade and defile prisoners without sanction.

**Discipline and abject punishment**

In the aim of representing the collusion between forces of the state in systematically humiliating republican prisoners at micro-political levels, H3 shows the prison officers’ daily performances of psychological and physical abuse of inmates at narrative and visual levels. Even though internment was no longer in force during the period when H3 is set, since it constituted a preliminary stage in the British government’s programme to depoliticise the republican movement, it is not irrelevant to H3’s representation of the historical grievances borne by prisoners, whose human rights the viewer witnesses as being consistently threatened, and in some scenes, altogether denied. In an institutional sense, the H-Blocks correspond to the ‘anthropological machine’, a term, coined by Agamben to designate how the humanity or animality of man is decided via either of two modes: humanizing of the animal and animalizing of the human. The
personal writings of Bobby Sands, an elected MP and leader of the 1981 Hunger Strikes in the H-Blocks, similarly construes the animalising mechanisms of the prison system, by describing the animality of living conditions inside the Maze: ‘I felt like an animal squatting in the corner of the cell among the rubbish and dirt.’ Although *H3* represents how Sands and the other prisoners positively exploited their self-abjection, equally, it represents their vulnerability to the biopolitical strategy, described by Agamben as the ‘animalising of the human,’ or to the efforts of the prison officers to deny them of their humanity. Daily rituals recur throughout the film in which the officers attempt to animalise the prisoners. For example, the officers dole out uncivilised dog-like bowls of food to the prisoners at meal times, and distribute and collect slop out buckets to and from the cells. The conspicuous absence of verbal exchanges between the officers and prisoners, communication is limited to the officers tendency to shout orders at the prisoners, suggests that the prison officers exclude the prisoners from their linguistic community. Likewise, the unavailability of writing and reading materials to *H3’s* prison population indicates an effort on the part of the prison authorities to debase the prisoners and dispel them from an intellectual, human, realm.

Historically, the British and Irish governments have employed language aimed at depoliticising militant republicanism. In the prison context, the British government’s policies of normalisation and criminalization were enacted in linguistic and practical realms. Correspondingly, *H3* presents republican prisoners’ resistance to their political devaluation as occurring in two spheres: in the physical realm they use their bodies to abject themselves in an effort to unsettle the social order within the prison; and in a linguistic one, they use the Irish language to position themselves in a symbolic space alien to the prison officers, and contiguous to the larger republican movement. In reality, many republican prisoners, who spoke no Irish upon being imprisoned, learned the Irish language during their period of incarceration in the H-Blocks, as a method of communicating republican resistance to British presence in Northern Ireland. Numerous scenes represent the prisoners’ persistent efforts to communicate through Irish, and despite obvious difficulties in mastering the Irish language, they appear determined to speak in their ‘native’ vernacular. Regardless of the acute syntactical and grammatical
errors punctuating their speech through Irish, and which through time became regularised into a prison dialect known as ‘Jaelic,’ by employing the Irish language as the prison vernacular, the prisoners inscribe themselves into a socio-symbolic space from which the emissaries of the British government are excluded and from where they can, potentially, resist their interpellation as ordinary criminals.

Abject states

A scene, set in the showers, echoes a comment of Maud Ellmann’s in the context of the Maze prison that ‘...the spectacle of nakedness titillates the clothed with the delusion of their own superiority.’ In this scene, a prison officer, who expresses hostility towards the prisoners throughout the film, scrutinizes a fully naked McCann, as he showers. Elsewhere in the narrative, prison officers gratuitously strike prisoners with their hard, rubber batons, enacting a violent gesture, which is contrary to protocol, and to the treatment of ‘ordinary decent criminals.’ The officers sadistically humiliate the prisoners, one of whom jeeringly asks McCann during the mirror search: ‘Didn’t your ma tell you how to wash.’ Another officer taunts him about the illegitimacy of their struggle and their lack of political status: ‘you can forget about the IRA now, there is no army here except the British army, no officers commanding, except for me and my officers. From now on you are 1844 McCann.’ Through words, and later in actions, McCann resists the officer’s attempts to humiliate him. He tells him, ‘I won’t be wearing the prison uniform or doing prison work, I’m not a criminal, I’m a political prisoner.’ In his eventual participation in the dirty protest, McCann enacts his defiance of the authority wielded by those officers responsible for his humiliation, and by extension, that of the British government.

Kristeva links abjection to ‘... the inability to assume with sufficient strength the imperative act of excluding.’ In H3, prisoners reverse this logic of exclusion. Rather than excluding defilement for fear of the threat it might pose to identity, they include it. By including rather than excluding filth, the prisoners control their abjection instead of having it visited upon them through degrading treatment during procedures such as internal searches. Kristeva describes the abject as that which ‘... is jettisoned from the
‘symbolic system.’ It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order in which a social aggregate is based, which then becomes differentiated from a temporary agglomeration of individuals and, in short, constitutes a classification system or a structure.’

Similarly, in *H3*, the prisoners’ dirty protest disturbs the collective existence of prison life and through their self-abjection, they allow ‘Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death.’

While prisoners are not frequently shown defiling themselves, the excrement smeared walls of their cells are indicative of their self-abjection, which is performed in order to disturb the socio-symbolic order within the prison, a measure which the narrative suggests was effected as part of a larger campaign to arrest implementation of the government’s criminalizing policies. Visible traces of the prisoners’ resistance in the mise en scène communicate the methods through which they opposed the extension of state biopower into the prison. Ellmann comments on the strategy adopted by actual prisoners in Long Kesh of admitting the abject into the collective life of the prison: ‘... it was the bowels that provided the excremental ink with which the inmates autographed their cells, defying their containment with incontinence.’

A select number of scenes adeptly visualise the early and later stages of prisoners’ self-abjection. In the film’s opening frame, a close-up reveals the protagonist Seamus Scullion, a composite character, lying naked beneath his blankets while resting his head upon a flattened pillow. As part of their no wash campaign prisoners desisted from having hair cuts and subsequently their unkempt manes became nests for maggots. Scullion gazes vacantly after a maggot as it sluggishly inches its way across the bare concrete of the floor of the prison cell, and the background of the shot, occupied by a wall smeared in excrement, enhances the abject aesthetic. Shortly after, two men in gas masks wearing vivid yellow jump suits are directed towards an area that requires fumigating. In another scene, which explicitly references the dirty protest, Scullion’s cellmate McCann who is desperately in need of the toilet, paces back and forth his cell, before Scullion, eventually, instructs him to ‘go into the corner and let nature take its
course.’ A few moments later, McCann reluctantly tears a piece of sponge from the corner of his mattress in order to wipe his excrement onto the cell wall. By incorporating filth into their lives, the prisoners abject themselves and destabilise the disciplinary mechanisms and socio-symbolic order within the prison. Kristeva’s argument that it is not lack of cleanliness that causes abjection, but that which ‘disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules’ may be recognised in the manner in which the prisoners’ transgression of a bodily border is represented, which ensures that does not signify the dirty protest as the ultimate stage in prisoners’ humiliation, but rather as a radical method of resisting state power. Historically, the dirty protest is perceived as one in which prisoners breached the delimitations of civilised human behaviour. In comparison to the graphic content of primary historical accounts of the H-Block protests, it might be argued that does not faithfully portray the animality into which prisoners on the dirty protest descended. Although contains scenes of intense suffering, they do not realise the degeneracy of which speaks: ‘An unwashed body, naked and wrecked with muscular pain, squatting in a corner, in a den of disease, amid piles of putrifying rubbish, forced to defecate upon the ground where the excreta would lie and the smell would mingle with the already sickening evil stench of urine and decaying waste food.’ In defence of the film, rather than painstakingly approximating the daily discomfort of life ‘on the blanket’ and participation in the dirty protest, summarises prisoners’ traversal back and forth across the border separating animal nature from human culture, and their resistance not only to their interpellation as criminals through the policy of normalisation, but also to the greater biopolitical objectives of the British state.

In historical terms, by refusing to exclude defilement from their daily existence, Republican prisoners enacted a strategy of resistance and threatened the socio-symbolic order of the prison. After visiting the H-Blocks, Cardinal O’Fiach reported on cell conditions there: ‘The stench and filth in some cells, with the remains of rotten food and human excreta scattered around the walls, was almost unbelievable. In two of them I was unable to speak for the fear of vomiting.’ In the film, even before the hunger strikers begin their protest, food is presented as an abject object. Each prison meal, served on a
garish blue plastic plate, consists of a portion of greyish matter accompanied by two slices of white bread and topped with a lump of butter. In one scene, McCann looks down at his plate with disgust before flinging it against a wall smeared in excrement. Kristeva describes the conditions in which food becomes an abject object. She writes,

When food appears as a polluting object, it does so as oral object only to the extent that orality signifies a boundary of the self’s clean and proper body. Food becomes abject only if it is a border between two distinct entities or territories. A boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the non-human.  

In throwing the meal against a wall coated in excrement, food’s potential as a polluting agent is illustrated. By framing food in this manner, the boundary between nature and culture is fractured. The prisoners taking part in the dirty protest capitalise on the boundary position of food by using its end product as a powerful if primitive weapon to debase the culture of the prison system. The hunger strikers also use food, by converting their suffering from its deprivation into a means to disturb that same culture.

The aesthetics of sacrifice

In H3, references to religion strengthen its sacrificial theme: when Scullion discusses the option of going on hunger strike, he does so in a scene in which a priest is saying mass. Furthermore, religious imagery is infused throughout the film’s visual text: the prison cells are bathed in a white light while the prisoners’ long hair and makeshift clothing lend them a resemblance to Christ’s apostles. Their allegiance to Sands borders on devotion, and it is owing to his endorsement of the hunger strikes that the others participate. H3’s aesthetic strategies emphasise the prisoners’ religiosity, while its narrative strategically excludes references to prisoners’ activities prior to their convictions – apart from a brief flashback in which McCann remembers an ambush along a country road leading to his capture by the RUC, which might subtract from its sacrificial theme. Through its aesthetic and narrative mode of address, H3 communicates the distinction between pure and impure violence as elucidated in another context by Girard. By emphasising the suffering of members of the republican movement and underplaying their engagement in a campaign of violence, H3 distracts from the possibility that prisoners partook in indecent acts of violence by emphasising their
suffering on behalf of a quasi religious, political cause.

In historical terms, public consciousness of the act of self-sacrifice was magnified after the events of the 1916 Rising, which its leader - Padraig Pearse - strategically planned in order to coincide with the Catholic Church’s ‘Holy Week.’ Sweeney describes the political repercussions of the Rising: ‘The events of the Easter Rising proved to be a watershed for Anglo-Irish politics and for the tradition of militant republicanism. The Rising, coinciding with the Catholic Church’s ‘Holy Week’ and the honouring of the resurrection of Christ, has been described as ‘a bloody protest.’ Traditionally, Irish republicans have sought religious justification for acts of political violence. In a famous speech, Pearse prophesised the religio-political worth of blood sacrifice when he extolled the virtues of dying for one’s nation, declaring that ‘Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations.’ After their execution, the 12 signatories of the 1916 proclamation of independence were remembered as martyrs and their deaths were widely perceived as efficacious sacrifices on behalf of the nation. One prisoner’s exclamation of the republican catch cry ‘Tiocfaidh ár lá,’ or ‘Our day will come,’ situates H3’s address within this larger, republican narrative in which self-sacrifice was a recurrent theme. By unifying religious and political themes in its narrative, H3 represents the prisoners’ self-directed violence via starvation within a historical context of pure or sacrificial violence.

Policing crisis

Girard observes that sacrifice languishes in societies that have a firmly established judicial system. This might explain why historically hunger strikes have been such effective strategies in those places where the judiciary has not been beyond reproach. Inspired by the H-Block strikes, young political prisoners on South Africa’s Robben Island, including Nelson Mandela, went on hunger strike and succeeded in their aims. While Northern Ireland has not been without a judicial system, since the foundation of the partitionist state, the predominantly Protestant make-up of the police force has attracted ample criticism. Additionally, general mistrust on the part of the nationalist community of the British legal establishment was justified when the wrongful
imprisonment of the Guilford Four and the Birmingham Six was acknowledged. Such an historical context suggests why the hunger strikes succeeded in sacrificial terms in the nationalist and republican communities. Girard notes how sacrifice surfaces when there is a threat to the collective existence of a group. H3 identifies the threat posed by the criminalisation of political prisoners to the identity of the larger republican community who refused to recognise the legitimacy of the Northern Irish state. Girard writes:

In societies that practice sacrifice there is no critical situation to which the rites are applicable, but there are certain crises that seem to be particularly amenable to sacrificial mediation. In these crises the social fabric of the community is threatened; dissension and discord are rife. The more critical the situation, the more 'precious' the sacrificial victim must be.218

In H3, prisoners respond euphorically to the news of Sands’ election to parliament. Although Sands was not a ‘precious victim’, since he himself chose to go on hunger strike, his identity as an MP marked his eventual death as all the more emphatically symbolic. Visited by Scullion on his deathbed, Sands bears an uncanny resemblance to the popular image of Jesus Christ. H3’s aesthetic mould evokes the religious connotations of self-sacrifice to buttress the political function of Sands’ death. By sacrificing their lives, the prisoners are shown attempting to reconcile a contradiction between religious duties and a commitment to political violence so that they can capitalise on the beneficent properties of sacrificial violence.219 On the basis of the visual text alone, the prisoners could be mistaken for a cast playing apostles in a biblical drama. Through its excess of religious imagery, H3 presents the prisoners struggle as a ‘saintly,’ if contradictory one.

Perhaps inadvertently, the film highlights contemporary concerns regarding the status of the republican movement. Girard uses the term ‘sacrificial crisis’ to describe the disappearance of the difference between impure and purifying violence. In this event, purification is no longer possible and reciprocal violence spreads throughout the community.220 H3 revisits a period that has since been succeeded by such a crisis. Arguably, the hunger strikes occurred at a time in republican history when militant republicans could still present their actions within the framework of sacrifice or purifying violence. In 2004 and 2005, the Northern Irish bank robbery and the killing of a republican supporter - John McCartney - as well as on-going activities such as money
laundering, fuel smuggling, loan sharking and extortion, have confirmed beyond rebuke that criminality is currently an integral component of the republican movement.\textsuperscript{221} Such instances demonstrate a breakdown in the ritualistic nature of sacrifice, which Girard states is designed to ‘... keep violence outside the community.’\textsuperscript{222} The republican movement’s inability to convincingly convey their separation from the criminal world resembles Girard’s description of the sacrificial crisis:

The sacrificial crisis can be defined, therefore, as a crisis of distinctions – that is, a crisis affecting the cultural order. This cultural order is nothing more than a regulated system of distinctions in which the differences among individuals are used to establish their ‘identity’ and their mutual relationships.\textsuperscript{223}

It is ironic that $H3$ remembers the prisoners’ resistance to criminalisation during a period when the criminality of that movement is so prominent. Despite this, the peace process has enabled the re-signification of the dirty protest and hunger strikes to occur at the level of popular representation. The term ‘peripheral memorial’ appropriately names how $H3$ commemorates the losses and suffering of those in the H-Blocks in sacrificial terms. Its narrative address is strengthened through analogies to Christian suffering and the screenplay anchors prisoners’ suffering within a nationalist and republican tradition by echoing those discourses. $H3$ proposes that the prisoners participated in abject behaviour in order to destabilise a symbolic system that threatened their identity as political prisoners through legislation and dehumanising treatment. While the hunger strikes were not a customary subject in popular representation, in reality, they marked a turning point in the history of the troubles. They are now considered responsible for a massive upsurge in support for the Sinn Fein party, and as a key reason for the British government signing the Anglo Irish Agreement in 1985.\textsuperscript{224} $H3$ commemorates the self-abjection and self-sacrifice of the H-Block prisoners in an audio-visual culture that has overcome much of the timidity evident in previous explorations of the past.

(ii)

\textit{Silent Grace}

Historical context

Although the hunger strike has not been typically associated with women in Irish history, the suffragette movement was responsible for reviving the practice in the early
years of the twentieth century. Maud Ellmann notes that although W.B Yeats prided himself that he had predicted the resurgence of the hunger strike in a little remembered play called *The King’s Threshold* (1904), in which a legendary poet fasts against a king to claim the ancient honours he has been denied, ‘... it is much more likely that the hunger strikers were inspired by the recent examples of the suffragettes, in spite of their [the hunger strikers] inveterate contempt for feminism.’ Between 1912 and 1914, 22 female prisoners belonging to this movement participated in hunger strikes. Immediately following the civil war, Mary MacSwiney, the imprisoned sister of republican martyr Terence MacSwiney, continued her opposition to the Treaty by commencing a hunger strike. MacSwiney’s action galvanised opposition to the government and Cumann na Mban enjoyed mass public support during their marches on Mountjoy jail and government offices. Pleas for her release came from political figures at home and abroad, and despite the Roman Catholic church’s official denouncement of the practice as suicide, Archbishop Mannix of Australia urged Irish Catholics to ‘...support MacSwiney’s “heroic struggle” for an Irish Republic.’ Confronted with mounting domestic and international pressure, the government executed a volte-face when it decided to release MacSwiney, despite professing, only weeks earlier, their intransigence vis-a-vis hunger strikers’ demands. MacSwiney, along with her female counterparts in the Cumann effectively conveyed to an international audience the political expediency encapsulated within the act of self-immolation.

As already discussed, during the troubles, the hunger strike became an invaluable political weapon of last resort for those for whom circumstances, namely incarceration, severely restricted alternative forms of resistance. Instances of female self-sacrifice in Irish history make the case of the three women in Armagh prison, who went on hunger strike in solidarity with their counterparts in Long Kesh in 1980, less anomalous. Despite a history of women’s resistance to British occupation, the hunger strikers in Northern Ireland in 1980 and 1981 expressed their allegiance to male republican martyrs. Indeed, a bias in favour of male hunger strikers still prevails in political and historical discourse. Even the Cain Web Service, which is otherwise a comprehensive resource on the troubles, neglects to document the female hunger strikers in Armagh prison.
Silent Grace is a fictionalised account of the hunger strike undertaken by Mary Doyle, Mairead Nugent and infamous IRA leader Mairead Farrell in Armagh prison in 1980. Like H3, it imparts little historical background, and its filmic narrative addresses the immediate physical and material aspects of confinement in the prison. Its narrative focus oscillates between the attempts of the prison authorities, scantily comprised of just three characters – two prison officers and the prison governor, to dehumanise and depoliticise the prisoners, and the extreme measures of resistance adopted by a group of female prisoners, instigated by the film’s main protagonist Eileen (Orla Brady), who is assisted by three other female inmates.

While Silent Grace’s representation of the republican hunger strikers in the Armagh Women’s Prison in 1980 inevitably renders the film as being of socio-historical significance, its narrative attention to the friendship between its two primary protagonists, Eileen and Aine, in which the former becomes a surrogate mother to the rebel-without-a-cause teenage inmate, sanitises its political import. In all likelihood, Eileen is based on the historical figure Mairead Farrell, who was the OC of Republican prisoners in Armagh and who, on 6 March 1988, was shot dead by SAS officers in Gibraltar. Aine, by contrast, is a fictitious, apolitical character, who has been committed for minor criminal activities. The film’s political seriousness is further eroded by the film’s romantic subplots: Eileen dreams about her boyfriend, which the viewer is privy to in a number of dream sequences, and Cunningham tells Eileen that he has dreamed about her. The narrative’s digression into romantic, dream worlds detracts from its presentation of the grim living conditions inside the prison, and from the seriousness of its address of the women’s campaign against the authorities.

Despite its humanist mode of address, Silent Grace alludes, however faintly, to the historical struggle of female republican prisoners in Armagh prison, whereby they incorporated their self-abjection into a method of resisting state efforts to depoliticise their identity, and disrupting the socio-symbolic order within the prison. Although the film does not explicitly represent the biopolitical machinations of the British government
in the affairs of Northern Irish prisons, as reported by human rights organisations beginning in the 1970s, its actions in Northern Ireland can be inferred from certain subtextual elements in the narrative and the, admittedly censored, representation of the abusive treatment of prisoners by the British state’s representatives – the prison officers. The film analysis traces the narrative’s alternating implication of and exculpation of the British government in the 1980 female hunger strikes in Armagh prison.

The vulnerability of the female body to the coercive disciplinary mechanisms operating within the prison system of the time is especially pertinent to how the film presents the prison as a site of biopower. In reality, the waning of the British government’s biopower over the population in Northern Ireland was reflected in the turn out of over 100,000 people at Bobby Sands’ funeral, which occurred several months after the period in which the film is set. The decision to send 600 extra troops into Northern Ireland the following day indicates the British government’s growing sense of apprehension with regard to maintaining its control of the population. Although, the female inmates’ gender difference from the male wardens might have disadvantaged the women, narrative analysis attends to how Eileen and her cohorts resist their subjugation by using the body in its abject state as a weapon against the prison officers, as part of a broader effort to contest the legitimacy of the British state’s presence in Northern Ireland. Additionally, the film presents the prisoner’s refusal to acquiesce with regulations concerning clothing and movement within the prison as a means by which they enact their rejection of the authority of the prison authorities and, by extension, that of the larger state.

**Uniform crime**

The film’s opening scene, in which a group of female republican prisoners, attired in military style clothing, perform a commemorative ceremony for a dead comrade, overlaid by a soundtrack of the real voice of Margaret Thatcher condemning IRA prisoners, simultaneously conveys the British government’s determination to criminalise political prisoners in Northern Ireland, and the tenacity of republican prisoners who wish to retain political status. Dressed exclusively in black and wearing matching berets, the
women's garments transmit unambiguous military overtones. The voice of Thatcher announcing that 'no prisoner convicted for murder will be granted political status,' is interrupted by Eileen's marching prompts. The interlacing of Thatcher's and Eileen's speech continues and immediately following Thatcher's statement that 'a crime is a crime is a crime,' Eileen commands her women to 'about turn, march.' As Thatcher's condemnation of the IRA continues, 'it is not political, it is a crime,' Eileen continues to enunciate marching instructions, and after she signals the completion of manoeuvres by saying 'at ease,' she requests a moment's silence for 'Micheal O'Sullivan who died in the fight for Irish freedom.' Through their military formations, uniforms and stylised movements, the women resemble members of a legitimate army. Inversely, Thatcher's interjections vocalise the British government's objection to their legitimacy and their determination to criminalize them. The prison governor's disapproving expression as he watches the scene from an upper window foreshadows the 'cell search for items of military style clothing,' which, in a later scene, he orders.

Some scenes later, Eileen and another prisoner amble along a prison corridor until they are unexpectedly confronted by a group of police wearing riot gear, standing obediently in line behind Cunningham. As soon as they are given the signal, they charge violently through the corridor. Encased in protective riot gear and menacingly wielding batons, they embody a 'technology of power,' employed by the British government to control the prison population in Northern Ireland. After charging through the prison corridor, they enter the women's cells in order to confiscate military items of clothing. Protocol I of the Geneva Convention outlines the relationship of military clothing to political status. Drafted on 12 August 1949, the protocol outlines the entitlement of resistance fighters or those fighting against colonial domination, so long as they wear a sign or carry their arms openly, to status of POW and that of combatant. Through repeated demands that she be allowed to wear her choice of clothing, Eileen attempts distance herself from the status of an ordinary criminal, and to identify herself as belonging to a legitimate resistance movement. IRA members attending the funerals of those who died during the 1981 hunger strike would openly carry guns in defiance of the legal and social sanctions, which forbade them from doing so. Through narrative
emphasis upon the women’s attachment to military items of clothing, the film presents their activities as both symbolically and politically motivated. Unwilling to relinquish their identity as combatants in the struggle for national liberation, the female inmates, represented in the film, refuse to concede to their criminalisation by the British government.

**Animal filth**

Competing interpretations of the dirty protest have circulated in historical discourse. From the nationalist perspective, prisoners were left with little choice but to proceed with the protest as they were consistently denied the opportunity to ‘slop out’ and were subjected to strip searches when they left their cells to avail of the communal showers. Reportedly, any cavities in the prison cells, through which prisoners had managed to empty their chamber pots, were subsequently sealed up, including windows and the peepholes adorning cell doors. The British government meanwhile and many unionist spokespersons refused to recognise any practical or political grievances the prisoners might have had, condemning their protest as inane and obscene.

In *Silent Grace*, Eileen frequently engages in private discussions with the prison governor in his office. In one scene, she argues her case, criticising the paltry quota of an hour’s daily exercise granted political prisoners and the restricted access to toilet facilities. Reduced to living in squalor and denied mental stimulation, prisoners were forced into confrontation with the notion of the abject described by Kristeva as ‘... those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*.’ In *Silent Grace*, female prisoners are pushed towards such a territory, rather than willingly straying there. Before the dirty protest commences, the representation of the appalling sanitary conditions in the women’s cells renders their environment as animal-like. One prison officer who exiting a cell mutters ‘filthy pigs’ verbalises the government’s biopolitical strategy. The abject squalor in which prisoners are depicted as living and their treatment as animals by the prison staff represent how normalisation of the Northern Irish prisons was merely a subterfuge through which prisoners could be deprived of their basic humanity and have their political status nullified. *Silent Grace*, therefore, represents a range of practices...
performed by the British state against the political prisoners in Northern Ireland.

**Dignified protest**

In reality, republican prisoners have persistently maintained that the prison authorities, under directives from the British government, imposed inhuman living conditions upon them in order to weaken their resolve in retaining political status. As part of this process, prisoners were locked in their cells for 24 hours and, as mentioned earlier, were regularly prevented from 'slopping out.' This version of prison life is proposed during a scene showing Eileen and another prisoner’s lengthy confinement to their cell. A time lapse impresses upon the viewer the duration of time that they have been confined within the cell. The appearance of bars across the frame of many of the scene’s shots, achieved by filming through the peephole of the cell door, contracts the spatial dimensions of the shot and effectively conveys the women’s entrapment. The women move agitatedly around the cell and we hear their pleas to empty their pots go unheard. Before Eileen commences the dirty protest, she perceives her cellmate’s aghast expression and resignedly, but determinedly, tells her ‘we’re gonna have to,’ echoing actual republican prisoners’ insistence that they had no alternative choices available to them.

Some scenes later, a point of view shot enables the viewer to observe the women protestors from the perspective of the rebel teenager - Aine. The camera pans awkwardly around the room until self-consciously pausing on a grubby chamber pot and a wall smeared in her new cellmate’s excrement. Before uttering a word by way of response to what she has seen, her disgust of the situation is matched by the abjection of her own body as she vomits all over herself. When she finally verbalises her opinion to Eileen, telling her that their protest is ‘disgusting,’ Eileen responds that that is the very reason why they must perform their actions with ‘dignity.’ Determined not to subtract from the dignity of their actions, Eileen presents lack of cleanliness less as an undesirable by-product of the prison campaign, and more as a potent weapon. By valuing the unclean body, she seizes upon the political potential of what Kristeva identifies as the abject, which she describes as not comprising solely of ‘... lack of cleanliness or health,’\textsuperscript{229} but
more importantly, as that which threatens ‘... identity, system, order.’ Furthermore, Kristeva argues that while the abject always relates ‘to corporeal orifices as to so many landmarks parceling constituting the body’s territory..., polluting objects fall, schematically, into two types: excremental and menstrual. Neither tears nor sperm, for instance, although they belong to the borders of the body, have any polluting value.’

Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, for the women involved, their bodily functions, or dual polluting capabilities, enabled them to enact an abject protest, which rivalled, and, in some respects, surpassed that of their male counterparts in the Maze prison. Although Silent Grace does not visually display the most ostensibly radical act of self-abjection performed by actual political prisoners in Armagh, the wiping of menstrual fluid on cell walls, its narrative acknowledges the prisoners’ historical determination to use their bodies, in states of abjection and starvation, to disrupt the social and symbolic order of the prison, and, concomitantly, its superstate structure.

Politics of disobedience

The British government’s entrenched argument that prisoners were responsible for degrading conditions within their cells is manifest during a conversation about prison conditions between Cunningham and Eileen. When she denounces their treatment as inhuman, he retorts that ‘its what you’re doing to yourselves.’ His opinion conveniently omits the already appalling conditions in which prisoners, refused toilet facilities and even the option of ‘slopping out,’ were forced to inhabit before the dirty protest began. Eileen responds by saying that they have been given no other choice. While the degradation of political prisoners was a given before the protest, it is suggested that they abject their own bodies in order to radically disobey prison or even human codes of conduct. By disrupting the socio-symbolic order inside the prison, the prisoners struggle to assert an alternative one. In this manner, they demonstrate what Foucault hoped in life would resist the technologies of power and form new subjectifications that escape its control. By contrast, Aine’s defiance of the system is reactive and devoid of political motivation. Convicted for the aiding and abetting in the stealing of a car, Aine is an ‘ordinary decent criminal’ and contrasts strongly with the republican prisoners whom she
meets in the prison. Her mocking derision of the IRA is played out when she shouts ‘the people are the provos, the provos are the people.’ Under the tutelage of Eileen however she is convinced to engage in the dirty protest. After Eileen has joined the republican protest, a line from a ‘Clash’ song: ‘I fought the law and the law won,’ which blasted loudly over earlier scenes in which she appeared, disappears from the soundtrack, denoting the abandonment of her individual struggle against authority and her submission to a collective, republican prison campaign.

The Armagh machine

According to a Foucauldian notion of biopower, biological life is central to modern political battles. From this perspective, the bodily mortification and dehumanisation of prisoners discounted them as valuable forms of political life. Agamben extends Foucault’s biopolitical theory by defining how within a legal vacuum, called the ‘sovereign exception,’ the state interpellates individuals as either examples of human life, or, as animal, or bare life. In a review of Agamben’s latest work, *The Open: Man and Animal*, Guillermina Seri summarises his analysis of the administration of life in Western democracies:

What remains implicit in the Aristotelian work and that Agamben infers is that, if life is human only when a political status is attached to it, then the adscription to humanity relies on a political, contingent decision. Starting from this insight, his work uncovers life as the raw matter over which sovereign power reproduces itself by distinguishing between human and inhuman, and makes clear that there is no humanity outside this decision. These main coordinates define what Agamben refers to in *The Open* as the “anthropological machine,” that is the onto-political grammar of production of the human against a background of life defined as worthless and eliminable.232

In its representation of Armagh prison as an extension of the British state, *Silent Grace* presents the prison as an example of Agamben’s ‘anthropological machine,’ in which prisoners are subjected to the abnormally strict, coercive controls of individuals occupying positions of authority, who deny them their basic human dignity and attempt to annul their political status. Despite historical documentation’s descriptions of strip and internal searches performed in Northern Irish prisons, practices which continued throughout most of the troubles,233 under the auspices of security measures, nothing was found on any woman’s body between 1972 and 1982. Forced to relinquish all clothing,
prisoners were deprived of one of ‘... the most primal signs of cultural inscription,’ while the manner in which the strip searches were performed exceeded their official function as security checks by exploiting the vulnerability of the naked body. Sexual humiliation of female prisoners in Armagh suffered was reinforced by the sex, which was invariably male, of those who carried out the physical and verbal interrogations. Although *Silent Grace* does not directly allude to this history of gender conflict in omitting strip and internal searches from its narrative, after the prisoners’ cells have been ransacked for military garments, Eileen lamentably demands of Cunningham why male wardens were delegated to search their cells, implying that this male intrusion violated their female modesty. His visible discomfort at her question suggests that the damage that had been carried out extended beyond the torn photo that is shown amid other personal belongings strewn across the floor of one ransacked cell, and while these details do not comprise an adequate representation of the humiliations experienced by actual political prisoners in Armagh, they evoke some of the abuses, heightened by gender difference, committed against the prisoners.

**Depoliticising state violence**

A scene in which a sadistic prison officer violently assaults Geraldine, a republican prisoner, alludes to the material destruction of the female body. Although the beating is not presented visually, the violence of his attack is conveyed aurally by the ruckus emitting from Geraldine’s cell that is heard by prisoners in adjoining cells. The severity of the officer’s blows is registered on the faces of Geraldine’s fellow prisoners who wince at the sound of her pain. Eileen’s frantic recitation of the Hail Mary is accompanied by Geraldine’s anguished screams as she is being assaulted. Eileen’s helpless plea to the Virgin Mary, while Geraldine is being mauled in a nearby cell, arouses pathos for the women prisoners. However, the offender’s parting riposte as he exits Geraldine’s cell of ‘that’s for Anne Bates’ (a prison officer who days earlier was assassinated by the IRA outside the prison) frames the incident within a revenge narrative, which implies the act is motivated by personal reasons, distinguishing it from other examples of violence in the narrative, which are presented as solely state or politically motivated. Some scenes later, it is revealed that Cunningham has dismissed
the offending officer, and subsequently, the beating is presented as an isolated incident concerning an avenging and bloodthirsty individual, and is dissociated from ordinary prison policy. Despite ample historical evidence of the recurrence and state endorsement of violent outrages against prisoners, the narrative personalises the officer’s violent attack on Geraldine, and elides any state responsibility for such violence. As already argued, prison officers performed violent practices acts against republican prisoners in order to reduce them to being ‘worthless and eliminable,’ and more significantly, historical evidence exists that the government sanctioned such violence. Although Silent Grace includes some scenes depicting prisoners’ suffering, by electing, in this instance, to present a prisoner’s suffering as the outcome of a random act of violence, the narrative depoliticises the physical abuse of prisoners.

In its depiction of Cunningham, the Governor, empathising with the women, particularly Eileen, the narrative deploys another strategy of undermining the severity of the women’s suffering. The film distances itself once more from historical reality, which it purports to represent, when a romantic interlude, in which Cunningham confesses to Eileen, during the peak of her hunger strike, that he has dreamed about her, intercepts its depiction of the struggle between the prisoners and the authorities. Far from being unrequited, Eileen confesses to Aine that she had been attracted to Cunningham when she was first admitted to the prison.

**Hunger strike**

Republican spokespersons have argued that in the early 1980s, prisoners, who after more than four years of protest had not been ceded a single concession by the British government, used the hunger strike as a weapon of last resort. Although Silent Grace’s narrative address often depoliticises the violence performed against and endured by female prisoners, it does, perhaps imperfectly, address the women’s resort to hunger strike as a continuation of their resistance to the criminalisation of the republican movement, and as a method of positively exploiting the body in its abject state.

For example, although Cunningham tries to dissuade Eileen from partaking in the
hunger strike by reminding her of her approaching release date, far from heeding his advice, Eileen admonishes the worthlessness of such freedom if she is defined as a criminal. In addition to stoically performing the ultimate act of self-sacrifice, Eileen justifies her actions in relation to the relevant religious and political discourses advocated by the republican movement at the time. In a meeting between Eileen and a member of the IRA in which they discuss the feasibility of her participation, she aligns her ideological position with that of the IRA. During Fr. McGarry’s visit to her, she affirms her ideological interpretation of the hunger strike when she seeks his guarantee that ‘it is the noblest thing to die for something you believe in.’ The subtle disapproval communicated through his response to Eileen that all life is sacred catapults her into a fit of rage and she sends him from the room shouting ‘you’re either with us or against us, there’s no middle ground.’ During this period, the Catholic Church was divided in its opinion regarding the hunger strikers. In a television interview at the time, Fr Crilly, a sympathiser of the hunger strikers, expressed the difficulty of criticising the act of hunger striking when those concerned were prepared to die for something that they believed in. Eileen verbalises not only the nobility of her actions but also that of the relationship between her political identity and the ‘long line of republican martyrs,’ who forsook their lives in a struggle for national liberation. Based on the consistency of the narrative’s attention to Eileen, and despite other narrative strategies which depoliticise the women’s struggle, the viewer is invited to sympathise with Eileen’s self-presentation as a political prisoner.

Painful performance

In addition to their commitment to carrying out the hunger strike to the death, hunger strikers were equally dedicated to exploiting the political spectacle of their starving flesh. Ellmann argues that by mobilising publicity they ‘... brought shame on their oppressors and captured the sympathies of their co-religionists.’ Aware that they were positioned at an important historical juncture, the wider republican movement recognised the long-term gains that could be achieved, notably that of weakening the position of the British government, if they successfully marshalled competing interpretations, circulating in public discourses, of the prisoners’ self-sacrifices.
Strengthened by an outpouring of public sympathy, the strikers persisted in their efforts to pressurise the British government into retracting criminalising policies affecting the republican movement, and also of mitigating at least some of the abuses that were being committed against prisoners in the prisons or, ‘anthropological machines.’ Since the balance of power lay with the British government, they retained the prerogative whether or not to dispense mercifully with the prisoners’ demands. Prisoners converted the superior position of power enjoyed by the British government into its achilles heel, however, by exploiting that government’s need to keep up appearances in the international arena. Aine explicitly refers to the propaganda war which was happening outside of the prisons, but which was concurrent with the prison campaigns, commenting ‘there’s marches in London and New York for the Armagh women.’ Although female prison campaigns were less trumpeted than their male counterparts’ ones in the Maze, Aine’s comment underscores the considerable level of international support for the female prisoners. Cunningham for his part expresses concern for Eileen by visiting the priest to discuss the situation. Awaiting the priest in the prison church, his attention flutters between the religious ephemera adorning the room before his gaze dwells upon a statue of the Virgin Mary. If his loyalties appear divided by his willingness to tread the prisoners’ religious turf, his comment to the priest some moments later that he cannot prevent ‘people from killing themselves,’ apart from communicating his disapproval of their actions, also suggests that his sympathy towards Eileen is not in any way politically motivated, but rather derives from a personal attachment. He betrays his ideological objections to their campaign once more, this time in a comment which is directed to Geraldine concerning her brother, whom he describes as ‘committing suicide.’ By describing the hunger strike as suicide, he suppresses its legitimacy as a form of political protest.

The cat and mouse act

In a scene occurring towards the end of the film, Cunningham announces his refusal to allow Eileen to profit from publicity generated by acts of self-immolation by saying: ‘I won’t have any martyrs in my prison.’ To achieve his aim, he enacts an old law, ‘the cat and mouse act,’ which was used to counter the efforts of the suffragettes
when they reached the terminal stages of their hunger strikes, and enabling the authorities to release them from prison. By playing the role of the ‘the cat,’ Cunningham remains confidently assured that he has blunted the women’s political weapon, and consequently, he has no objections to the news that they are dancing around their cells in celebration of Aine’s release the following day; when a prison guard asks him if the prisoners should be reprimanded for this behaviour, he says ‘if they want to dance, let them.’ The prison officer fails to comprehend his disinterest in the recommended disciplinary action, until Cunningham placates the officer by explaining how they no longer have to contend with a dirty protest or hunger strike. He can afford to be smug since he has not had to concede to any of the prisoners’ demands.

Fr. McGarry, who alerted Cunningham to the existence of the cat and mouse act, remains an ambiguous character, he is at once confidante to Eileen and co-conspirator with Cunningham. His cooperation with the governor however is presented as being motivated by the interests of the women, rather than as an alliance with the prison hierarchy. In reality, republicans resented the Catholic Church for their role in ending the hunger strikes and relieving the British government of international political pressure to concede to republican prisoners’ demands. Although *Silent Grace* presents the church’s interference as a benevolent intervention, the priest nonetheless assists the prison authorities in diminishing the political worth of the women’s campaign. In a departure from the abject aesthetic, which characterises much of the film, one of the final scenes shows Eileen standing under a shower appreciatively washing away, presumably both literally and symbolically, the traces of her protest. Her resignation regarding political protest is conveyed by the uncertainty she expresses in response to Aine’s question as to whether she will continue the struggle. Correspondingly, Aine has been tamed by the film’s close - in an early scene, she gives Cunningham the middle finger, whereas in the ultimate scene she blows him a kiss just before she exits the gates of the prison. In the end, the prisoners are remembered as neither martyrs nor rebels, but rather as shafted sacrificial mice, who are deprived by the filmic narrative of the power accredited to their male counterparts represented in *H3* to resist their subjugation by a foreign government.
**(iii)**

*Some Mother's Son*

In contrast to *H3* and *Silent Grace*, *Some Mother's Son* betrays its loyalty to mainstream filmmaking by being largely inattentive to the historical specificity and political significance of the 1981 hunger strikes in Northern Ireland, and by adopting universalising strategies to narrate a story of how two mothers respond to their sons' arrest for IRA activities and subsequent hunger strike in the Maze prison. The film's promotional tagline: 'Between love and loyalty ... Between life and death lies a choice no mother should have to make,' prepares viewers for the narrative centrality which it affords the figure of the mother at the expense of the prisoners, and its melodramatic and universal address of mother-son relationships.

By deliberately omitting representation of documented abuses committed against republican prisoners, Terry George, writer and director of *Some Mother's Son*, travesties the film's subject matter. Although the loss of political status motivated prison protests during this period, George revealingly argues that by situating the loss elsewhere, the film would acquire more popular appeal, and would attract less criticism from the British press. In an interview, he discloses why he declined from representing other examples of loss experienced by prisoners, such as those provoked by physical abuse: 'even though some of the hunger strikers, the blanket men, were badly brutalized. They got scrubbed down with wire brushes and all that sort of stuff ... I knew that if I go into that the film would suffer, and I preferred to emphasize the basic humanity of some prison officers.' The 'basic humanity' of certain prison officers and the friendship that blossoms between two of the prisoners' mothers encapsulates the 'condition of intactness,' or 'narrative fetishism,' presented throughout the film.

John Hill's classification of the film as a 'maternal melodrama' implies by privileging universal themes such as 'love and loyalty,' the narrative depoliticises its historical subject matter. Hill isolates the key dramatic device in the 'maternal
melodrama' as that in which the heroine is presented "with an 'impossible' or heartbreaking choice." In one of its final scenes, the film’s principal protagonist, Kathleen, is presented with such an impossible decision by the priest, who tells her: 'you have the right to choose, you can make the choice.' By placing the moral onus on Kathleen, the priest becomes an unwitting accomplice to the British government in the 'war of position' in which neither side showed any indication of brokering reconciliation. In reality, families of those on hunger strike were confronted with this exact decision after the moral responsibility to halt the hunger strikes shifted from the British government to the relevant families who found themselves under increasing pressure to sanction the force-feeding of their sons. Despite its basis in reality, such emphasis on the mothers’ quandary distracts from the difficult relationship between the British government and republican prisoners, by denying it adequate narrative attention. Eric Santner’s concept of 'narrative fetishism' will frame a discussion of the numerous textual examples of this narrative strategy which situates ‘...the site and origin of loss elsewhere.’ Santner’s definition of narrative fetishism commodiously describes the narrative mechanisms at play in Some Mother’s Son. He writes:

... a strategy whereby one seeks voluntaristically to reinstate the pleasure principle without addressing and working through those other tasks which, as Freud insists, 'must be accomplished before the dominance of the pleasure principle can even begin.' Far from providing a symbolic space for the reconstruction of anxiety, narrative fetishism directly or indirectly offers reassurances that there was no need for anxiety in the first place.

Although Some Mother’s Son’s narrative approximates in many regards to what Santner describes as ‘intactness,’ occasionally, the narrative alludes to the prisoners’ historical struggle. This film analysis considers the narrative’s accommodation of both historical fantasy and reality. While the narrative devotes fuller attention to events outside the prison, it does not completely ignore the biopolitical strategies employed by the British state to control the population both in Northern Ireland’s prisons and the wider community, or its attempt to ‘normalise’ the situation in the North by criminalising political prisoners. Similarly, and although George dismissed the British media’s denouncement of the appearance of the hunger strikers in the film as ‘christlike,’ for privileging a mere coincidental resemblance, inadvertently or otherwise, the film’s
narrative and its historical context are once more inextricably linked. Therefore, regardless of whether or not such religious and sacrificial imagery is incorporated into the film’s narrative economy, its presence, coincidental or otherwise, invites the informed viewer to forge linkages between the film’s visual text and sacrificial notions, which have, historically, characterised republican discourse.

The iron lady

Despite numerous instances that excise references to the power relations to which the prisoners are locked, other narrative instances anomalously incorporate criticisms of the British government. Archival footage of Margaret Thatcher making a speech to the press in front of 10 Downing St is inserted before the opening credits. As a framing device, its relevance to the ensuing story is highly ironic, considering that two years after this speech in which she quoted the words of St Francis of Assissi, she demonstrated absolute intransigence to the hunger strikers pleas and appeared unperturbed by the subsequent deaths of ten men. In this footage, Thatcher describes how the words of St Francis are particularly apt before quoting from his writings: ‘Where there is discord, may there be harmony. Where there is doubt, may there be faith, where there is despair, may there be hope.’ This is the same woman that prisoners in the Maze called ‘tin knickers’ for her categorical refusal to cede to any form of negotiation with them, an appellation that many of Britain’s working classes would not dispute considering their opposition to her economic reforms. Later, Thatcher’s instructions are diegetically inscribed within the film when Farnsworth, the film’s two dimensional villain, informs his colleagues that ‘the Prime Minister wants an entirely new approach to the Northern Irish problem...We’ve drawn up a three pronged strategy: isolation, criminalization and demoralisation.’ In achieving this, he announces that they must gain ‘control of roads’ and ‘isolate communities.’ By impinging on the movements of ordinary civilians and demoralizing prisoners through untold techniques, the imposition of political power in the sphere of life can nonetheless be appreciated, even if it is not laboured within the representation. Also, by incorporating a real historical figure within a fictionalized account of a historical event, which predominantly uses an assortment of composite characters, the film invites a degree of engagement with an extra-diegetic political history.
Landscape fetishism

The impact of archival footage of Thatcher is attenuated by the ensuing cut to a picturesque bay traversed by a couple of fishing vessels. The pastoral image is completed by mountains in the background of the shot, and enhanced by a soundtrack playing traditional Irish music, composed by Bill Whelan of *Riverdance* fame. In the background of the peaceful setting of the shot however, several armoured vehicles cluster together on a patch of high ground overlooking the bay. The sound of controlled explosions interrupts the placid environment of several frames earlier. Shortly after, Kathleen’s son Gerard, both of whom incidentally are fictional characters, disparages attempts to control the community by blocking off their bridges. His arguments allude to the biopower used by the state’s armed forces to minimise the local populations’ freedom of movement.

Although the romantic scenery surrounding the British soldiers as they perform their duties on a far off hill offers effective dramatic contrast, recurrent cuts to the bay and its fishing harbour quickly acquires a mawkish sentimentality. At a stretch, the bay’s metaphoric function could be defended for its promotion of a rural idyll unspoiled by political acrimony. However, in the context of the hunger strikes, such a visual motif does not reflect the horrors endured by those inside the prison. The bay is revisited at various narrative points, sometimes inserted as a cut-away and at other times seen from a character’s perspective. The narrative presentation of Kathleen’s daughter’s departure from the family home for a new life in Britain is instilled with a strong sense of pathos: she looks contemplatively across the bay as the traditional music is reprised by the soundtrack. The emptying of Kathleen’s home is represented in a manner that emphasizes the poignancy of the situation rather than the relevance of political factors to the dissolution of her home.

After the ice has been broken between Kathleen and Annie Higgins, the staunch republican mother of Frank who was imprisoned along with Gerard, the two women embark on a driving lesson along the local beach. They laugh and chatter while Annie takes the wheel and Kathleen instructs her on the basic principles of driving. Enjoying
the freedom of driving across an open stretch of sandy beach, their enthusiasm is abruptly halted when the front wheel of the car becomes lodged in the sand. Surveying from the damage outside the car, Kathleen notices some British soldiers in the distance and without hesitation flays her arms about to signal for assistance. Within seconds, a group of burly soldiers are on the scene and without further ado they effortlessly raise the car out of the sodden sand. Annie petulantly observes the commotion and begrudgingly admits to her new friend that not all British soldiers are bad. Apart from romanticizing the setting by using the sea as a backdrop, this minor incident fetishises the spirit of cooperation between the two parties, while only vaguely acknowledges the bitter acrimony between the security forces and nationalist communities during this tense historical period.

Unhealthy bodies

For the most part, the narrative action occurs beyond the prison walls. However, on those occasions when the drama moves inside the Maze, the unhealthy state of the prisoners' bodies is apparent. The prison authorities curb those 'technologies of self' that would enable the prisoners to maintain their dignity and physical well being by forcefully imposing inhuman living conditions upon them. One officer shouts out 'no uniforms no slop out.' In a deplorable example of prisoner ill treatment, prisoners were prevented from emptying their pots until they ceased their protests. Although the film does not graphically represent the ensuing dirty protest, it does elaborate upon some of its motivating factors, and partially criticizes the position occupied by the British government in the affair. Besides Margaret Thatcher, Bobby Sands is another real individual who is represented within the film world, ensuring that his centrality to the hunger strikes is not erased. After the prisoners have been refused the option of slopping out, he reads out a communiqué that he has written to the leaders of the republican movement. In it he outlines the reasons for the prisoners' actions: 'The Brits have forced us to live in our own dirt, the lads morale is collapsing if you cannot find a solution, then we must push this crisis to its conclusion by going on hunger strike. I'm not threatening you, but stating the cold reality. Your friend and comrade. Bobby Sands.' Apart from being prevented from slopping out, prisoners were also denied adequate exercise and
decent food. The film incorporates these grievances by showing the quality of food which prisoners were expected to eat and their cell confinement. Aware of the authority’s determination to demoralize the protesters through physical abasement, Sands can be heard ordering the prisoners in his block to exercise as he performs a series of push-ups himself: ‘Exercise lads, come on, get up ... 20 press ups.’ When another prisoner complains about the purposelessness of such activity, Sands countermands him by stressing the interrelationship between physical self-discipline and mental fortitude. By depriving prisoners of exercise outside of their cells, the officers are revealed as exerting power over the prisoners’ bodies in an effort to demoralise them. As a countermeasure, Sands tries to ensure that his fellow prisoners maintain enough self-discipline to resist the abjection imposed upon them by the prison officers.

While instances of prisoner resistance can be gleaned from the narrative, these are rarely presented within a political context. The manner in which the hunger strikes are treated is exemplary of this. Rather than stressing the political dimensions of the hunger strikes, they are presented as instances of homosocial bonding. For instance, when Sands eventually succumbs to hunger strike, he emphasises his solidarity with his fellow prisoners rather than his political motivations for starving himself. Later on, Gerard resists outside pressure to relinquish his hunger strike by adamantly proclaiming: ‘I will not let Bobby down.’ By emphasising the camaraderie between hunger strikers rather than their commitment to a political aim, the political significance of the strikes is transmuted into a meditation on brotherly love and loyalty.

Although narrative fetishism depoliticises the film’s content, the extent of the animalising of prisoners, insofar as they are forced to live in their own filth, is alluded to during the speech given by the cardinal after he has visited the prisoners. Standing outside the Maze, the cardinal condemns those responsible for the living conditions inside the republican wing of the prison, he says: ‘I worked for a time in the sewers of Calcutta, one would not allow an animal to live in such conditions, let alone 340 people.’ The political power of the British government is manifest in the prison officers’ application of the power vested in them by the state to alter the prisoners’ own
relationships with their bodies. By ‘animalising’ republican prisoners, they are shown enacting one of the policies of the British government in their application of the ‘Northern Irish Solution’: the demoralisation of republican prisoners. While the narrative does not elaborate fully upon the subjection of prisoners to degrading practices, for those viewers who are familiar with the recent history of Northern Ireland, sufficient information relating to the historical reality of the situation is transmitted to enable speculation of this nature.

In another example of the ‘... radical intrusion of political power in the sphere of life,’ a group of civil servants receive a lesson relating to the physiological implications of starvation. With a teaching aid of a large diagram of the human body, a colleague informs them about the relevant time frames within which the senses and the organs can be expected to commence fading and ultimately fail. The diagram itself illustratively signifies a narrative concern with the government’s engagement in biopolitics. As their scientific knowledge of the human body increases, their increasing competence in the management of the biological life of the prisoners and particularly the hunger strikers is discernible. In its literal mapping of the human body, this scene epitomises the relevance of the ‘biological issue of the exercise of power’ within the narrative.

**Violent law**

Unhygienic strictures within which prisoners were obliged to live were not the exclusive biopolitical methods of control exerted by the agencies of the state. Additionally, prisoners were subjected to instances of state violence, which exemplified the relationship between the law and violence. Within the film world, the relationship between the law and violence is represented through recurring violent assaults of prisoners, performed by prison officers. The prison officers’ baton becomes a familiar trope, since they are shown brandishing these implements in the majority of their encounters with the prisoners. When Gerard is admitted into the prison, his refusal to wear the prison uniform provokes a prison officer to caress his face with one such baton while sneeringly telling him ‘I have a special place for you.’ Then, brushing the baton across Gerard’s face, he asks him ‘Do you refuse?’ Meanwhile, Farnworth describes the
prison as a potential asset, and explains how he hopes to ‘break the back of the IRA’ inside the prisons. In this way, the institution of the prison is presented as a place in which authorised state violence is covertly enacted in order to reinstate the state’s rule of law in the prison and beyond. When the prisoners thrash their cells to vent their frustration over not being permitted to slop out, the riot police are lying in wait along the corridors dressed in full riot regalia. Encased in protective gear, they are contrasted with the semi-naked bodies of the prisoners, while their liberal use of hard rubber batons conveys the unequal power relations between the two groups. Although this narrative segment is granted only cursory screen time, it nonetheless criticizes the governmental technologies applied in regulating the bodies of members, or suspected ones, of the republican movement.

**Normalisation**

By criminalising prisoners, the British government tried to ‘normalise’ the political conflict in the north, even though only some years previously, the very site on which the Maze was built was occupied by Long Kesh prison camp, where thousands of suspected IRA members were interned under the Special Powers Act. Additionally, the policy of normalisation was being advocated simultaneous to the replacement of a jury system by Diplock courts. The double standards being performed at governmental levels are alluded to in an early scene when Frank stands up in court and announces: ‘we refuse to participate in this non-jury farce.’ The judge, however, silences his resistance and announces: ‘... this is a court of law sir, empowered by the Queen to try you. ... You are a criminal menace to this society.’ In the absence of a jury, the courtroom becomes a space where the law is suspended and members of the police service become violent enforcers of obedience. Although the normal rule of law has been suspended, and a state of emergency exists, characters, politically aligned to the British state, continue to discuss their actions within the context of normalising the prisons. A radio transmission in which Thatcher reiterates the criminality of republican prisoners is incorporated within the diegesis: ‘There’s no such thing as political violence, we will not compromise on this, there will be no political status,’ indicating her strategy of normalising republican prisoners. According to Thatcher’s criminalization policy, republican prisoners were
obliged to wear prison issue clothing. The film represents the stalemate in the prison prompted by the British government’s policies of normalisation, and in one scene, one officer’s irate command, ‘I want these men in uniform,’ is matched by the depiction of the prisoners ‘on the blanket.’ Upon admittance into the prison, Gerard is greeted by several bearded ‘blanket men’ with long matted hair, whose appearance identifies them as participants in the no-wash protest, and communicates their determination to resist the policy of normalisation. Gerard refuses to wear the prison uniform, he says to the officer in charge: ‘I’m a POW, I refuse to wear the criminal uniform.’ The prisoners use their mode of appearance – the overgrown hair, beards, and the naked bodies draped in blankets - to differentiate themselves from ordinary criminals in rejection of the policy of normalisation.

The film has been criticised for the Christ-like appearance of the prisoners, and although its director Terry George would strongly refute this, the dialogue indicates that this is the case. For example, when Gerard enters Sands’ cell, he looks aghast at him, prompting Sands to say ‘Do I look that bad?’ In turn, Gerard remarks ‘You look like Jesus Christ.’ Whether intended or otherwise, Bobby Sand’s physical appearance connotes a sacrificial discourse, and distinguishes him from an ordinary criminal.

Hill has expressed concern regarding the substitution of Farnsworth for a satisfactory representation of the political forces in operation during this period in Northern Ireland. He rejects the simplification and personalisation of political issues within a conspiracy style narrative by arguing that:

For Hill, Some Mother’s Son’s rendering of complicated political processes through presenting the villainy of a single character is politically inexcusable. Indeed, Fredric Jameson has written about the difficulty of representing complex political processes through filmic narrative, without ‘... recourse to the stock languages of older
melodrama. He poses the difficulty of de-individualising the 'criminal agent' when narrative movement depends upon character-based action. Similarly, even if it is argued that Some Mother's Son is concerned with the treachery of the British government, and not simply with that of an individual, fictive agent of the state, the difficulty of presenting a 'totality-effect', rather than simply 'a collection of individual characters', or of a single character, in this instance, behaving badly remains. Of course, the limits of narrative representation, not least those of mainstream feature filmmaking, entails that individual characters must be ‘... made capable of bearing the weight of allegorical generalization’ in order to deliver the foibles of a ‘structural collectivity,’ or super-state structure, to the viewer. In the film, melodramatic plot devices privilege individual character over political process. For instance, its presentation of Farnsworth is shorn of any political complexity, and he merely resembles a villainous type.

**Resisting authority**

Despite the over-abundance of instances of narrative fetishism within the film, there are many examples that denote resistance to two types of institutional authority: that of the state and the church. Annie displays her irreverence towards both the state and the church in two short scenes. In the first of these, she is shown herding her cattle along the road when she encounters a British army roadblock. Incensed by a sign that reads 'unauthorized road' she barges her way through the army personnel and vehicles and vents her ire at the state's attempt to isolate local residents by barricading vital infrastructure. In a brave gesture, she ushers her cattle through the space in which the barricade is being assembled, refusing the state's efforts to impinge upon her movements. In another scene, she storms angrily into her daughter's school after learning that the headmistress – a nun – has physically reprimanded her daughter. Annie threatens the nun, who is in full habit, by warning her: 'if you touch my daughter again, that outfit won't save ya!' In this exchange, Annie refuses to accept the authority of the church and the value of its social markers, such as religious dress. Kathleen also rejects the authority of this same nun. In a scene following that in which Annie and Kathleen participate in Sands' election campaign, the nun summons Kathleen before her and suspends her from her teaching duties. Without complaint, Kathleen takes her leave, however, instead of
leaving the school, she returns to her classroom. When the nun demands her departure once more, Kathleen looks at her defiantly in the face and suggests that she ‘call the cardinal.’ Aware of the cardinal’s defence of the prisoners, Kathleen uses one member of the clergy against the other to weaken the authority of the church.

Although the film’s narrative fetishism enacts a forgetting of the historical trauma of the hunger strikes, their continuing resonance in the collective consciousness and in contemporary political discourse renders such an exercise a self-defeating one. The analysis of Some Mother’s Son has discussed the state of emergency in Northern Ireland and the power relations, performed via governmental technologies, which sought to subjugate members of the population. While admittedly these do not constitute the narrative focus per se, the historical excesses of this context of political violence indicate the limitations of fetishising the hunger strikes as a story of motherly love in a political vacuum. Ultimately Some Mother’s Son’s erasure of the political significance of the hunger strikes does not resonate beyond its own narrative, since its melodramatic musings cannot and do not replace the historical magnitude and continual resonance of the strikes - they spurred the remarkable shift to electoral politics within the republican movement – and instead, the film comprises an unconvincing cultural memory of an unforgettable historical trauma.

The historical significance of the 1981 Hunger Strikes was no small factor in the establishment of the Maze Panel, which was established in 2003 by Ian Pearson MP, who at that time was the Minister responsible for the former security sites transferred to Northern Ireland by the government for regeneration. In May 2006, The Maze/Long Kesh Monitoring Group, which replaced the original panel, strongly approved of a Master Plan outlining the multi million pound redevelopment of the 360 acres site of the former Maze prison and Long Kesh army barracks. The plan’s inclusion of an International Centre for Conflict Transformation, a multi-purpose sports stadium, which will facilitate Northern Ireland’s three main sports bodies – the GAA, the IFA and the Ulster branch of the IRFU, as well as other leisure and business facilities is indicative of
a political desire to remember historical trauma without ignoring present day social realities.
Primely-Timed Investigations

In contrast to the films studied in the preceding sections, in this chapter the objects of analyses, which include Holy Cross (Mark Brozel, 2003), Omagh (Pete Travis, 2004), and a Prime Time Investigates programme about Robert McCartney’s murder (RTE, 2005), are almost contemporaneous with their fields of allusion. While a significant time period had elapsed before events such as Bloody Sunday or the hunger strikes became subjects of dramatic representation, the urgency, purposeful or otherwise, with which these films were produced entailed their intersection with contemporaneous political debates pertaining to the relevant traumatic events. Notwithstanding the commonality between these works, in so far as the historical reality alluded to in each case was rapidly recuperated in the relevant filmmaking enterprises, endorsement of these works by the victims, whom they purported to represent, varied considerably.

Holy Cross, produced by BBC Northern Ireland in association with RTE, was broadcast only two years after the controversy in 2001 concerning access to the eponymous Belfast school had subsided. The film reviews a unique expression of sectarian animosity, when large numbers of Protestant loyalists launched a picket in protest against Catholic school children’s and their parents’ use of the front entrance of the Holy Cross primary school, which is situated in a predominantly Protestant area. In an effort to present a balanced portrayal of events, its narrative divides itself between two families who live on opposing sides of the sectarian divide. Produced more or less independently of the victims of the dispute, Holy Cross promptly became a source of consternation in the communities concerned, as well as in the regional print media. In stark contrast, Omagh, whose narrative directly addresses victims’ demands for recognition and accountability, was strongly endorsed in the media and by the majority of members belonging to the Omagh Support and Self Help Group, many of whom collaborated closely with the filmmakers. The Prime Time programme about Robert McCartney’s murder did not attract the same degree of media or public scrutiny as the
previously mentioned works. Its endorsement - from its inception to its completion - by the McCartney family, and association with a high profile investigative journalist - Tommy Gorman, who is RTE’s Northern Ireland correspondent, promised a certain guarantee of historical accuracy, from which its dramatic reconstruction and documentary content similarly benefited. Despite their differences, analyses of all of the works explore the political expediency of reconstructing traumatic events within close temporal proximity to their historical occurrence, while co-jointly considering whether or not the films bear ethical witness to these events, or, invite voyeurism and/or sensationalise their content for entertainment purposes. Multiple statutory reports, which were published in Northern Ireland in the decade following the first IRA ceasefire, reflect a similar concern and highlight the potential of the media, in its various guises, to re-traumatise victims and glorify the perpetrators of violence.

Political amnesia

A drama documentary *Stardust* (RTE 1, 2006) based on the Stardust tragedy in 1981, when a fire in a nightclub in the Artane area of Dublin resulted in the deaths of 48 young people, has provoked similar debate in the Irish Republic’s media and in the community concerned. Many of the victim-survivors and relatives of the dead expressed outrage at what they perceived as the exploitation of their tragedy for entertainment purposes. By contrast, other aggrieved individuals supported the drama for attracting public attention to their ongoing campaign to receive adequate financial compensation and governmental recognition of their losses. Owing to the victims support group’s dismay at Taoiseach Bertie Ahern’s failure to meet members of their group - he always dispatched representatives on his behalf - and the inextricable link, in their opinion, between the lack of political recognition afforded them and the tragedy’s occurrence in a disadvantaged area, the attention garnered by the programme was especially welcomed by those who were discontented by a lack of publicity.

Similar to victims of political violence in the North, the Stardust victims have reiterated, time and again, their fear of being forgotten by society and remembered only by their immediate families. According to the report of the Irish Victims Commission,
victims and survivors’ strongest wish is ‘... that their stories and those of their loved ones should not be forgotten.’

There has been a recent trend in which public opinion has been galvanised in support of victims - in the case of the Stardust tragedy, urgent political redress has been demanded in the numerous public debates, prompted by the drama documentary and a current affairs programme which re-evaluated the inquiry’s findings, and addressed ethical issues, including fire safety standards and the public liability of the venue’s proprietors. However, despite surface resemblances, the figure of the victim in a post-conflict society, such as Northern Ireland, bears a markedly different discursive currency to that of the victim in a society, which has not, at least in recent times, been under the duress of political violence. Accordingly, the critical strategies of productions addressing Northern Ireland’s victims reflect remarkable dissimilarities to those of productions which address the victims of non-political violence. However, despite the socio-political specificities of victim discourses pertaining to a particular location, such as Northern Ireland, on the evidence of victim debates elsewhere, such as in the Irish Republic, the subject of victim-hood has permeated contemporary discourse to an unprecedented degree – the discursive visibility of victims’ issues is especially relevant to analyses of Omagh and Prime Time.

Memory and forgetting: the politics of victimhood

The institutional mechanisms through which victims’ issues are addressed in the North have been described as among the most sophisticated to be found anywhere in the world. Historical circumstances have necessitated the development of a unique network of agencies and resources, as noted in the following extract from a report on the victims of political conflict:

Northern Ireland currently has the most wide-ranging and resourced conflict victim support programme of any currently or formerly in operation. The UK government provides funds, resources, support structures and information for those affected by the conflict and, unlike in most conflict regions, a welfare state to a certain degree absorbs the most severe consequences of conflict, such as treatment for injury, re-housing after homelessness and compensation for damage to property. In addition, there has been a range of reports, research, consultations, departmental restructuring and strategic planning to investigate the needs of and address the deficiencies in victim support provision.
Since the IRA ceasefire in 1994, a proliferation of government agencies, voluntary bodies and community schemes dedicated to remembering the victims of violent conflict in Northern Ireland have lead to a highly variegated discourse of remembrance. Government bodies such as the Victims unit, which was established in June 2000, Northern Ireland’s first think tank - ‘Democratic Dialogue,’ as well as myriad other groups in the voluntary and community sectors have vitalised public discourse of victim related issues by remembering, responsibly or otherwise, the conflict in a public manner on behalf of the victims and their families, many of whom had been marginalized during both the troubles and the peace process. While many such public institutions have enhanced accountability through discursively producing memory of the violent past, and, in the most successful cases have counter-acted public amnesia, induced through official and distressingly incomplete versions of the violent conflict, the Bloomfield Report, which was commissioned by the British government to investigate the impact of the troubles upon its victims and to ‘examine the feasibility of providing greater recognition for those who have become victims,’\textsuperscript{252} has been virulently criticised for constructing a ‘hierarchy of victims.’ In its much-publicised findings, the report failed to grant specific recognition to the victims of state violence or to acknowledge the preponderance of state sanctioned violence. Roy McClelland, coordinator of the ‘Healing through Remembering’ project has argued that the promulgation of knowledge of political violence must be accompanied by its acknowledgement, both by individuals and the state, if justice for victims is to be achieved: ‘We need to embrace not just past events but responsibility for dealing with past events, for responding to the needs of victims, for dealing with memory at a societal level - for remembering, for honouring, the memories of those who have suffered most in our long and bloody conflict.’\textsuperscript{253} Accusations levelled against the Bloomfield Report argued that its dissemination of selective knowledge of the past perpetuated politically induced amnesia of the political conflict at a governmental level.

While the act of publicly remembering political conflict in the North has become something of a mini-industry, in marked contrast to the early years of the peace process, an attitude of ‘forgive and forget’ has simultaneously prevailed, and is reflected in the
lack of prosecutions against those involved in paramilitary activities. Both *Omagh* and *Prime Time* explore this issue of criminal prosecutions. Despite the implementation of the Criminal Justice Review Group's report\textsuperscript{254} and the burgeoning of restorative justice schemes, victims' groups have criticised state policy in relation to victims' issues. In a 'Democratic Dialogue' publication,\textsuperscript{255} Mary O'Rawe notes a dearth in criminal prosecutions against the perpetrators of violence since the beginning of the peace process and cites from 'The UN Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power' according to which victims' right to redress through the courts is identified as the very minimum entitlement of the victims of political violence. She expresses dismay that in spite of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission's victims' rights project's emphasis upon accountability and investigative inquiry, there has been a significant lack of due legal process on behalf of the victims of the Northern Irish conflict, excepting The Saville Inquiry. O'Rawe buttresses her argument by quoting from an article entitled 'Truth telling, accountability and the right to life' by Fionnuala Ní Aoláin:

> The State must lead the response with imagination and openness ... If the State seeks to escape or minimize its past, it will inevitably meet it again. A vehicle for exposing and examining the past is required. Without it, the long list of unresolved... cases will continue to linger at the margins of political debate and legal process, stymying the capacity of all such systems to move forward.\textsuperscript{256}

Although the political elites on the islands of Great Britain and Ireland have been demonstrably circumspect in performing official remembrance of the Northern Irish conflict, since the first paramilitary ceasefire in 1994, historical memory has circuitously entered public discourse on a scale that has hitherto been unprecedented in the North, as the films studied in the previous chapters have demonstrated. Unfettered by either censorship laws or the pressure to self-censor, factors which had restricted discussion of victims’ issues in the public forum before and indeed during the preliminary stages of the peace process, these productions perpetuate the ‘discursivity,’ generated by the films studied in the previous chapters, pertaining to victims’ issues and to more general post-conflict related issues.
As stated already, some bodies remember more than others, and it is noteworthy that filmic discourse has occurred in the context of more radical acts of remembrance on the part of non-governmental agencies. One such example is the Ardoyne Commemorative Project in which editorial control was extended to all of its contributors, who were asked to submit personal accounts of a past, traumatic event. A number of books exclusively dealing with victims of the conflict have also been published, including *Lost Lives*[^257], *Unfinished business: state killings and the quest for truth*[^258] and *Northern Ireland After the Good Friday Agreement: Victims, Grievance, and Blame*[^259] among plentiful other publications and statutory reports.

The McCartney sisters’ determination to secure a conviction against the killers of their brother Robert is illustrative of a broader movement in civil society in which individuals and groups have campaigned for justice for the victims of violence, independently of the state and in spite of paramilitary intimidation. The rapidity with which, firstly, the McCartney sisters became mobilised in the wake of their brother’s death, and secondly, a high profile investigative news programme profiling their campaign was produced, is illustrative of the increased agency of victims in Northern Ireland. In May 2005, the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly to give EU financial assistance to the McCartney family to help fund a civil action if the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) failed to bring his killers to justice. The availability of EU funds for victims of terrorism indicates the supra state support systems available to victims, like the McCartneys, to pursue civil actions in the absence of their government’s support. The McCartney sisters’ efforts indicate their refusal to assume the role of passive victim of, firstly, terrorist intimidation, and secondly, governmental negligence.

Conversely, other arguments have proposed that the elite-driven, top-down nature of the peace process has contributed to diminished human agency for those living in Northern Ireland and has resulted in over-identification with victim status on the part of many of its citizens.[^260] For example, media criticism of *Holy Cross* complained that rather than imparting worthwhile insight, its exposition of the event portrayed both ethnic communities as victims, and unhelpfully reproduced intercommunal, sectarian tensions.
While the analysis of *Holy Cross* in this chapter considers such narrative failings, it also valorises representations of victims which do not present them in terms of an over-identification with a disabling form of victim status. For example, representation of the support group in *Omagh* reveals its members’ ability to positively exploit their victim status, similar to real victims groups elsewhere in Northern Ireland, and the publicity conscious activities of the McCarthy sisters, as represented in *Prime Time*, reveal their desire to enhance their public visibility in order to gain recognition of their loss, and to secure acknowledgement by the perpetrators of their brother’s murder for the violent act.

Writing about cinematic representations of traumatic events, Christopher Colvin has expressed alarm at the poverty of political acumen in representations which fulfil a therapeutic function. For Colvin, many such works conform to a narrative trajectory in which disclosure is followed by closure and reconciliation. While such a narrative arc conforms to audience expectations and therefore appears frequently in mainstream television and cinema, the films examined in this section do not adhere to such a neat pattern. Instead, their narratives reflect the persistence of historical trauma. For example, in keeping with the historical reality, the communities represented in *Holy Cross* have not been reconciled, and the perpetrators of violence in *Omagh* and *Prime Time* have not been prosecuted.

Although narrative imperatives in both *Holy Cross* and *Omagh* demand that their plots are enacted by a select number of characters, the apparent authenticity of mise en scène and verisimilitude of real locations balances the narratives’ attention to characterisation. In this way, *Omagh* does not over-personalise the historical trauma being represented, while *Holy Cross*, despite its simplistic personifications of complex sectarian relations, succeeds in at least partially invoking the concerns of an extra-diegetic social world. For example, by foregrounding maps which colour code sectarian residential zones and the physical barriers or ‘peace lines’ which spatially divide communities, *Holy Cross* alludes to the reality of residential segregation in these areas of West Belfast. These indicators, belonging to its mise en scène, denote the lived reality of living in sectarian zones, and, arguably, surpass the informational value of its
representation of ‘neighbourly’ relations between Catholic and Protestant characters. For its part, *Omagh* eschews the convenient narrative mould of the family drama by situating much of its narrative action outside of the family unit, enabling it to balance its address between the personal and the broader socio-political ramifications of victim-hood.

All of the works examined in this chapter coincide with an almost hyperactive promulgation of victim-related policies, which have emerged from the publication of statutory reports and the campaigning efforts of many of those working in the voluntary sector, and those operating at a community level. Although the narrative content and strategies of these works vastly differ, they all nonetheless, albeit in varying degrees, engage with contemporaneous debates about victims’ issues. Consequently, these works coincide with a multitude of efforts being made by and on behalf of victims in the voluntary sector, government departments and in communities, and both respond and contribute to discursive changes in these areas.

(i)

*Holy Cross*

*Holy Cross* was broadcast only two years after the controversy in 2001 concerning access to the eponymous Belfast school had subsided. The film reviews a unique expression of sectarian animosity, when large numbers of Protestant loyalists launched a picket in protest against Catholic school children’s and their parents’ use of the front entrance of the Holy Cross primary school, which is situated in a predominantly Protestant area. Members of the Protestant loyalist community argued that Catholic insistence upon using this route was an exercise in sectarian provocation and demanded that the school children access the school from the back entrance, which would entail passing through a field, to avoid any further confrontation. Intimidating tactics adopted by the protestors included shouting insults, throwing objects, splashing urine and even flashing pornographic pictures at children as young as four years of age. Although the protest was eventually suspended, the necessity of filming *Holy Cross* in Liverpool, rather than on location in Ardoyne, and the seeking of an injunction against its
transmission by members of both communities, indicates the persistence of sectarian tensions in this particular interface zone of west Belfast.

Sectarian discourses

The Holy Cross dispute was not an isolated incident of sectarian violence in the North. On 31 August 2005, two Catholic primary schools in Ballymena were the foci of serious firebomb attacks, causing considerable fire and smoke damage and the postponement of the new school term for several days. At the time of this attack, SDLP and Sinn Fein representatives expressed little hope that local sectarianism would lessen, despite the forward march of the peace process. Commenting on the aforementioned attacks, SDLP councillor Declan O’Loan was quoted in The Irish Times as saying: ‘Sectarian embers are always here and I must say I’m pessimistic about the underlying tensions.’ \(^{263}\) More pertinently, he described anti-Catholic violence as ‘the extreme end of a sense of unionist angst.’ \(^{264}\) (emphasis added) In itself, this statement is exemplary of a discursive tendency in the media, which pathologises rising levels of loyalist violence and, counterproductively, exacerbates sectarian divisions. Similarly, in Holy Cross, the narrative internalises an anti-Protestant address, and presents sectarian violence as emanating predominantly from the Protestant loyalist community. Rather than exploring the socio-political provenance of inter-communal, sectarian relations, Holy Cross locates sectarianism almost exclusively in the Protestant loyalist community, by reductively presenting its Protestant characters in possession of a flawed, ‘Protestant’ psyche. In a similar manner, stereotypical characterisations of Catholic characters, namely males and youths, who act aggressively toward their Protestant neighbours, pathologise sectarian violence. Even though members of the Catholic community criticised the drama for underplaying loyalist intimidation and concomitant Catholic victimisation, the differential narrative treatment of Protestant loyalist and Catholic nationalist communities, the one being portrayed as antagonists, the latter as victims of such antagonism, is indicative of the film’s simplification of the actual Holy Cross dispute. The manner in which it personalises the dispute does not successfully represent the territorial attachments in the relevant interface, residential areas.

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Many political analyses have argued that successive government policies promoting equality between the Catholic and Protestant populations have provoked 'persecutory fears' within Unionism. Following the IRA ceasefires, Unionist politicians, and none more so than the Rev. Ian Paisley of the DUP, have conveyed their dissatisfaction with the dissipation of support for unionism in Westminster and its cooperation with the Dublin government, beginning with the Sunningdale agreement (1973), followed by the Anglo-Irish agreement (1985) and ultimately by the Good Friday Agreement (1998). Sociologist Andrew Finlay has convincingly argued that government policies, which emphasise 'parity of esteem' between the 'two communities,' including the Good Friday Agreement, are responsible for institutionalising sectarianism and causing polarisation between the two communities. However, Holy Cross elides references to the political classes by dramatising the territorial dispute in a political vacuum.

**Ethno-sectarian enclaving**

‘Ethno-sectarian enclaving' characterises residential patterns in many parts of Northern Ireland, particularly in inner city Belfast. In the Ardoyne, a place name which is synonymous with the idea of a ‘Catholic/Republican neighbourhood,' territorial division and ethno-sectarian discord are features of daily life. Most residents in ‘Catholic' Ardoyne refuse to reside in friendly co-existence with their Protestant neighbours in the ‘Upper Ardoyne.' In fact, they refuse to even recognise their neighbouring territory as the ‘Upper Ardoyne,' referring to it instead as Glenbryn, after some street names in that area. Unsurprisingly, Protestant residents of ‘Upper Ardoyne’ have retaliated against Republican monopolisation of the local place name. As you enter this area from the Ardoyne, grafitti that reads ‘you are now entering Protestant Ardoyne,’ is indicative of their desire to reappropriate the place name's significatory capital. By stressing its exclusively Protestant identity, however, rather than wishing to inhabit a unified communal space, which use of the same place name might suggest, ethno-sectarian divisions between the ‘Ardoyne' and ‘Upper Ardoyne’ are both reinforced and reproduced.
Like many other interface zones in the city, ‘processes of residential extension and contraction’ largely determines the amount or lack of social authority wielded by a given community. Population figures for the Upper Ardoyne reveal a drastic decrease of Protestants from around 3,000 in 1971 to 1,500 in 1991. Inevitably, the dwindling numbers among those remaining feel besieged by the growing Catholic community residing within close proximity. Comparably, Catholics claim that they too feel besieged by encroaching Protestant territory. As the political geographer Peter Shirlow notes, ‘In each instance, reactive forms of cultural opposition are tied to notions of cultural dissipation, besiegement, threat and intimidation.’ Although, at least ostensibly, peace has been achieved in Northern Ireland, complex spatial arrangements, many of which evolved during the troubles, continue to perpetuate ethno-sectarian divisions. While there has been a conspicuous spiralling upwards of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation since the beginning of ‘the troubles,’ these practices also featured prominently during the plantation of Ulster, when the British crown dispossessed natives of their land and redistributed it among settler populations. Although ethno-sectarian discord should not be viewed as a static legacy of Ireland’s colonial past, its divisive repercussions upon residential patterns in the present can be nonetheless acknowledged, as the following extract suggests:

Control of a block of territory can be closely associated with a specific community identity. In some parts of Northern Ireland, particularly parts of Belfast, place of residence is widely understood (and occasionally misunderstood) as a mark of religious affiliation. Furthermore, concepts of territoriality have a long history. Land was historically central in a largely agricultural society where the ownership and occupancy of farmland were closely related to political power; political organizations on both sides, most notably the Orange Order, have rural roots. When Northern Ireland’s first Prime Minister, the unionist leader James Craig, used the slogan ‘Not an inch’ in defence of the territory of Northern Ireland it had well established popular local resonances.

Many commentators have discussed the historical antecedence of territorial attachments in Northern Ireland, Feldman writes:

Space itself functioned as a mnemonic artifact that stored repertoires of historical narrative and collective action. The often-mentioned emotional intimacy of the Northern Irish with distant historical events can be accounted for by spatial symbolics in which the past takes objectified form in the immediacy of spatial cognition.
In *Holy Cross*, themes of anxiety such as ‘cultural dissipation’ and ‘besiegement’ are linked to the Protestant community through the presentation of such fears as symptomatic of the attenuation of their territorial control. In reality, the deterritorialisation of Protestant areas and the Catholic community’s concomitant reterritorialisation of certain areas in inner city parts of Belfast has become a source of concern in some unionist circles. Contrarily however, many commentators have undermined the validity of such fears since, rather than being pressurized to leave their former places of residence as a result of sectarian tensions, favourable economic circumstances have motivated many Protestant and indeed Catholic community members’ relocation to more affluent suburbs. Within the film world too, interface zones are presented as highly politicised spaces, which are contested by characters representing one or other of the two predominant ethnic communities.

Many commentators have emphasised the urgency of moving beyond standard analyses of ethno-sectarian conflict in order to understand how religion, ethnicity and territoriality are combined in sectarianism. Political geographer Ian Shuttleworth writes:

> Sectarianism has been variously defined as a ‘disease’, a stereotyping and an over-identification of religion with politics, but we need to clarify its complex relationships with ethnicity and territoriality.  

Similarly, John Cash discredits pre-existing interpretive paradigms for contributing to incomplete explanations of sectarian conflict. Cash employs Kleinian psychoanalytic theory in order to interpret the intersecting ‘... psycho-cultural and socio-political processes,’ which, he states ‘... have been central to the re-production of sectarian difference as an institutionalised feature of the Northern Ireland state.’ He identifies two positions existing in both communities - the ‘persecutory and ambivalent positions’ - derived from Melanie Klein’s paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. Cash promotes the idea of a ‘psychosocial theory of subjectivity,’ and argues that psychoanalytic theory can be gainfully used in determining whether identities and ideologies, existing within Republican and Unionist traditions, are ‘exclusivist’ or ‘inclusivist.’ Klein’s emphasis upon object relations is particularly suited to the task of
interpreting the narrative representation of territorial attachment and certain characters’ projection of sectarian vitriol onto the hated object, or person, belonging to the opposing community. In *Holy Cross*, the extent to which a community fosters ‘exclusivist’ or ‘inclusivist’ modes of behaviour can be gauged by the degree of attachment by its members to the contested territory. The film visualises ‘spatial enclosure and socio-spatial demarcation’ through a mise-en-scène which incorporates illustrated maps of residential segregation, towering ‘peace lines,’ and the segregated housing estates themselves. The following film analysis is sensitive to how such visual information communicates how sectarian allegiances become solidified in accordance with the regulation of, and attachment to residential space.

*Holy Cross*’s narrative links an inability to work-through socio-political anxieties almost exclusively with Protestant characters, who idealise certain external objects to a far greater degree than their Catholic counterparts. In one illustrative example, the road leading to the primary school in question is presented as the ‘idealised object,’ which Loyalist Protestant characters wish to regain exclusive control over in order to allay their ‘persecutory anxieties.’ Klein describes the fear of loss of the ‘good object,’ in this case the road, as the deepest source of pain for the child, and also for the adult in cases where feelings of grief and fear have not been successfully worked through over the course of development. Klein notes that when the child’s inability to mourn the lost object is carried through into adulthood, the individual’s inner world becomes progressively more disconnected from external reality. It could be argued that in a society characterized by sectarian strife, the trust and love that Klein maintains are vital in diminishing fears and overcoming depression in the child, are severely damaged. Klein remarks that in cases where persecutory fears are very strong, the infant cannot work through the paranoid-schizoid position and consequently the ability to work-through the depressive position is impeded. By contrast, in successful mourning, or the working through of persecutory and depressive positions, anxieties lessen and objects become less idealized as the ego becomes more unified. Klein’s theory of unsuccessful mourning according to which the abnormal object relations which are established in the early years persist into adulthood might explain the depiction of the Protestant community’s idealisation of a
territory and the extremity of hatred which they project onto the Catholic community, and, more disturbingly, onto the pupils of Holy Cross primary school within the film.

Considering *Holy Cross* depicts an extreme instance of anti-Catholic sectarian aggression, it is hardly surprising that it sympathises less with its Protestant characters for the hardships endured by their community. However, it does measures the social and psychic cost of residential segregation for both communities by representing the confluence of fear, distrust and animosity, which are equally evident in the Protestant and Catholic communities. Subsequently, in addition to inter group relations, intra group relations, especially those between the younger and older generations of a given group, will be analysed in the aim of attaining an enhanced understanding of existing and potential identities as encapsulated by the adult and child characters respectively. Despite the film’s negative portrayal of the Protestant loyalist community, children from both communities, as well as certain adult members of the Catholic nationalist community, are characterised by their inclusivist tendencies. Explication of the narrative function of these characters will draw from Cash’s definition of the ‘ambivalent position’, adapted from Klein’s ‘depressive position’ which he uses to describe the complexity of thoughts and emotions of those who do not subscribe to exclusivist rules in inter group relations. He describes this position as follows:

The ambivalent position of ideology is inclusivist. It construes individuals, groups and the whole political and social formation as complex and multifaceted. It is from this complex construction that the ambivalence arises. Rather than being split and projected in ways characteristic of the dehumanising and persecutory positions, others and other groupings, (including frustrating others, distrusted others and, even, despised others) are construed as complex subjects with both positive and negative aspects. Thus, in contrast with the dehumanising and persecutory positions, the capacity for the handling of complexity, for the shifting of perspective and the enactment of bargaining and compromise is greatly enhanced.285

The variance between characters exhibiting exclusivist, sectarian identities, and those who adhere to inclusivist, non-sectarian ones mirrors Klein’s distinction between individuals exhibiting the characteristics of the paranoid schizoid position on the one hand, and of the depressive one on the other.
Finally, although the following film analysis does not over-determine the role of religion in reproducing sectarian attitudes in Northern Ireland, cognisance of its role in perpetuating sectarian division, notably through the church’s active endorsement of a segregated school system, is implicit throughout.

Topophilia

One of Holy Cross’s early scenes begins amid the roar of garrulous voices competing to be heard during a meeting which has been organised by the ‘Glenbryn Residents’ Association.’ Its most vocal members are entirely uninhibited in expressing their ire at the receding lines of Protestant housing in Glenbryn or the ‘Upper Ardoyne.’ Almost frothing at the mouth, one attendee angrily points towards a residential map, uttering ‘They used to be ours,’ referring to houses previously inhabited by Protestants and venting frustration at the contraction of Protestant homes and the subsequent decline of Unionist dominance in this particular area of West Belfast. In its size, framing, and centrality to the dialogue, the map, briefly, becomes a locus of the mise en scène and indicates how residential patterning in interface parts of the city denotes the spatial arrangement of sectarian communities. A close-up of the map displays sketches of a Union Jack and a Tricolour overlaying grids further emphasises the distribution of houses among the sectarian communities and specifically identifies the irruption of sectarian hostilities as arising from the extension of republican communities into a formerly Protestant area. Such ‘topophilia,’ or a fixation with ownership of residential land, is indicative of the loss of ‘territoriality’ felt within Protestant communities on a political, geographical and ideological level. The film’s opening scene’s presentation of these losses as accruing from residential contraction prefigures the ensuing introjection of these losses by certain Protestant characters, whose ‘topophilia’ is easily discernible in the depiction of their exaggerated attachment to given territory. Their presentation through the filmic narrative resembles Shirlow’s sociological description of the sectarian group who, unlike the non-sectarian one, ‘reorganized, through the expression of topophilia, the communities within which they lived.'
In a scene invoking the commencement of the actual inter-communal dispute, a couple of men are shown hoisting an Ulster flag in an attempt to symbolically appropriate a stretch of road when a man, listening to traditional Irish music on his car radio, slams on the brakes to intercept their efforts, and demands its immediate removal. Such sectarian fracas occur frequently in interface zones, for example, in September 2005,\textsuperscript{288} sectarian violence erupted in Belfast after Republicans erected GAA flags in celebration of a local victory. Loyalist paramilitary response to this incident underscores the inflammatory potential of symbolic gestures in divided communities and more precisely in those areas where territory is contested. Ongoing Unionist unwillingness to accept the Parades Commission’s decision prohibiting the Orange Order from marching down the Garvaghy Road, which is an entirely nationalist area, is instructive in this regard. Feldman observes that ‘In the loyalist community these parades synthesize historical symbolism, the command of space, and boundary transgression.’\textsuperscript{289} The ensuing exchange, occurring in the aforementioned scene, signals the stubborn attachment, of both parties, to an external object, which in this case includes a road, a school, and more understandably, children,

\begin{verbatim}
This is our road!
Your road? What’s that up there?
Those are our streets!
That’s our Catholic school.
That school shouldn’t even be there/your days of walkin up here are over.
They’re our fuckin Catholic kids!
Y-ha! In our fuckin area!
\end{verbatim}

As the dialogue suggests, from the point of view of these characters, ethno-sectarian identity and territory are intimately related. By exchanging punches, they violently enact communal divisions, and the night riots, which occur subsequently, dramatise the outgrowth of sectarianism in the wider communities.

Some days later, and following scenes depicting the toll on family life by incessant rioting and the frequent interruption of circling helicopters, a group of Protestant men applaud themselves for their reclamation of the controversial road leading to Holy Cross primary school. Despite the trauma inflicted on young school children,
Infantalisation

In *Holy Cross*, two Protestant characters – Peter and Roy – who exhibit the most virulent sectarian attitudes, are infantilised, thus denying them the opportunity to mature as the narrative unfolds. Within the logic of the narrative, their infantalisation corresponds to an inability to successfully mourn a lost ‘loved object.’ By presenting these characters as being childlike, the degree to which their psychic development has been hampered by such a loss is communicated. Peter lives in the parental home with his sister, Sara, and her daughter, Karen. They comprise one of two family units, the other being Catholic, attended to within the narrative. Peter is unemployed and contributes nothing to the mortgage, the sole responsibility of which is borne by Sara. In one scene, set in the afternoon, Peter and Roy stand defiantly on their ‘territory,’ or in other words, on the public footpath of their housing estate. Although both characters are mid to late twenties, their adolescent appearance, swaggering body language and juvenile conversation style render them comparable to a pair of teenage boys. Peter wears a brilliant-red snugly fitting t-shirt with a picture of a cartoon character, identified as ‘Batpig’ in colourful writing. Roy swigs churlishly from a beer can and in a manner more befitting a teenager, Peter goads the police, who are visible in the background of the shot, by shouting ‘come on’ at full pitch in their general direction. Roy gloats about their
petty triumph: 'we did it, we shut them out, this is our road again.' His childish attachment to the road implies that he has developed an idealised relationship toward it, while an absolute refusal on the part of both characters to live peacefully beside their Catholic neighbours indicates the degree to which their emotional maturity has been restricted as a result.

Later that night, Roy and Peter arrive drunkenly home and awaken the rest of the house after Peter realises that he has lost his keys. The following morning, oblivious of the irresponsibility of their behaviour, they lie draped across the living room furniture while Karen, dressed in her school uniform, empties a beer can down the kitchen sink. Awakening from their drunken reverie, they exchange comments about the night before as if it were a regular evening's entertainment. By contrast, a radio news report refers soberly to the night of rioting in question. When Peter emerges into the daylight outside the house, he disinterestedly views the smouldering remains of burnt out cars, rocks and other debris strewn across the estate and his sister's dogged efforts to scrub a large bloodstain off the pavement. A close-up of the blood soaked pavement juxtaposes the seriousness of the night's rioting with Peter's emotional withdrawal or impoverishment. According to Kleinian theory, such a withdrawn, unemotional attitude or detached hostility is associated with the process of splitting, in which a part of the personality is destroyed under the pressure of intense anxiety. A moment of mature, self-realisation on the part of Peter does occur however, when Karen, who is making a video diary for a school assignment, innocently asks him: 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' Her Uncle Peter's stunned silence and failure to answer her question before the film cuts to the next scene strongly suggests that the irony of her question has not been lost on him. Peter and Roy are not the sole recipients of an infantilising characterisation. A few scenes later, a group of Protestant men standing around the housing estate licking ice creams and boasting about petty victories against their Republican neighbours equally resemble overgrown adolescents.
Projective identification

In one particular instance, the verbal abuse and physically threatening behaviour towards children attending Holy Cross School issuing from a group of Glenbryn residents betrays their sense of emasculation provoked by their waning socio-political domination. The Protestant loyalist community’s projection of their insecurities onto the Catholic children conforms to Klein’s notion of ‘projective identification.’ As mentioned earlier, this psychic activity occurs when a hated internal object is projected onto an external one. By weaving authentic radio and television news reports through the film’s soundtrack and inserting real footage of the daily protest and night time street violence, viewers are alerted to the historical reality of sectarian hatred or ‘projective identification’ in Northern Ireland. One radio report describes the discovery of a device on the school wall as ‘the most sinister development’ in the spate of violence, even if it was later revealed as a hoax.

As school children and their parents move nervously through a funnel of Perspex glass, erected by the PSNI as a protective measure against groups of protestors, they are subject to a torrent of insults. Muting of the sound track for several seconds conveys one child’s traumatic response to the onslaught of unpleasant taunts. Successive frames reveal a woman repeatedly mouthing a single phrase and when suddenly the sound returns, the woman’s viciously delivered refrain of ‘Fenian bitch’ becomes audible. A seemingly endless stream of abuse issues from the protestors, the most recurrent phrases being: ‘provie bastard, Fenian bastard, you’re scum.’ One protestor waves a banner reading ‘Protestant Civil Rights,’ heedless of the pronounced dramatic irony of such a demand. By directing much of their abuse specifically at the school children, the protestors’ regard of the children’s active role in the diminution of their socio-cultural authority is conveyed. Throughout these scenes of violence, successive news reports, culled from genuine broadcasts, extra-diegetically double the dramatisation of events within the film world. Sectarian hatred reaches a crescendo when, during one of the daily protests, several protestors chant in unison:

Fenian scum! Scum! Scum!
Scum! Scum! Scum!
Through such extreme aggressive behavior directed toward any and all members of the Catholic community who deign to step on ‘their territory’, these characters enact a textbook example of ‘projective identification.’ Unaware that her daughter is close by, Sara displays solidarity with the purveyors of sectarian hatred by chiming along with their hypnotic chant of ‘Scum! Scum! Scum!’ As Karen notices her mother, the soundtrack is, once more, completely muted. Motionless, mother and daughter hold each other’s gaze, before Karen, whose expression of disbelief indicates her shock at the intensity of her mother’s hatred, dejectedly walks away. After nightfall, the protests transform into riots, and although members from both communities are shown engaging in offensive activities, the victimisation of Catholics is foregrounded when the house belonging to the Catholic family is firebombed. The following morning, Ann discovers that her children’s outdoor, wooden play-house has been burnt out. In terms of imagery, the charred remains of the miniature playhouse evoke the destruction borne by sectarianism upon the lives of children. In this way, the innocence of children born into such communities is dramatically contrasted against the conviction of certain members of the adult population that these children should be subjected to the same ‘projective identification’ as adults who are situated on the opposing side of the sectarian divide.

**Persecutory anxiety**

Throughout much of the film, recurring images of towering concrete walls, known euphemistically as ‘peace lines’ and which snake through interface zones of Belfast, demarcate the fault lines of sectarian tensions for the viewer. Generally built at the behest of concerned city dwellers, who have been the subjects of increased sectarian attacks committed by local ‘hoods’ at night, such demands on the part of one community for the erection of a ‘peace line’ frequently anger the opposing community, who do not want to live under the shadow of such oversized structures. A conflict of interests occurred in the area in which *Holy Cross* is set, when members of the Protestant community requested the construction of a wall that would obstruct the line of sight between the two communities. Parents of children attending the *Holy Cross* school objected, arguing that the wall would restrict views from the school and limit their...
children’s perspective upon their surroundings. Such efforts to limit, not only the opposing community’s physical movements, but also their ocular freedom, indicate the intensity of anxieties motivating such demands within communities in Belfast. In *Holy Cross*, a peace line separates a protestant housing estate from a Catholic one, and in one scene its casting of a menacing shadow upon Catholic children at play in their back garden denotes its invidious presence. The benefits of living in these sequestered conditions are almost entirely absent from the narrative, while the representation of the unimpeded occurrence of nightly riots corroborates the notion that sectarian tensions are heightened by the existence of such structures in interface zones.

Incessant demands by Protestant characters for the erection of a wall dramatises what is commonly labeled Protestant ‘persecutory anxiety.’ Their insistence upon enclosing their community behind security walls or desire for ‘spatial enclosure and socio-spatial demarcation’\(^{291}\) suggests the prevalence of a ‘siege mentality’\(^{292}\) – a phrase used frequently in literature relating to Protestant communities. In practice, unionists’ fierce resistance to reforms in the electoral process and the security forces by threatening to boycott devolution and openly criticizing the Patten report\(^ {293}\) might also be motivated by the ‘siege mentality’ and/or their loss of political supremacy. In *Holy Cross*, Protestant loyalists exhibit the signs of a ‘siege mentality’ through their unmitigated lobbying for the construction of a wall, the intensity of which far exceeds its practical necessity. Accordingly, their self-imprisonment is presented as an expression of their desire to maintain ethnic purity and to arrest the residential mobility of the Catholic population. The intensity of their hatred towards the Catholic community, not least toward Catholic children, is narratively conveyed not so much in terms of a reaction to Catholic provocation, but rather as arising from anxiety generated from within their own community. While in reality some demands for the construction of the wall were motivated by security concerns, the narrative alludes only faintly to such, and instead, presents Protestant characters’ earnest desire for its construction as an expression of sectarian hostility and a wish of retaining exclusive territorial control through spatial demarcation.
The concentration of riot police and armoured vehicles along the increasingly infamous stretch of road indicates the mobilisation of state forces precipitated by the gravity of the situation. Indignant at their protection of the Catholic nationalist community, Protestant loyalists throw bricks at the riot police and Peter berates their assistance of Catholics by complaining: ‘The cops won’t be happy until we’re all dead in our beds.’ As this statement reveals, for a Protestant loyalist community, such policing efforts are tantamount to betrayal. Of course, in reality, the composition of the security forces in the North has been almost exclusively Protestant since the foundation of the state, and consequently their feelings of ownership over the police force are hardly surprising.

Despite multiple narrative instances which present the Protestant loyalist community’s persecutory anxieties as irrational, scenes of night time rioting which accumulate over the course of the narrative dilute the representation of their persecutory anxiety by acknowledging a real, external threat. On mornings after a night’s rioting, their housing estates appear ravaged by street warfare, and burnt out cars and scattered bricks become familiar visual motifs as the film progresses. On one morning following a night’s rioting, Sara and Peter decide to have their homes fortified against future sectarian attacks. However, the metal grids attached to their windows constitute a rare example in which their ‘persecutory anxiety’ is related less to their diminished sense of self worth, and more to the real security fears prompted by sectarian violence. For the most part, the narrative presents as unjustified, the demands, in this case for the erection of a security wall, of Protestant communities, whose requests aimed at restricting the mobility and diminishing the social authority of the Catholic community amplify sectarian violence.

While the film’s inclusion of scenes of rioting demonstrates that both communities are subject to violent attacks, the film’s narrative address strongly suggests that sectarian violence is amplified by the demands, in this case for the erection of a security wall, of Protestant communities, who wish to restrict the mobility and diminish the social authority of the Catholic community.
Mobilising fear of the other

*Holy Cross* explores how fear of the other is used as a method of strengthening communal separation. Peter fuels his sister’s fear, Roy fuels Peter’s, while members of the Glenbryn Residents Association fuel each others’. In all such instances, the threat of Republican violence is exaggerated in order to justify ethno-sectarian animosity. Insistence on the part of the aforementioned characters, upon their distinction from the Catholic ‘scum’, reinforces these regimes of communal separation. Political actors, especially those who adhere to exclusivist ideology such as members of the Democratic Unionist Party, corroborate these characterizations in the world of politics. Like their fictional alter egos, they ‘... mobilize fear in order to strengthen uni-dimensional classifications of political belonging.’\(^{294}\) Cash argues that:

In the persecutory position others are construed as persecutory if, within the field of social and political relations, they adhere to, and act upon, values and beliefs which are different from those sanctioned by the subject’s communal grouping. Acting differently is construed, within the persecutory position, as acting in a hostile and aggressive manner which must be opposed and defeated at all costs, in order to maintain the propriety and authority of the communal values, beliefs and interests of one’s own grouping.\(^{295}\)

Through propagating such exclusivist political and social relations, the potential to promote alternative, inclusive identities and the scope to practice progressive politics is restricted. *Holy Cross* displays how communal differences arise organically due to residential segregation, but also how they are actively fostered through the reiteration of mythic notions of ethnic purity, both of which, in turn consolidate cross community fears.

The ‘ambivalent position’

Although *Holy Cross* does not present sectarian hatred as the preserve of a single community, its mode of address suggests that such violence is more coterminous with the Protestant loyalist than the Catholic nationalist community. In its representation of the Catholic nationalist community, with the exception of some rebellious teenagers, the majority of its members have withdrawn from sectarian violence; by contrast, most of the Protestant community are shown engaging in quotidian expressions of sectarian violence. Unlike depictions of their Protestant contemporaries, the Catholics do not fuel one another’s fear of the other community, and according to narrative evidence, they even
express a desire to cooperate with their Protestant neighbours. This is dramatised most convincingly through interactions between Ann McClure (Zara Turner) and her unnamed friend. While Protestant loyalists are shouting for the erection of a wall at their Residents Association meeting, Ann and her friend wait in an adjoining corridor where Ann confesses a yearning for some form of dialogue between the two communities: 'This can’t go on, living side by side and we can’t even talk to each other.’ Her words foreshadow an ensuing remark made by a cynical member of the Residents' Association: ‘there’s going to be a cross-community meeting, you better nip home and change into your riot gear.’ Some moments later, there is some form of cross-community recognition when Ann recognising her neighbour Sara, attempts to hold her gaze, suggesting her ambivalent as opposed to vitriolic feelings towards her Protestant neighbour. Through her active protraction of this silent exchange, Ann reveals a desire for compromise, an important characteristic of the ‘ambivalent position.’ Ann’s perception of the other community as complex, rather than as ‘persecuting others,’ distinguishes her from other characters who are consumed with sectarian hatred.

Rather than instilling their children with hatred of the other community, Catholic mothers express their anguish at their children’s exposure to sectarianism, for example, Ann resignedly complains about ‘the girls seeing things they should not see.’ When Ann and her friend meet one another as they are accompanying their children past some protestors, rather than venting anger, they express grave disillusionment at yet another instalment of an intractable conflict: ‘its never over is it? Never over.’ Despite being denied the right to walk their children to school and their reliance on Perspex sheeting for their own and their children’s safety, they do not trade insults with the protestors or exhibit any outward signs of ‘persecutory anxiety.’

Unlike the Norton household, sectarian hatred is not evident in the daily conversations conducted in the McClure’s home. And although their adolescent son’s involvement in rioting at night threatens the family’s embrace of the peace process, the undercurrent of tension simmering throughout those scenes shared by father and son suggests that he is more committed to resolving oedipal, than political issues.
Accordingly, an undercurrent of tension simmers beneath the surface of scenes shared by father and son. When Ann McClure defends their son Tony by reminding her husband Gerry that he is merely following his father’s example, Gerry insists upon the distinction between the apolitical violence of ‘hoods,’ or local youths, and the political aims for which he campaigned in the past by engaging, presumably, in paramilitary violence. By virtue of Tony’s failure to proffer political justification for his night time escapades during arguments with his father, his activities are depoliticised, while his absorption in mindless, violent computer games does little to counter act his apparent political disinterest. Gerry McClure (Colum Convey) has little faith in his son and warns him ‘if you’ve been out causing trouble, I’ll find out about it.’ On one level, the Catholic community are seen aggravating sectarian relations, however by presenting a member of the older generation, who is also a previous IRA member, as promoting peaceful co-existence to a younger character, the Catholic community is relatively positively represented.

Carnal metaphor

In a scene in which Aoife, the McClure’s youngest daughter, plays with her dolls, she enacts ‘a carnal metaphor,’ a term used by Kristeva to describe how behaviour betrays insight into an individual’s psychic activity. Through such child’s play, she reconstructs an incident from earlier in the day when a protestor threatened her father. She begins her game with a reassuring refrain, which she repeats throughout the film, ‘it’s safe at day time’, before repeating the person’s words verbatim: ‘What are you doing here?/ you’re dead provie/ you re a dead man’ while violently banging two Barbie dolls together. Although the impact of sectarian conflict upon children is reflected upon in this scene, the child’s ability to externalize the threat through play bodes well, and aligns her with her mother who appears more interested in resolving than fuelling sectarian tensions.

A scene involving Aoife’s older sister, Siobhan, and Karen Norton mirrors the ambivalence, which characterised an earlier scene in which their mothers featured. Both girls’ bedrooms face onto to each other and despite the presence of a peace wall, the line of vision between their bedrooms is unobstructed. Before leaving for their segregated
schools, the girls notice each other as they are gazing vacantly out their bedroom windows. Displaying mutual curiosity toward each other, they are reluctant to avert their attention elsewhere. Eventually, both girls dispiritedly retreat into their respective homes, realising the impracticality of forming a friendship. Undoubtedly, the sectarian environments in which the girls live negate the possibility of forming a friendship, even if Karen is more interested in listening to Britney Spears than the adults’ sectarian rants. Indeed, such references to popular culture illustrate the commonality between the girls. When she rips up her posters of Britney however she enacts her frustration with an external world that is characterised for the most part by extreme hatred, and the resulting difficulty of sustaining healthy relationships in other areas of life. Likewise, when Karen stares blankly at her mother obsessively shouting the word ‘scum’ at young school children, her withdrawal of affection from her mother is conveyed through the muting of the sound track, before she resignedly walks away. Karen condones the sectarian hostilities to which the rest of her community is wholeheartedly committed by frequently retreating into the solitude of her bedroom and confessing her desire to leave Glenbryn. Karen and the McClure girls, although not unperturbed by sectarian tensions, express ambivalence towards those of different religious persuasions and do not succumb to the same paranoia and fear of other members of the respective ‘sectarian’ communities.

**Depressive anxiety**

The signs of the ‘depressive position’ exhibited by Ann earlier in the film lessen in inverse proportion to an increase in depressive anxieties. The reparative energies, which were released during the period in which she occupied the depressive position, are overwhelmed by the intensity of depressive anxieties she experiences. Kristeva summarises the positive attributes of Klein’s ‘depressive position’: ‘She highlights the creative side of the depressive position: if the ego is capable of making reparation to the lost object, rather than responding with manic defences it can take root in a creative work that contains both pain and the work of mourning in the name of generating the symbol.’ Ann, who was earlier concerned with such ‘creative work’ in her efforts to promote cross-community co-operation, succumbs to severe depressive anxieties, which curtail creative activity and threaten her emotional stability. Several scenes convey the
escalation of her anxieties; in one instance, she ventures into her garden late at night and stands in front of the peace wall, shouting hysterically ‘you’re all animals’ at the Protestant community beyond the wall; at a later narrative stage, she breaks down in uncontrollable sobs when she discovers that her daughter has wet the bed. In perhaps the most revealing of such scenes, Ann eagerly accepts a packet of anti-depressants from her local chemist.

Conclusion

Admittedly, many of the film’s performances and plot devices are highly melodramatic. However, its reconstruction of the urban topography of Ardoyne and the Glenbym area, both interface zones, invites serious consideration of the spatialised nature of the sectarian modes of living pursued by both communities. In this manner, the film does in fact bear ethical witness to the historical reality of sectarianism in this part of Belfast, despite other narrative strategies that sensationalise intercommunal tensions for dramatic effect.

In its representation of Protestant loyalists’ militant preservation of communal separation, it presents their actions as a defence mechanism against fears of cultural and socio-political besiegement. From this perspective, Roy harbours the strongest ‘persecutory fears,’ since he is more vehemently opposed to the Catholic community than any other character. After witnessing a feature length dramatization of the sectarian abuse of school children, viewers will undoubtedly be primed to recoil from the smug satisfaction which Roy expresses after he discovers that the wall will be built: ‘Class...so this is what winning feels like, not exactly over night, but still 12 weeks, not bad.’ Although the Catholic nationalist community of the Ardoyne complained that the drama adopted a conciliatory narrative, and in so doing, lessened the severity of the trauma inflicted upon their community, Roy, a member of the Protestant community, is demonised through his characterisation.

However, a strongly evocative shot towards the film’s close, encapsulating the annihilating repercussions of sectarian conflict for Roy’s community, caused further
consternation in the Catholic community for attributing narrative preference to the hardships experienced by the relevant Protestant community. A caption reading ‘Friday, 23rd November: After 12 weeks of protest....’ is supplanted by a wide shot of Glenbryn road in which a worn and sullied flag, its tatters defiantly catching the wind has replaced the pristine Ulster flag which appeared in an earlier scene. In the same frame, several despondent youths perch on the bonnets of some burnt out cars. These combined elements evince the notion of a false victory for the Protestant community, and grants them too a certain victim status. Further parity of esteem is afforded the Protestant loyalist community when Sara expresses regret for her actions by apologising to Karen for enlisting in the protest against the school children. By confessing to her daughter in this manner, despite the deficit in credibility given the vehemence with which she performed her previous protests, Sara expresses her willingness to work-through her socio-political anxieties.

Untarnished by sectarian hatred or entrenched in an essentialised sectarian identity, the film’s child characters symbolise the possibility for substantive change in intercommunal relations. *Holy Cross*’s two final shots focus upon the challenges for children from Protestant loyalist communities to withstand the corrosive effects of sectarian hatred; in one, Karen stands motionless in front of the peace wall as an overhead, craning camera pulls back, leaving her dwarfed on the ground; in the final shot of the film, a line of uninhabited houses with windows missing and weeds overtaking the front lawns are accompanied by the caption: ‘Glenbryn Park August 2003: The area is being redeveloped,’ however there is little opportunity to contemplate if the redevelopment is a reactive measure to the depletion of the Protestant community in that area, or even whether the redevelopment will erase former territorial patterns, since an intertitle bearing a sobering statistic that ‘Since 2001, over 100 girls from Holy Cross school have received trauma counselling,’ intercepts the frame, and clumsily transfers concern from the Protestant community to that of the Catholic one. Despite the narrative’s persistent concern with Protestant loyalist aggression, towards the film’s close, *Holy Cross* hurriedly suggests that both communities have suffered equally as a result of the territorial dispute. Its final scenes underplay the sectarian targeting of
Catholic children by members of the Protestant loyalist community by haphazardly distributing the baleful repercussions of territorial and sectarian dispute between both communities. Such an exercise appears as a belated attempt to bestow narrative balance upon a film and situation, of which, in reality, they were equally bereft.

(ii)

Omagh

Historical context

The explosion of a car bomb in Omagh on August 15 1998 resulted in the single largest atrocity in the history of Northern Ireland. Twenty-nine people died in the blast and hundreds more sustained injuries, many of which were extremely serious. Shortly after claiming responsibility for the event, the Real IRA declared a ceasefire. Although the British and Irish governments stressed their determination to prosecute the perpetrators, survivors and the bereaved protested that insufficient efforts were being made in the legal pursuit of those responsible. Several months following the atrocity, members of Protestant, Catholic and Mormon communities established the Omagh Support and Self-help Group. Convinced that the governments had made little or no perceptible progress towards prosecuting the perpetrators, the support group decided to launch a civil action against those suspected of planting the bomb. By announcing their intention of taking legal action against individual members of a paramilitary organisation, the support group attracted substantial media attention, which in turn heightened their visibility in the public sphere.

Prior to this historic decision, discursive attention accorded the perpetrators of political violence in Northern Ireland exceeded that of its victims, including the dead and bereaved. The print and broadcast media displayed keen interest in the issue of early prisoner releases and the efforts being made to convince the paramilitaries of the desirability of maintaining their ceasefires. Likewise, when the British Secretary of State Mo Mowlam visited Loyalist prisoners as part of an effort to garner their support for the peace process, the media relayed her progress in minute detail.
However, by staging their campaign during this period of intense public mourning - the timing and unprecedented death toll of the Omagh bombing provoked a huge outpouring of public grief - the support group attracted atypical media attention. By gaining media recognition and actively pursuing justice through the courts, the support group counterbalanced British and Irish governments’ apathy toward, and strategic neglect, of victims. Under increasing political pressure, generated, at least in part, by the support group’s campaigning activities and by criticisms concerning his supervision of the North’s security forces, Tony Blair announced his government’s contribution of £800,000 to the support group’s legal fund. While the British government’s financial contribution was of practical assistance to the support group, more importantly perhaps, it lent expression to the enhanced political recognition of the victims of the Northern Irish political conflict. Arguably, the support group’s campaigning efforts distinguished the lives lost and affected by the Omagh bombing from those of other political atrocities in the North, which, by contrast, were more conveniently forgotten by political elites. One professional observer’s comment that ‘Caring for the victims of Omagh was almost caring by proxy for the thousands of others who had been left in isolation and without support’ reflects this notion.

In 2002, the media spotlight was, once more, trained on the support group, when Ombudsman Nuala O’Loan delivered her report on the Omagh bombing to a local audience and indicted the Special Branch and RUC leadership for professional misconduct before and after the bomb, thus confirming many of the suspicions harboured by members of the support group in the years following the blast. O’Loan’s report denounced high-ranking members of the security forces, whom, she claimed, had impeded her investigation.

Filming historical memory

The plight of the support group in the period immediately before the bomb, during its aftermath, and in the period leading up to the Ombudsman’s report in 2003 was transposed into a feature length film – Omagh (Peter Travis, 2004) - by Hell’s Kitchen
International and Tiger Aspect production in association with Channel 4, Bórd Scannán na hÉireann, Radio Telefís Éireann (RTE) and Portman Film. Paul Greengrass, who co-produced and co-wrote *Omagh* solicited the advice of Michael Gallagher, chairman of the Omagh Support and Self Help Group, and engaged in extensive consultations with other members of the group and Omagh community. At the time of *Omagh*’s theatrical release, Greengrass commented: ‘There are two events that frame the Troubles: one was Bloody Sunday – the moment at which the progress towards conflict became unstoppable and Omagh, which marked the moment at which everyone knew the conflict had to end.’ Correspondingly, films representing these events bookend this thesis. *Omagh* garnered numerous critical accolades and won the prestigious Discovery Award, voted for by the Press Corps - consisting of more than 750 international media, at the Toronto Film Festival. It also won Best Screenplay in the 2004 San Sebastian Film Festival, Best Actor and Best Film in the 2004 IFTA Awards ceremony, a BAFTA TV award for Best Single Drama in 2005 and swept the boards at the 45th Monte Carlo television festival, winning 4 major awards: Best TV Film, Best Actor – Gerard McSorley in his role as Michael Gallagher, Best Actress – Michèle Forbes in her role as Patsy Gallagher, and the Special Jury Award. After being screened on RTE and Channel Four in early 2004, *Omagh* received a limited theatrical release in the Republic and in the UK.

Derek Paget ascribes the privileged position occupied by drama documentary to its investigation of official matters in the absence of sufficient evidence and its ability to ‘open up documentary space’ around contentious matters of public concern. He also attributes its discursive strength to ‘... the camera’s ability to go anywhere and see anything’ which ‘... is both borrowed from documentary on behalf of the drama and extended by the drama on behalf of the documentary.’ While a documentary would require extensive factual evidence before examining what a character in *Omagh* describes as the ‘murky world of intelligence,’ the drama documentary addresses this murky world with relative ease. Considering *Omagh*’s contentious and contemporaneous content, Michael Eaton’s observation seems entirely apt, ‘... in drama-documentary you can throw light into dark places, and show large audiences the way power is exercised.’ Furthermore, by publicly performing remembrance of the victims and circumstances of
the Omagh bombing, Omagh participates in a cultural process which has invigorated memorial and political discourses in Northern Irish society since the beginning of the peace process. These discursive developments are commended in a report entitled ‘Future policies for the past’ commissioned by ‘Democratic Dialogue’:

In terms of truth, it seems unlikely at this point that there is going to be one event, such as a comprehensive truth commission, that will deliver all the truth about the past. We may all have to accept that there will be a series of events or episodes - trials, commissions of inquiry, investigative journalism, story-telling by victims and so on - that will bring out some dimensions of the truth for some people.  

By emphasising the socio-political importance of victims’ visibility and of securing public acknowledgements by perpetrators for the specific acts of violence for which they are accountable, Omagh enacts an argument proposed by Slavoj Zizek that in order to forget historical trauma, it must be remembered properly. He states that:

The true choice apropos of historical traumas is not the one between remembering or forgetting them: traumas we are not ready or able to remember haunt us all the more forcefully. We should therefore accept the paradox that, in order to really forget an event, we must first summon up the strength to remember it properly.

Zizek accounts for the contradictory strategy of remembering in order to forget by proposing that ‘the opposite of existence is not nonexistence, but insistence: that which does not exist continues to insist striving towards existence.’ Omagh rejects the commonplace axiom of ‘forgive and forget,’ which since the beginning of the peace process has been regularly hi-jacked in public debates for political purposes. By contrast, Omagh performs an ethico-political responsibility to remember historical trauma ‘properly.’ Despite official efforts to obscure remembrance of the circumstances surrounding the Omagh bombing, which has been justified from within the political establishment as necessary in safeguarding the advancement of the peace process, or the premature insistence on the part of non-partisan observers of the necessity of healing and closure, the responsibility of remembering the historical trauma ‘properly’ is undertaken in Omagh, which acts as a narrative counterpoint to those official narratives through which its ‘murky circumstances’ spectrally insist.
While Omagh's narrative concern with remembering the event 'properly' is incompatible with the format of a family drama, the film's representation of the Gallagher family as a paradigmatic example of the personal cost and suffering caused by political violence unifies political and personal issues of victim-hood. In reality Michael Gallagher, whose son Aidan was killed in the atrocity, was a prominent member of the support group. The film equates Michael's (Gerard McSorley) relative success in working through his personal trauma to his politicisation and visibility in the public world. By contrast, his wife Patsy (Michele Forbes) who almost completely withdraws from the social world and is rarely shown outside of the domestic space becomes less and less visible as the film progresses. Dominick LaCapra's adaptation of the Freudian concept of melancholy, describing it as '... an isolating experience allowing for specular intersubjectivity that immures the self in its desperate isolation' and as '... a state in which one remains possessed by the phantasmically invested past and compulsively, narcissistically identified with a lost object of love' is used to interpret Patsy's inability to come to terms with her son's death. Patsy fails to participate in the 'social processes of mourning losses and dead loved ones,' which LaCapra argues '... may be the only effective ways of partially overcoming melancholia and depression or at least of preventing them from becoming all-consuming and incapacitating.' Although Michael is equally ravaged by grief after the death of his son, after attending the support group's first meeting, he begins to demonstrate resistance to melancholy and engage in the process of mourning:

Yet mourning, although continually threatened by melancholia, may counteract the melancholic-manic-cycle, allow for the recognition of the other as other, and enable a dissolution or at least loosening of the narcissistic identification that is prominent in melancholy. In the mourning one recognizes a loss as a loss yet is able to take (partial) leave of it, begin again, renew interest in life, and find relatively stabilized objects of interest, love, and commitment.

Although still traumatized by the death of his son, Michael's participation in the support group demonstrates his commitment to a stable object of interest, indicating an ability to renew his interest in the outer world. LaCapra even states that 'Support groups could facilitate memory-work and mourning,' while also questioning 'how they might relate to broader social and political processes of transformation.' Through the support group, Michael and other members collectively work-through their trauma and
productively exploit their victim status to demand recognition of their losses and acknowledgement by those individuals responsible for the bombing. Through such deliberative action, or by acting on their desire of the desire of the other,’ they exhibit an increased level of agency and communicate their refusal to be identified as passive victims of the conflict.

**Calm before the blast**

In the film’s establishing shot, a camera which pans across empty stretches of farmland lit by the available, half-light of early dawn captures the deathly stillness of the Omagh countryside. The placidity of the rural scene is interrupted however by the sight and sound of a white van which enters the background of the shot and slowly moves into its foreground. A cut into a straight-on shot of its blinding headlights interrupts any further contemplation of the pastoral idyll. In the subsequent shot, two men remove sacks of fertilizer from the rear of the van and commence their bomb making routine; in a series of close-ups, number plates are exchanged, a pair of latex gloves are stretched across some one’s hands, and these by-now gloved hands assemble a bomb in a lunch box. Successive close-ups of their hands and bomb-making products render the bombers faceless, impeding the viewer’s identification with them.

An intertitle reading 15 August 1998 - the date of the Omagh bombing – appears momentarily, before being swiftly supplanted by a sun-drenched shot of a busy town centre. A cruel presentiment pervades the ensuing scene in which chirpy shopkeepers exchange pleasantries as they open the doors of their premises in preparation for the start of business and passers by cheerfully bustle through the town’s main thoroughfare. Narrative anticipation of the impending explosion is heightened when two of the bombers, filmed in shadowy light, are shown driving through the town centre in palpable silence. Obliquely angled shots of their faces convey their disjointed relationship to the community being depicted, who by contrast are favourably lit and framed. In propagating a mood of tragic irony, a shot of another car carrying the rest of the bombers travelling along the road leading to the town is cut with that of a car carrying Aidan, Micheal’s son, and his friend, travelling in the same direction. A montage of shots
depicting the everyday activities of prospective bomb victims, who appear and express only mild inconvenience at the police’s efforts to evacuate an area of town having misinterpreting the bomb warning, precedes the bomb blast.

By allowing the bomb explosion to interrupt the narrative approximately 15 minutes after the film begins, it resists using the representation of the bomb as a climactic finale. The explosion is followed by a single, protracted shot occupying almost a minute of screen time in which the soundtrack is completely muted. The image’s blanched appearance replicates the vulnerability of both film stock and recording equipment to the heat of an actual blast, and is reminiscent of the photographic realism of images shot at the scene of a disaster. The dust, smoke, and flames which obscure vision of the mise en scène contribute to the sense of a profilmic actuality. By being filmed in a single shot which slowly pans across the bomb site, the sequence approximates the single viewpoint of an individual witnessing the blast. The subsequent limitations of its visual field preclude the cinematic fetishisation of the bomb blast. When the colour of the image returns to normal, the sound track gradually cranks up. An ambulance siren, which pierces the muffled silence, arrests Michael’s mournful contemplation of the surrounding carnage, which includes corpses, people in flames, and bodies without limbs, and he promptly undertakes the arduous task of searching for his son. At this point, the camera’s pans, which become more and more urgent, and which incidentally, also deprive the bombsite’s imagery of spectacular merit, mimic Michael’s frantic surveillance of the area. During several scenes, the camera follows Michael’s frantic movements as he searches for Aidan, matching his momentum as he dashes through hospital corridors, recklessly drives between locations, and bolts through public spaces designated for the purposes of the emergency operation. Gradually his pace slackens until eventually a stationary camera rests on him as he sits in a tent awaiting an invitation to identify a body. At this juncture, the film’s cut to the carnage at the bombsite alleviates narrative attention from Michael, and resituates his personal ordeal within the broader context of the event. Mid close-ups of two objects - a scorched pram and a small number plate, placed beside a bloody white sheet concealing a victim’s body, poignantly conveys the personal cost of the atrocity. Meanwhile Michael’s wait has finally ended and he is shown walking
through a room draped in deep red velvet curtains toward a casket flanked by a priest whose presence confirms Aidan’s long suspected demise.

**Political charades**

Pitched at an interpretive community, cognisant of the failure and apparent disinclination of the British government to prosecute the bombers, there is much dramatic irony in footage of Tony Blair immediately after the event denouncing the bombers and expressing his determination to bring them to justice. In this news report, culled from the BBC archives, which is stitched into the diegesis by virtue of being played on the Gallagher’s television in their living room, Blair professes his assurance that the group’s announcement of a ceasefire would not alter his determination to seek justice on behalf of the victims. In the extract shown, he states that: ‘For our part, we have agreed that the two governments will work within their power to hunt down those responsible for this outrage.’ By switching off his television before the news report ends, Michael expresses his frustration at the Prime Minister’s lip service. Michael’s actions and attitude foreshadow subsequent narrative developments, which infer that Blair’s public response to the bombing was of a disingenuous nature. Such dramatic irony thinly conceals a narrative critique of the political charades performed by the political elite in the aftermath of the bombing.

A later scene further expresses Micheal’s unambiguous disenchantment with the British government. Michael recounts an anecdote concerning an English member of the support group, whose letters of appeal to Tony Blair were repeatedly ignored. Eventually, this man resorted to sending a blow-up photo of his dead wife to the prime minister, in receipt of which he received a reply which finally responded to his demand for recognition. The necessity of inflating the original photo of his wife into a giant sized image represents the challenges surmounted by the individual to attain the recognition of the political elite.
Working through the support group

By establishing the Omagh Support and Self-Help Group, victims enacted their refusal to endure continued marginalisation by the public authorities. In the film, the group’s genesis occurred during a meeting organised by some of the families of the victims and survivors of the atrocity. At the meeting, tempers easily flare and it threatens to completely derail. In one fracas, an attendee responds to a criticism of the British government, arguing ‘when are the Irish going to start taking responsibility for what happens in Ireland?’ indicating the extent of ideological divisions between its members. After several more disputes, Michael, adopting the role of arbitrator, finally intercepts the dissonant rancour by calling for calm. As part of his attempt to dispel the dispute, Michael refers to the cross section of the community in attendance, ‘there’s Catholics in this room, and Protestants and Presbyterians, and Mormons – and some of us believe in a god and now maybe some of us have no god, but I can tell you this, we’re not going to get anywhere unless we do it together.’ The assembled crowd responds to his speech through their rapt silence. In this pivotal scene, Michael’s involvement in the group’s activities counteracts the state of inertia provoked by his son’s death. By allowing the support group to become the object into which he can invest his energies, Michael demonstrates his ability to invest interest in an object as distinct from the lost loved object and he accedes to a vital stage of working through of his trauma. More important than its dramatisation of a personal journey, Michael’s recovery process foregrounds the socio-political importance of the support group, thus conjoining the film’s political and personal concerns.

Public visibility

The group’s activities in the film mirror those of its real life counterparts, whose struggle for recognition incorporated numerous bids to gain public visibility. In Lacanian terms, these individuals desire the Other’s recognition. Since, according to Lacanian theory, symbolic law derives from the Other, their position within the symbolic order is largely contingent upon the Other’s recognition of their victim status. Their ‘desire of the desire of the Other’ or struggle for recognition is manifest in their numerous bids to gain public visibility and anger at being sidelined by the political process. Indeed, the film’s
selective application of a televisual aesthetic, evident in a proliferation of close-ups, perfectly complements its narrative foregrounding of the group's members' efforts to attain enhanced public visibility. In a scene, which epitomises the group's struggle for recognition, the support group pickets a meeting organized by the 32 County Sovereignty Movement. As its members file out of the meeting, the support group heckle them and wave large placards emblazoned with life size images of the faces of their lost, loved ones. By cutting to close-ups of the faces of the dead on the posters and of the demonstrators, the film represents two tiers of victims – those who lost their lives and those who mourn these losses. The dual, visual foregrounding of these victim entities contrasts with fleetingly presented long-shots of members of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement. Television cameras, prominently situated within the mise en scène, which film the event within the diegetic world represent the multiplication of the victims' visibility and convey their group's successful strategy of gaining recognition of their victim status in the socio-political realm of the film world. A short time later, Patsy frantically chases a poster of Aidan's face after it catches in the wind and falls to the ground before clinging to the wet pavement. Shown in close-up lovingly smoothing out its creases, she publicly performs her insistence that his death and her grief be recognized. In a piece to camera, Michael tells a news reporter about the support group's determination to be both seen and heard in public: 'Everyone wants us to walk away, ya know, go quietly, so they can get on with their peace process,' and expresses his objection to being sidelined by the political process.

The politics of forgetting

As the peace process developed, victims' groups argued that victims' issues were being sidelined for political reasons. Supposedly, many of the main players in the peace process believed that the process would be threatened if victims' demands were fully met. However, other arguments proposed that a lasting peace could only be achieved if victims' needs were adequately addressed. Such 'politics of victim-hood' are alluded to in a scene featuring Gerry Adams. Shot in half-light, Adams appears almost sinister, while the inferiority of the actor's impersonation of Adams undermines the political seriousness of the scene and mocks the Sinn Fein party. Michael and another, more
phlegmatic, member of the support group – Laurence - visit Adams in his office and listen to his justifications for sidelining victims’ needs. Almost immediately after reassuring them that he does not wish to talk to them as a politician, he informs them of the priority of the peace process and asks them to put the past behind them. Michael refutes the placatory platitudes espoused by Adams: ‘the war is supposed to be over, if you say you want to build a new Northern Ireland, but how can we until we bring the killers to justice?’ Michael voices a central narrative concern that until wrongdoing has been acknowledged, a comprehensive peace will not be achieved. Adams is not convinced however and he maintains that hardliners would be alienated if the demands of victims were met. His attitude correlates with that of the British and Irish governments whose conspicuous lack of activity on the victims’ behalf is evident through their almost total absence from the film, apart from Blair’s television appearance. As such, the meeting with Adams encapsulates a strategy pursued by the political elite in the historical world according to which contentious elements of the past are forgotten in order to preserve the fragile equilibrium of a flawed peace settlement. Such ethico-politically inspired inaction, which arguably can be justified on the grounds of reconciliation, contrasts with the Omagh support group’s efforts to remember the historical trauma ‘properly’ so that it may eventually be forgotten, or become less consuming. Through their dogged efforts, the support group interrupts the state sanctioned discourse of forgetting by alerting the public both to the state enforced invisibility of victims and to the unacknowledged guilt of the perpetrators of violence. Until Michael is shown watching an investigative journalism programme entitled ‘Who bombed Omagh?’ in which it is acknowledged that ‘the absence of prosecutions is an increasing burden on the families of the victims,’ the narrative offers scant evidence of the recognition of the group’s ongoing trauma in the public arena of the film world. By inserting a genuine news programme, the representation of the media prominence of victims groups extends beyond a mere narrative function and references a reality beyond the story world.

As the narrative progresses, the support group encounters increasing numbers of obstacles in their pursuit of justice and the levels of political intrigue to which they are subject become increasingly apparent. Not only are they victims of political violence, but
equally of police ineptitude and state-sponsored cover-ups. In a revelatory scene, echoing the narrative conventions of the political thriller, the covert activities of government and security forces are unmasked during a meeting between Michael and an RUC informer. Their conversation, which is being conducted in the front seat of the car, is filmed in awkward pans oscillating between the two men. Occupying a position in the back seat of the car, behind the two individuals, the camera’s jittery movements convincingly simulates the restrictive conditions of filming an illicit meeting and partially conceals the appearance of the informer, in keeping with the secrecy surrounding their encounter. Nonetheless, their conversation is clearly audible, and he divulges crucial information to Michael: ‘they knew, they knew about the bomb, the army, MI5, RUC’, before assuring Michael that he informed them himself in fulfilling his duty as a mole for the security forces. On the advice of this mole, Michael embarks on a road trip to Dundalk, where he meets a member of the Gardai National Surveillance Unit, who informs Michael that they are a secret organisation and sheepishly admits that after ‘30 years of chasing shadows, the machine gets lazy.’ Some scenes later, a member of the RUC admits to having received information from their informant regarding the Omagh bomb and explains their disregarding of it by proffering the excuse that ‘the world of intelligence is murky, we need good reliable information.’ It becomes apparent that the interlocking interests of the security forces and government intelligence agencies pose as big a threat to the campaign for justice as the ability of the Real IRA to evade identification. Although the impact of the covert activities of intelligence agencies upon political decision-making indicates the erosion of constitutional democracy in the Northern state and the disenfranchisement of its citizens, Michael’s engagement in investigative activities successfully discloses the state’s unorthodox activities and simultaneously demonstrates the agency available to ordinary civilians.

Towards recognition and acknowledgement

In one of the film’s final scenes, the content of the Police Ombudsman’s report implies the fraudulent nature of Prime Minister Tony Blair’s announcement earlier in the film that he would do everything in his power to bring the perpetrators to justice, thus completing the narrative’s gradual disclosure of the unwillingness to pursue those
individuals and to persecute them accordingly on the part of both the Irish and British governments, the police forces, and the intelligence agencies. By retroactively confirming earlier suspicions of the disingenuous nature of Blair’s prior announcement, the report suggests that his public statements regarding the Omagh bomb were mere diversionary tactics designed to placate the public. Meanwhile, the dozens of cameras pointed at Michael, as he tries to exit the building where he listened to the Ombudsman’s report, indicates his accession to the public gaze. The support group’s struggle for recognition is awarded through the attention granted them in the Ombudsman’s report, which in reality confirmed that the victims of the Omagh bombing had been failed by the public authorities. By the film’s close, the members of the support group have become politicised by actively positioning themselves in the media spotlight, and are no longer political pawns in the state’s victims’ agenda. Unlike many films whose representational and narrative strategies divert from socio-political issues, in favour of exploiting the pathos of victims’ stories for entertainment purposes, Omagh recognises the socio-political agency of victims. The film’s ultimate utterance, in which Michael says: ‘We speak for the victims of the troubles of whatever tradition and all those victims of terror wherever it happens. We will not go away, we will not be quiet, we will not be forgotten’ succinctly summarises Omagh’s narrative objective to counter the politics of forgetting historical trauma by foregrounding victims’ struggle for recognition and their efforts to secure the acknowledgement of the perpetrators for wrongs committed.

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Prime Time

In the beginning of a Prime Time Investigates programme about Robert McCartney’s murder, Tommy Gorman’s voice-over, in which he states that the McCartney case ‘asks fundamental questions about truth and justice,’ provides an informative summary of the programme’s investigative concerns. Gorman’s additional introductory remarks, that ‘this programme looks behind the cloak of silence that so far has allowed the culprits to stay free,’ reiterate the programme’s goal of denouncing those individuals who have evaded judicial redress, and denied the family and partner of Robert
McCartney full and comprehensive recognition of their loss. Gorman’s referral to ‘the cloak of silence’ alludes to something even more sinister than merely evasive tactics on the part of ‘the culprits,’ and suggests a degree of state collusion in protecting the perpetrators of violence, or, at the very least, of negligence, in their pursuit of justice on behalf of the victims of violence, political or otherwise. The programme’s critical stance towards Sinn Fein is nowhere more evident than in its observation that Robert’s murder occurred on the same day as a rally commemorating Bloody Sunday. The irony of this coincidence is further compounded by Gorman’s observation that a Sinn Fein representative assured huge crowds in attendance on that very day that the pursuit of justice on behalf of the victims of that atrocity would not be abandoned.

Speaking about documentary film and television, John Comer describes a dual aim in many cases ‘to retain referential integrity and yet generate aesthetic value by what we can call an intermittent aesthetics.’ According to Comer, documentaries and current affairs programmes combine sequences which generate ‘a viewing subjectivity of “looking through,”’ comprising interview, voice-over commentary and archive material, and other sequences in which aesthetic coding replaces the apparent transparency of the former by ‘transferring viewers into a deeper imaginative space.’ The Prime Time reconstruction exhibits an ‘intermittent aesthetics’ by employing a dramatic reconstruction of Robert McCartney’s murder in combination with sequences formatted according to the standard practices of factual news programming.

Talking heads and voice-over commentary of the McCartney sisters and his partner Brigeen Hagans intersperse and overlay the reconstruction, which represents the hours immediately preceding, and inclusive of, Robert’s death. In their pieces to camera, the women describe Robert’s movements on the day of his attack and how he would have maintained a fearful distance from many of the individuals drinking in the bar, many of whom were well known IRA figures. In the reconstruction, the interior of the bar is poorly lit, and a large television screen playing a football match almost entirely occupies the background of the frame. Groups of people encircle tables crowded with pint glasses, while others, who occupy standing positions, clutch onto their drinks as they shout sport-
related, and more over, aggressive comments at the screen. Before long, the scene’s atmospheric musical score becomes punctuated by insults being traded between drinking groups. A fight, which promptly breaks out, is signalled by an abrupt alteration in the music, which assumes a distinctively more urgent beat. At this point, the viewer’s confusion as to the exact circumstances provoking this violent outbreak should approximate the confusion and misunderstanding, which provoked the actual fight involving Robert and the IRA men. One of the McCartney sisters provides the missing information, explaining how a rude gesture, which Robert made at the screen, was mistakenly understood by a woman, who was seated in his line of vision, as being directed towards her. A close up of a man as he is sifting through a deep tray filled with knives foreshadows the imminent carnage.

When the action shifts outside, Brendan Devine, a close friend of Robert’s, who is streaming blood, tells him that some ‘swine’ has cut his throat. Before Robert is granted the opportunity to assist Brendan, several men, who trailed them as they exited the bar, drag Robert away from the bar and onto the adjoining street. Again, as in the bar, the only light source derives from fixtures from within the mise en scène, and in this case light is emitted by a red streetlight, approximating the poor visibility, which an observer of the actual scene would have been privy to. A high angled long shot captures the fatal beating administered to Robert. After the beating of Robert, a rapid cut returns the action to the bar, where a man informs the crowd that: ‘This is IRA business, nobody move.’ A close-up of Robert and Brendan lying flat against a blood soaked pavement cut with that of the red stained bar floor illustrates the type of business to which the IRA man refers. In the final scene, set during daylight hours, flowers lying where Robert was murdered mark the irreversibility of the night’s tragic outcome and its repercussions for Robert’s family.

When the reconstruction ends, the programme’s intermittent aesthetics follow suit. Gorman’s voice-over resumes after the final shot of the reconstruction and he informs the viewer of a preoccupation shared by the programme and the sisters: ‘having buried their brother, the 5 sisters now started their search for justice.’ He proceeds to offer his
analysis of why Robert’s murder became a high-profile case by stating the reason why his death might be differentiated from those of other innocent victims, he states:

On one level, Robert McCartney was just another innocent victim in an Ireland where North and South, justice is often denied and victims are frequently forgotten, but in another way, he was different. He wasn’t just a Sinn Fein supporter killed by his own. At a time when probing questions were being asked about republicanism and criminality, the McCartney case was highlighting fundamental questions about rights and wrongs and why people were remaining silent.

Growing impatience in US political circles at the dearth of justice for Northern Ireland’s innocent victims of violence culminated in the invitation of the McCartney sisters and his partner Brigeen as guests of honour to the White House on the same St Patrick’s day when Gerry Adams was cold shouldered by Washington by being denied an invitation. Speeches given by both Senators Edward Kennedy and Hillary Clinton are replayed, and the theme of justice recurs in the texts of both speeches. Clinton grants the case unparalleled importance by saying that ‘the peace process cannot go forward unless there is complete reckoning with the demands of justice in the murder of Robert McCartney,’ while Kennedy, too, stresses the absolute necessity of ensuring justice is achieved. The European parliament, too, offered its support to the McCartney sisters’ campaign and expressed disillusionment with the ability of the authorities to secure justice on their behalf by pledging financial support for a legal case in the European court should a satisfactory outcome not occur in Ireland.

In an interview with Gorman, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern responded with more equanimity than other politicians who featured in the programme. In reply to Gorman’s question which asked if, referring to the peace process, ‘that journey is complete or incomplete if the McCartney case is outstanding?’ Ahern says that he wants justice for lots of other cases and that equal priority should be accorded to all innocent victims. Ahern proceeds by arguing that when ‘high profile cases are held in a vacuum’ progress towards a lasing peace is curtailed. So while, on the one hand, he supports the McCartney’s campaign for justice, he also implies that a disproportionate emphasis has been placed upon their
particular case, in a manner that might damage the peace process, thereby overtly commingling political and judicial issues. In the final interview of the programme, Gerry Adams states that he, too, would like to see Robert’s murderers brought to justice, and tries to depoliticise Robert’s murder by diverting attention from suspicions regarding Sinn Fein’s role in the cover up of the killing, by urging the PSNI to pursue the case not as a political one, but as a criminal investigation.

Despite public criticism that justice in the McCartney case has been sacrificed at the altar of the peace process, all of those included in the programme employ a similar rhetoric, which convincingly enunciates issues of truth and justice, and which displays the displacement of concern from the problems posed by political violence to those of criminality. The reconstruction’s overt textual display similarly exposes the problem of criminality in Northern Irish society. Whether or not justice is ultimately achieved, or even if such rhetoric is disingenuous and the reconstruction ineffective, the actual political discourse espoused by all of the relevant political parties, as well as politicians from further afield, has become increasingly characterised by a tacit acknowledgement of the urgency of addressing issues of justice and criminality in Northern Ireland’s post-conflict society.
A useful methodological principle is that the analyst should always ask of any text whether and how it is working ideologically but expect answers to vary: ideology is more of an issue for some texts than others.\textsuperscript{314}

This chapter considers how film reviews in the print media in Northern Ireland contribute to contemporary discourses about the historical events represented in the film and television texts examined in the previous chapters.\textsuperscript{315} Although the postmodernist notion that a mediasphere\textsuperscript{316} which privileges visual over typographical domains has succeeded that of the traditional public sphere, in proportion to the population of Northern Ireland, the readership figures of its major newspapers indicate that the print media remains a dominant resource of public information, or disinformation as the case may be. Considering the discursive contributions of the print media to public life in Northern Ireland, the plentiful number of film reviews appearing in its primary daily newspapers, and the patterns of responses contained therein, merit investigation as a case study in their own right. At best the sporadic attention afforded these films in regional papers, magazines, and periodicals inhibits comparative analysis, and subsequently these publications are not considered. Similarly, while many of the films addressed in this thesis sparked provocative debates in the broadcast media, its variable rate of response to the films precludes its consideration.

Abundant examples exist in other national contexts of films representing historical events that have provoked inordinate press attention - \textit{Schindler's List} (Steven Spielberg, 1993) being an exemplary example. And even though this film’s production and reception was greater than any of the films under examination in this thesis, the provocative position occupied by \textit{Schindler's List} in the global media proffers some thought-provoking parallels with press responses to the films under investigation. Similar to critical responses to \textit{Schindler's List}, the press responses under consideration constitute vital components of the ‘memory politics’ and debates about historical events pertaining
to the ‘troubles,’ albeit in a localised context. Writing about \textit{Schindler’s List}’s reception in France, Natasha Lehrer writes, ‘Even by French standards, the rhetoric which surrounded the film seemed unusually passionate. As though deciphering a palimpsest, one could trace beneath the acres of print a complex pattern of unease which, though inspired by the film, was not about the film at all.’ Similarly, Haim Bresheeth, writing about the film’s reception in Israel, comments that ‘the reaction is more revealing about contemporary Israeli public discourse than about this individual film.’ Bresheeth adds that ‘Much of the press coverage and reaction is especially vitriolic and full of argumentation totally unrelated to the film itself (some of the most aggressive pieces were even written in advance of viewing it!).’ In the German context, the print media’s response to the film has been described as an ‘emotional explosion’ and as a ‘seismograph for the current emotional and intellectual climate in the newly unified Germany.’ In comparison to responses in the German, French and Israeli press, in the US, responses were considerably more celebratory in tone. This is hardly surprising when it is considered that victim and perpetrator discourses were far more prevalent in Germany and Israel than in the US, while the issue of Nazi collaboration remains a moot point in the French case. By contrast, and despite a sizeable Jewish population in the US, reviews there did not discuss historical issues to as great an extent as elsewhere, and displayed a greater tendency to attend to issues of filmic form. The national specificities of press responses to \textit{Schindler’s List} are exemplary of the extent to which discursive practices operative in film reviews are imbricated in the national life of a state, and of how they offer insight into its historical preoccupations. In a similar fashion, the emphatically sectarian character of responses in Northern Ireland’s print media to films about ‘the troubles’ reveals much about the historical forces shaping that society and the contours of public debate therein.

Despite the innumerable differences separating the print media’s response to \textit{Schindler’s List} in the aforementioned national contexts from the press reception in Northern Ireland to the films studied in this thesis, it is worth probing certain salient correspondences, which nonetheless exist. In a considerable number of cases, the Northern Irish reviews supersede evaluation of the content and style of the films, and/or
their proximity to the historical events with independent accounts of the relevant historical event which make negligible or no references to the films themselves. Similar to reviews in, for example, the German media, rather than comprehensively attending to the filmic and/or narrative strategies employed to represent a particular historical event, a significant portion of the film reviews – in common with many of the films themselves – betray a greater concern for a contemporary ideological agenda, whose aim to patrol the dissemination of knowledge about the past necessitates the relentless exercise of constructing discursive or cultural memory of historical events. Comparatively speaking, the naturalised ideological viewpoints evident in the overtly opinionated language of the reviews do not achieve the same level of expression in the majority of the drama-documentaries considered, since, as already discussed, they demonstrate greater fidelity to their generic and legal obligations to ‘objective’ criteria, and the precepts of scrupulous research.

It is important to point out that I do not want to attribute the ideological content of a review solely to its author. Following Judith Butler, the ideological dimensions of a review are not attributed to the reviewer’s ‘psychopathology,’ since, as Butler argues, ‘when we are talking about the “subject” [in this context, the film reviewer] we are not always speaking about an individual: we are speaking about a model for agency and intelligibility …’ Butler perspicaciously adds that ‘At the most intimate levels, we are social; we are comported toward a “you”; we are outside ourselves, constituted in cultural norms that precede and exceed us, given over to a set of cultural norms and a field of power that condition us fundamentally.’ Congruently, although the reviewers, who in the course of analysis are individualised and referred to by name, inhabit these models of ‘agency and intelligibility’ and enjoy an authorship role, the ideological and/or sectarian opinions which may be attributed to them on a number of levels are not considered as expressions of their ‘psychopathology’ but rather as textual re-enactments of prevailing sectarian and/or ideological discourses in Northern Ireland, namely those of Irish republicanism/nationalism and unionism. In other words, reviewers writing in Northern Ireland about Northern Ireland are in the words of John Keane ‘situated interpreters.’ Accordingly, their viewpoints are inextricably related to the social and
political forces circulating in society in Northern Ireland. The rhetoric espoused in a given review therefore is not seen as originating or expiring solely at the level of the individual reviewer, but as being, at least partially, informed by the post-conflict context, which is in turn vitally informed by the persistence of perpetrator and victim discourses in that society.

To summarise then, while textual analysis of the individual reviews provides concrete evidence of the subject, or ideological, position of the reviewer, more importantly, they provide traces of cultural memory, whose discursive ramifications extend beyond the remit of a typical film review. The following analyses explore how the film reviews in question alternately offer competing or complementary interpretations - or cultural memory - of the historical events with which the films are concerned. Furthermore, while analysis of the individual reviews unearths the discreet discursive practices which operate in a given review of a single film, cross referencing between different film reviews about a single production extends the depth of analysis, and amplifies insight into the cultural or discursive memory of a specific historical event.

**Bloody Sunday**

Unsurprisingly, as a former member of Northern Ireland's Civil Right's Association, political activist, left-leaning journalist, and prominent member of the Socialist Workers Party, Derry-born Eamonn McCann’s review in the *Belfast Telegraph* adhered to a committed Irish Republican agenda. McCann enacted a tendency exhibited elsewhere in the Northern Irish press – that of criticising film for failing to fulfil extra-filmic standards of political and/or historical analysis, or in this case the ideological expectations of the reviewer. While he ably denounced the actions of the British government and military in relation to Bloody Sunday, McCann was either naively unaware or wilfully oblivious to the limitations imposed upon the film by the generic conventions of narrative drama. Predictably, McCann admonished *Bloody Sunday* for not being sufficiently anti-British, and argued that the youths depicted in the film expressed too much deference toward the British forces. However, failure to elaborate upon the specific reasons motivating another criticism – the critical shortcoming inherent
in employing the dramatic device of a leading protagonist to dramatise the complexities
of history – again indicate the extent to which the reviewer’s preoccupation with an
ideological agenda relevant to but extending beyond Bloody Sunday precludes critical
engagement with the narrative failings or otherwise of the film itself. Similarly, while the
metaphor of ‘a stick bent to breaking point’ that he employs to describe the film’s
narrative might be apt, McCann fails to integrate this insight into a fully realised critical
discussion. In this way, McCann betrays further resistance to situating the magnitude of
the film’s historical referent in relation to the limits of filmic representation, and a
propensity to engage almost exclusively in anti-British debate. It is noteworthy that while
many sections of the media in Northern Ireland, as well as in Great Britain and the
Republic of Ireland alluded to the film’s inaccurate depiction of McCann’s actual role in
the Civil Rights Movement, McCann does not refer to this. In McCann’s film review, the
reader is made privy to the reviewer’s distaste for the actions of the British government,
and to the strength of Republican opposition to their presence in Northern Ireland. The
discursive practices however offer readers scant critical insight into Bloody Sunday.

The headline the IRA/Sinn Fein newspaper An Phoblacht ‘Death of Innocence’
introduces the elegiac tone and personal register characterising Jim Gibney’s film
review.328 In the opening paragraph, when Gibney asked rhetorically how he and others
‘got through it at all’ he implicates himself in the historical event and aligns himself with
the Derry community. Although the review’s criticisms of the British government
compare to those espoused by McCann, emphasis on the personal hardships endured by
residents of Northern Ireland distinguishes Gibney’s discursive strategy from that of
McCann. To illustrate this, Gibney enumerated the following British military stratagems
which incurred upon the civil liberties of the people of Northern Ireland: the Falls Road
curfew in July 1970, internment in 1971, and Operation Motorman in July of the
following year. Given that Gibney is a prominent Sinn Fein representative, he has acted
as a director of elections and spokesperson for his party, writing for a radical political
weekly such as An Phoblacht, the combined political and personal perspective of his
review might be aligned with the communitarian relationship between An Phoblacht and
its readership in Northern Ireland, and to a lesser extent in the Republic, and between
Sinn Fein and its constituents in Northern Ireland. From this perspective, Gibney’s reviewing style perfectly complements the political functions performed by both organisations in the Northern Irish context. The fact that Gibney, in common with many of the paper’s writers, are embedded in the local and political affairs of Northern Ireland impacts strongly upon the discursive practices found in *An Phoblacht*. Media academic John Horgan relates *An Phoblacht’s* political importance to its editorial commitment to Irish Republican ideals, and distinguishes the political weekly from other political press as well as from other daily newspapers circulating in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. He says:

> In contrast with the lacklustre and politically vacuous tone of the press of the political parties generally, it performed a hugely important function in alerting a wide readership to issues and events which media lack of interest or (in the case of radio and television) censorship had kept below the political horizon. It was avidly read by politicians, senior public servants and administrators in Dublin, Belfast and London concerned with ongoing attempts to resolve the Northern Ireland crisis. Miniaturised versions were smuggled into the Northern Ireland prisons – notably the Maze, outside Belfast – to keep Republican prisoners abreast of political developments outside, and some prisoners (including Gerry Adams) smuggled their contributions out for printing.  

Significantly, and perhaps even in response to McCann’s review, Gibney refuted a popular republican viewpoint that the film is not sufficiently strenuous in its indictment of the British government. To this end, he pinpointed a subtle ‘vortex’ in the narrative’s incorporation of a three way dialogue between Ford, Commander Wilford and Brigadier McLellan, which, he argued, implied that the British army’s violence on the day in question was pre-planned. Having endorsed the narrative’s level of political analysis, Gibney reverted once again to a more personal engagement with the film when he confessed that although he was deeply affected after attending a tour of the killing zone, led by Don Mullan, *Bloody Sunday* resonated more profoundly for him. To explain his heartfelt expressions of awe and reverence for the film, Gibney listed the three most powerful scenes, including the shooting dead of Paddy Doherty. Again, he assumed an intimate relationship to the event by alluding to his personal connection with Doherty – he knew his son Tony - and even spoke on Doherty’s family’s behalf, saying that they
would have had difficulty watching the reconstruction of him crawling across a pavement after being shot. Far from criticising the film’s narrative for not being sufficiently anti-British, Gibney considered its positive contribution, from the perspective of the families concerned, to the campaign for truth being canvassed by the people of Derry since the atrocity. By simultaneously subscribing to *An Phoblacht*’s ideological sympathies and the expectations of its readership, while neutrally sketching the political context in which the film was produced, Gibney’s review is relatively uncontroversial. By contrast, the overwhelmingly personalised nature of his engagement with the private suffering of Bloody Sunday’s survivors, victims and their families emphasises a discourse of personal trauma, which, considering it emanates from a politician, might be perceived as an opportunistic effort to capitalise on private suffering for political gain. Alternatively, because of his personal relationship to Bloody Sunday and his embedded position in Northern Irish life, Gibney’s alignment with the victims and their relatives might be strenuously defended. Given the record of incursions upon the civil liberties of, predominantly, the nationalist population of Northern Ireland, for whom the personal has been unavoidably political, the latter perception is more likely to prevail among *An Phoblacht*’s readership. Those less sympathetic to the cause of Irish nationalism are more likely to consider Gibney’s discussion as a cynical exercise.

In contrast to the measured tones of Gibney’s review, reviewers of a Unionist persuasion enacted their sectarian position in aggressive, antagonistic language. Although neither McCann nor Gibney spared any wrath in their indictment of the British government, the reviewing strategies in the following cases exhibit a greater tendency to target the individuals involved in the film and connected to the historical event for personal attack.

A highly pejorative review in *The Belfast Telegraph*, which condemned Greengrass’s film, assumed the form of a personal attack on Ivan Cooper, and largely dismissed the film for unsympathetically depicting British paratroopers. Here, Stephen King, former adviser to former Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble, presumed that Ivan Cooper would have ‘reason to be pleased’ for being elevated from ‘relative
obscurity’ to the central figure in the narrative. Not stopping there, he derogatorily surmised that Eamonn McCann could sue for his ‘clownish depiction.’ King’s comments about Cooper and McCann suggest that he was more interested in castigating the real life individuals being represented in the film than in evaluating the intricacies of their characterisations in the film itself. His hostility to the peace process manifested itself in attempts to antagonise both Cooper and McCann. Such discursive practices could be viewed as an attempt to actively disrupt the political efforts being made to improve relations between members of all of the North’s communities. King’s refusal to countenance the widely-held belief that the British military acted injudiciously on the day was nowhere more evident than in his observation that the film’s depiction of the Paras as bloodthirsty killers constituted a weakness on the part of the filmmakers, since, according to King, it unproductively reconfirmed the prejudices of Derry’s nationalist population. King’s adamant refusal to engage with the notion of military misconduct on the day replays Lord Widgery’s policy of ‘see no evil, hear no evil’ immediately after the event. By assuming the mantle of the guardian of a flawed public record - whose gross misrepresentation of the historical event necessitated the establishment of the Saville Inquiry, which was responsible for re-examining the events of Bloody Sunday – it could be argued that King participates in a politics of forgetting, or a war over memory. By addressing the sectarian elements of the Telegraph’s unionist readership, he blocks a discursive space with the potential to develop cross-community relations.

Some weeks preceding the broadcast of the ‘Sunday’ films, writing for the Belfast Telegraph, the veteran journalist Eric Waugh, well known for his melodramatic writing style, performed a blistering attack against both productions and the broadcasters concerned, whom he described as being particularly partial to ‘looking at life through spectacles of a pinkish, anti-establishment hue.’ The extremity of both the language and viewpoints offered by King and Waugh are accommodated by, but not indicative of, the Belfast Telegraph’s editorial line since, despite being a unionist paper, it has appealed to a broad cross-section of readers across the political and religious divide throughout its history. Philip Elliott, in his pioneering study of print coverage of the troubles, attributes this to its ‘professional’ standards. For Bill Rolston, over its long history, the
Telegraph has become ‘the voice of the professional unionist bourgeoisie,’ adding that ‘the pursuit of markets and profit led to a less sectional approach to politics, one that allowed for the inclusion of bourgeois nationalists. Waugh seems out of step with the Belfast Telegraph’s carefully cultivated image of liberal unionism.’ However, the paper’s courting of appeal in all sections of Northern Irish society would account for the appearance of Waugh on its staff and failure to censor his comparative indifference to the factuality or otherwise of the film in question in favour of discussing broader political and historical issues. To serve these aims, Waugh belittlingly reduced Bloody Sunday to the status of a ‘fable’ constructed by Irish Catholics as propaganda against the British government. Comparing the film to the Saville Inquiry, his description of both juridical and filmic attempts to revisit the event as a ‘prodigal waste,’ adding that ‘raking over the ashes of Bloody Sunday is bound to prove a negative process,’ betrays his resistance to not only the film but to any remembrance of the event. Consolidating a concerted effort to invalidate the films’ basis in fact, he accused the films of obscuring the truth, which incidentally he earlier identified as an elusive, unknown quantity. In the remainder of the review, much angry posturing and repetitive comments aimed at eliding the factuality of both ‘Sunday’ films continued unrelentingly. However, Waugh’s failure to provide reasons which would explain why and how the films should be perceived as propaganda weapons exposes his opposition to the films as being ideologically motivated, and demonstrate how his sectarian loyalties preclude consideration of the films’ content.

Interestingly, in Waugh’s determination to attribute the films to Irish Catholics hoping to bolster what he patronisingly referred to as ‘the fable’ of injustices committed by British rulers against the Irish, he entirely overlooked the British funding and personnel, responsible for the realisation of both films. Considering that the ‘reviewer’ in this case has not even seen the films, it should come as no surprise that he does not denigrate the films on the basis of their content, but on the fact of their production in the first place. And while his approach might be found wanting in terms of critical analysis, it perfectly accords with the sectarian avenues of political debate and the wider ‘memory politics’ currently characterising historical debate in Northern Ireland. From this perspective, his glib suggestion that events like Bloody Sunday should be forgotten to
enable the population of Northern Ireland to put its ‘litany of grief’ behind it might be perceived as a strategy of obscuring the political reasons motivating his opposition to the exposition of certain uncomfortable facts about state-sponsored violence in Northern Ireland, and the sectarian nature of the unionist political regime in Northern Ireland against which the civil rights movement on Bloody Sunday were campaigning. These ostensibly ethical objections to the production of these films and earnest efforts to annul their basis in fact illuminates Waugh’s fear that the films will provide the nationalist community with ammunition in a war over memory in Northern Ireland. By concluding the review with the question ‘Whose interest, then, do these films serve?’ it is abundantly clear that the films fail to serve the reviewer’s ideological position in the ‘war’ over memory, or merit admittance into the public record.

Derry MP for the Democratic Unionist Party Gregory Campbell expressed his dislike of *Bloody Sunday* in no uncertain terms, saying that the ‘the thing that galls me’ about Greengrass’s film is its failure to contextualise the event, or to even provide ‘a brief one line mention’ of the unrest which blighted the four weeks before the march, a tendency which he identified as being similarly ubiquitous in the media. Campbell’s attempt to counter the culpability of the British military in this opening statement perfectly accords with his and his party’s negative attitude toward Republican parties. A description of Campbell on the DUP website is demonstrative in this regard:

Campbell combines the two characteristics that the DUP are known for, speaking out on a range of issues and tireless representation. The Unionist community has a number of concerns, they know in Gregory Campbell they have an ardent advocate. They also know that to combat republican misrepresentation and deceit they must have a consistent campaigner.

Campbell, one of the most prominent unionist politicians in Derry has been a vocal critic of the political attention accorded Bloody Sunday, in a separate article pertaining to the Saville Inquiry he stated ‘We have had hundreds of people slaughtered without a single inquiry, and here the nationalists are getting a second one. The Unionist community is absolutely outraged that they have to get this drip-drip news every day of every month for what will be four years.’ The emotive language employed by Campbell throughout the review excellently communicates his disapproval of the film, but weakens his critical
engagement with it. His disparagement of James Nesbitt’s performance as Ivan Cooper ‘in the Ghandhi role’ echoes the cynical comments made about Cooper in Stephen King’s review. Campbell’s extreme fealty to his political and sectarian allegiances offers one explanation for the display of supreme insensitivity to the injured and relatives of those who died on Bloody Sunday. He even labelled as ‘ludicrous’ the scene in which the Paras ‘go in shooting at anything that moves,’ despite the existence of historical evidence that the Paras opened fire on unarmed civilians. He expressed yet further disrespect for the dead by adding that many unionists would have reached for the ‘off’ button at this stage, missing the girl ‘in brave heart mode yelling at the camera,’ a girl, incidentally, who witnessed from a distance of only a few feet the shooting dead of Barney McGuigan as he tried to assist one of the wounded. Campbell’s cynical conclusion that an estimated figure of ‘one hundred million pounds’ was spent on promoting a revisionist agenda reveals the kernel of his objections to the film – i.e. that Bloody Sunday enables the historical event to be revisited, and construes Derry’s Catholic population as victims of state violence. Far from treading the usual territory of a film review – where a film’s strengths and failings are evaluated - Campbell’s ‘film review’ denies the historical suffering of Derry’s Catholic population in a pre-emptive measure to curtail popular endorsement of the films. In this way, Campbell engages, like the other unionist commentators, discussed so far, in a politics of victimhood.

In a self-conscious polemic about the ideological foundations of competing interpretations of history and film, another review in the Telegraph alluded to the difficulties inherent in reviewing a film such as Bloody Sunday. In comparison to the distinctly sectarian character of reviewing practices in other reviews appearing in the Telegraph, the reviewing strategy here appears to be non-partisan. In this case, columnist Janet Devlin’s argument crystallises the discursive controversy sparked by Bloody Sunday in her comment about the complexity of addressing contentious historical events to a polarised population, noting that one viewer’s fact was another’s propaganda. Devlin proceeded by broaching a range of controversial issues surrounding the politics of Bloody Sunday’s production before addressing the film itself. Anticipating the divided loyalties of her readership, she tempered admiration for the film – which she described as
'timely' - with expressions of caution regarding its 'mischievous' qualities. By the time she acceded that judgment of the film would ultimately 'depend on your take on things,' her unwillingness to endorse or criticise the film was abundantly clear, as was her desire to address Northern Ireland's two dominant ethnic communities - Catholics and Protestants. She continued to play out this strategy, or 'to sit on the fence,' by arguing that the film's meaning was entirely contingent upon the ideological position of the viewer. For example, she wrote that the film's depiction of the Paras as 'trigger happy killers,' desperate to 'bag a few paddies' could either be interpreted as fact, or, alternatively as a 'travesty of the truth.' However, she diverted from this non-partisan course somewhat when she commended the film for its unambiguous representation of the gunning down of innocent civilians, while, careful not to alienate any of her readers, conceding that to his credit in the absence of irrefutable proof Greengrass fudged the contentious issue of the provenance of the first shots. Like other reviewers, but without blatantly promoting her own ideological agenda, she participates in a discourse concerned with the film's contribution to historical debate, and expressed fear that the film's version of the 'truth' be readily accepted and that audiences would fail to recognise, as perhaps a majority of the reviewers demonstrate, that 'the thing about television is that it is just television.' For Devlin, the film's adoption of the drama-documentary form compounds this concern for lending factual authority to a representation. In expressing anxiety about the public's uncritical acceptance of the film's ideological interpretation of the event, Devlin betrays her own concerns about the discursive strengths of film and television as cultural memory, and the threat posed by popular media to the integrity of historical discourses. However, by situating the film in the context of theoretical and critical concerns, Devlin avoided perpetuating sectarian discourse, an activity many her colleagues in the Telegraph excelled at.

After a total of four reviews which revealed considerably more about the sectarian divisions running through Northern Irish society, with the exception of Devlin’s review, than insight into the film, a review in the Telegraph by one of the victim-survivors of Bloody Sunday - Michael Kelly - provides welcome respite. Although a unionist paper, the liberal editorial line promoted by the Telegraph throughout its history would account
for its far-reaching discursive parameters. Instead of rehearsing clichéd arguments about British culpability in the security affairs of Northern Ireland, Kelly addressed issues more germane to a film review – notably those of historical accuracy and verisimilitude; for instance, he commended the scenes in which the march was re-enacted. Without appropriating a sectarian mode of analysis or anti-British rhetoric, Kelly congratulated Greengrass and producer Mark Redhead, saying that they ‘delivered as promised,’ adding that the film gave a ‘first hand opportunity for the world to witness the dreadful truth about Bloody Sunday.’\[^340\] The equanimity with which Kelly endorsed the film, on behalf of all the families, for its valid contribution to their quest for truth and justice effectively communicates the ethical legitimacy of both the film and the family’s campaign. The quiescence marking his final and uncomplicated appraisal of the film as a ‘job well done’ distinguishes Kelly’s language from the sectarian overtures characterising that of other reviews, and can be situated in relationship to the discursive activity of remembering trauma ‘properly,’\[^341\] or according to a method which enables historical trauma to be discursively worked-through.

A review in the more explicitly unionist newspaper the *News Letter* condemned *Bloody Sunday* for failing to address the concerns of Protestant communities. Indeed, the *News Letter*’s sectarian loyalties have a long history. Bill Rolston remarks that as far back as ‘[…] 1851 the *News Letter* proudly proclaimed its guiding principles as “loyalty to the throne, devotion to the religion of the Bible, and unswerving attachment to the Protestant constitution of these lands.”\[^342\] Regular reviewer Ian Starrett’s description of the Berlin Film Festival judges’ praise of *Bloody Sunday* for its ‘extraordinary authenticity’ as ‘fair enough,’ and his cynicism regarding the efforts of the filmmakers ‘to really look for “the truth,”’ by denouncing their failure to address events predating Bloody Sunday such as ‘the days of the Siege of Derry and the Battle of the Boyne,’ reveals not only his opposition to the film, but also a refusal to explain his objective stance by engaging with its specific merits, and/or, failings.\[^343\] In doing so, Starrett entirely undermined not only the film in question but also the historical relevance of Bloody Sunday. His disinterest in discussing the film’s style or narrative, for example, and the eagerness with which he disparaged the fact of its production in the first place
and the premeditated decision to portray Derry’s Catholic community as victims of state violence indicates a greater concern for a politics of victimhood than the practice of film reviewing. By framing his antipathy for Bloody Sunday with his disappointment at the dearth of films about Northern Ireland’s Protestant community, and their heritage, Starrett performs his implacable sectarian allegiances, which inhibit him from countenancing, let alone reviewing, a film privileging Derry’s Catholic population.

The headline describing Bloody Sunday as ‘A Breathtaking Piece of Television’ in the The Irish News - whose openness to the ‘range of nationalist politics’ Rolston describes as a ‘principled position’ and the reviewer’s description of the film’s emotional depth as ‘moving and harrowing,’ demarcates the parameters of the review’s effusive praise of the film. While readers from Protestant backgrounds might perceive these recommendations as nationalist propaganda inspired to further the victim status of Catholics, the predominant readership of the Irish News being nationalists are less likely to make negative inferences and more likely to accept its line of argument. In defence of the review, it anchored its recommendations in the film itself by noting that the narrative offered the viewer various points of entry, ranging from the perspective of the marchers to that of the army. Of course, this could also be perceived as a politically-correct means of promoting a pro-nationalist film. However, the reviewer’s attention to filmic form indicates a deeper level of engagement with the film than a propagandist reviewing agenda would demand; for example, admiration for its technical finesse was granted for the facility with which the camerawork simulated a sense of live immediacy and for transporting the viewer ‘amid the crowds as the army fire bullets.’ In a discussion of the film’s proximity or otherwise to the ‘truth,’ the reviewer betrays a critical awareness of the anxieties permeating debates about contentious historical events. By addressing filmic and broader critical, or philosophical, issues, the reviewer does not overtly betray his or her political or sectarian position, and while a nationalist ideology is nonetheless being canvassed, its expression is, comparatively speaking, relatively muted. In keeping with the editorial tendencies of The Irish News, the reviewer considers Bloody Sunday from a moderate nationalist, or SDLP, perspective.
Sunday

The fact of *An Phoblacht*’s attention to *Sunday* in two consecutive issues is significant in itself, considering that this paper ordinarily grants only very cursory attention to film. That said, rather than being the focus of analysis in the ‘film reviews,’ the films provide a pretext for the discussion of the military and political context of the historical event and its continuing legacy for the people of Northern Ireland. In one review, Fern Lane’s valorisation of *Sunday* for providing a political context, which *Bloody Sunday*, ‘for all its brilliance,’ lacked and preference for its more conventional back-story indicates a greater concern for historical than filmic issues. Indeed, Lane is a tireless investigative reporter into the historical injustices which nationalist have suffered and continue to suffer in Northern Ireland. Lane’s disapproval of the Paras’ ‘exquisitely structured, almost poetic dialogue,’ and observation that McGovern’s obvious screen-writing abilities were entirely misplaced, is noteworthy for betraying the ideological basis on which the staunchly Republican reviewer criticises the screenplay. In arguing for the exclusion of anything short of the military’s vilification, Lane’s attempt to regulate the representation of Bloody Sunday is apparent.

Commending the poignancy of *Sunday*’s evocation of the suffering of the families for its accuracy and deference to the actual relatives, whose pain she says has never been fully articulated, Lane simultaneously sympathises with those affected by Bloody Sunday and contributes to a discourse of victim-hood, likely to benefit contemporary Republican politics. Likewise, when Lane shifts the analysis from issues of performance and characterisation to a commentary elucidating her opposition to the British presence in Northern Ireland, it is not difficult to discern the extent of her investment in a debate extending beyond the film. By criticising Unionists and British conservatives, whom, she said, complained about the financial cost of the Saville Inquiry, and who would be unimpressed by McGovern’s drama, Fern denounces the basis of their resistance to the remembrance of Bloody Sunday. Her plea that such individuals be reminded of the ‘numberless billions which have been wasted by successive British governments since partition, in fighting a dirty, unjust and ignominious war and to support a unionist regime so vile and sectarian that it finally collapsed under the weight of its own wilful, criminal
incompetence and dismal political corruption, amply demonstrates the emotive forces driving Lane’s anti-British rhetoric, and an inability to extricate himself from that discourse. Indeed, the syntactical coherence of this lengthy sentence almost collapses under the weight of its verbosity, which, in combination with the reviewer’s lack of detachment from the historical event, leaves little doubt as to the political and personal relevance of both the film and its historical subject matter to the reviewer. Lane’s concluding comment equating the Sunday films and the Saville Inquiry for similarly constituting rare examples of British money ‘well and honourably spent’ in the six counties functions less as a compliment to the British government than as a recommendation of Sunday for its positive contribution to the discourse of victim-hood occupying public debate, and accurate depiction of the historical victims of Bloody Sunday.

The following week’s issue of An Phoblacht devoted another article to Sunday. On this occasion, Lane aligned herself with the filmmakers by compiling their comments, namely those of its screenwriter Jimmy McGovern and executive producer Stephen Gargan. The review’s inclusion of lengthy quotations by the film’s anti-establishment, British screenwriter Jimmy McGovern established the tone of the article - McGovern described how his loyalties were divided between his country of origin and home – Great Britain – and his obligation to the people of Derry to accurately portray the injustices committed against them by the British military. In his statement that only by responding to the ideals of truth and justice, which he enacts on behalf of his country through the screenplay’s address of the British state’s responsibility for Bloody Sunday, would Great Britain redeem itself in the eyes of the world, McGovern emphasises the ethical importance of remembering Bloody Sunday. Gargan, for his part, strongly refuted an argument which proposed that chaos and confusion prompted the Paras’ actions by demanding that such ‘nonsense’ be ‘nailed,’ and that the Paras identity as a ‘crack, elite regiment,’ who acted as killers and executioners, be exposed. Here, Sunday is considered more in terms of a political coup than a triumph in filmmaking terms, since the discussion is overwhelmingly concerned with holding the Paras accountable for their misconduct on the afternoon of Bloody Sunday and the necessity of pressurising the British government.
to claim responsibility for the atrocity. The reviewer and filmmaking team’s earnest efforts to entrust to a readership what is, at least from their perspective, an accurate account of the event, supplement rather than comment upon the film’s political agenda.

*Sunday* provoked similarly divided responses as *Bloody Sunday* in *The Belfast Telegraph*. As already discussed, anxieties over converting history into a narrative film motivated Eric Waugh’s misgivings, as his comment that ‘Granada and C4 would have been well advised to leave Bloody Sunday alone’ makes abundantly clear. The reviewer’s eagerness to eliminate Bloody Sunday from public debate precludes consideration of the film itself, to which, for political reasons, he is completely opposed. At least Suzanne Rogers anchored her opposition to the film in its narrative, when she criticised its self-presentation as factually accurate despite the fact that evidence regarding the provenance of the first shots for instance, was still ‘hotly disputed.’

By contrast, Larry White’s review discussed the supreme importance of remembering Bloody Sunday, since as an event its singularity should distinguish it from all other atrocities committed in the North. White’s commentary bears notably little comparison to the *Telegraph*’s other reviews. Such a discrepancy illustrates the bipartisan nature of the *Telegraph*’s editorial line, and reflects the lack of consensus about the events of Bloody Sunday in Northern Irish society. Although ostensibly a unionist paper, it has traditionally appealed to moderate sections of Catholic and Protestant communities, while its acquisition by Irish media baron Tony O’Reilly’s Independent News and Media corporation in 2000 has diluted its unionist associations. White underlines the ethical necessity of remembering Bloody Sunday by criticising Gregory Campbell’s disparagement of *Sunday*, asking him whether or not he ‘feels at all disturbed that the army killed innocent people,’ before labelling Campbell’s refusal to differentiate Bloody Sunday from other atrocities in the North as ‘begrudgery of the lowest order.’ Although he aligns himself with a nationalist perspective, White addresses both Unionist and British readers when he regards the political function of *Sunday* in terms of its potential to correct the travesty of justice committed under the auspices of the *Widgery Report* by bringing ‘those tragic events to a wider, more appreciative audience who will see what was done, wrongly, in their name.’ Through his emphasis on the event’s historical
magnitude, and the suppression of this fact in the Widgery Inquiry and in the political chambers of Westminster subsequent to the Inquiry, White’s political opposition to the British presence in Northern Ireland overwhelms consideration of the film itself.

Two reviews of Sunday in the Irish News consolidated the papers pro-nationalist agenda in their categorical endorsement of the film. However, it is important to note that the Irish News has traditionally rejected republicanism in favour of promoting the politics of pan-nationalism, showing, in Rolston’s words, ‘clear echoes of the SDLP’s position’. In one review, reviewer Roddy McGregor enthusiastically endorsed Sunday in the context of its British origin, describing McGovern as ‘among the best contemporary British screenwriters’. McGregor’s faith in its historical accuracy is made manifest through the enumeration of the many factual sources informing the film, which results in ‘a powerful and chilling portrayal of what it must have been like in Derry’s Bogside on 30 January 1972 and in the weeks leading up to the march.’ By quoting Jim Keys, former producer of Gaslight Productions, who stressed the collaborative nature of the project between Irish and British filmmakers, McGregor pre-empted criticisms of the film’s bias in favour of the marchers and factuality of these scenes, while at the same time engaging in a discourse of co-operation and reconciliation between Northern Irish, Irish and British political parties. Another review for the paper on the same day can be aligned with McGregor’s review for similarly endorsing the film, with the distinction that it does not stress the British role in its production, and incorporates the more traditional language of opposition and resistance to British presence in Northern Ireland. The comment: ‘your gut instinct would be outrage and sympathy for those demanding justice,’ indicates a more inflammatory reviewing approach to that of McGregor, whose carefully measured comments endorse Sunday without antagonising British interests.

\textit{H3}

In case the headline ‘Don’t Miss this Movie’ was not explanatory in itself, Dubliner and \textit{An Phoblacht} editor Martin Spain framed his review of the film with a confession about his ideological sympathies with the film’s protagonists. Spain, incidentally, appeared as an extra in \textit{H3}. The reverence characterising his references to
the historical personages, who, because of the 'strength of their political beliefs', endured a 'callous prison regime,' betrays both Spain's emotional and political sympathy for the real life hunger strikers. While he qualifies his admiration of the film according to several categories, by judging it, for example, on the basis of its formal dimensions – i.e. as being 'well made,' and informative function - for imparting 'a greater appreciation of the hunger strikes,' the emotional register of other comments such as that of it being an 'extremely moving' film and 'whatever you do, don't miss it,' overwhelm the more objective reasons he earlier offered in support of the film, and attest to his personal investment in the film and its subject matter.

In the same issue of *An Phoblacht*, the late Brian Campbell, editor of the paper from 1996 - 1999, and one *H3*’s two co-writers, addressed two very alternative issues – those of producing and financing the film. Noting that potential investors were uneasy about the narrative's sympathy for the prisoners’ perspective, Campbell highlighted how, regardless of the post conflict context, the subject of the hunger strikes continue to provoke anxieties. Campbell dutifully underlined the film's historical integrity by alluding to how the filmmakers resisted pressures from interested investors who suggested they include a scene in which a prisoner and prison officer talk about their working-class backgrounds. As part of a concerted strategy to elevate *H3* above the realm of commercial film making, he argued that it distinctly lacked the simplifications and distortions which he assigns to mainstream films about the conflict, and aligned it with factual discourse pertaining to the historical event.

In contrast to his cogent defence of the film’s historical merits in the opening section of his review, Spain’s discursive practice becomes markedly impressionistic, notably when he interpreted the silence of ex-Blanket men who visited the film set as speaking ‘of long-held memories of what they had endured. ’ However, the conviction with which he mobilises his argument that *H3*’s narrative tells ‘the truth’ about the hunger strikes transmits as highly persuasive, making it easy to overlook Spain’s indifference to the manner in which the Strikes are filmically realised. In attributing to the filmmakers the desire that *H3* would simultaneously inform a general audience about
‘the unbreakable spirit among those ordinary men in the H-Blocks that saw them through the extraordinary events of 1981,’ and act as a tribute to ex-Blanket men, their families, and all those who supported the hunger strikers outside of the prison, Campbell emotively proselytises the relevance of the historical event to contemporary life, and, less sensationally, highlights its contributions to historical knowledge about the events of 1981 in The Maze.

Silent Grace

As with H3, An Phoblacht was the sole publication among the newspapers being considered which gave coverage to Silent Grace. However, despite an introductory paragraph which resembled that of a typical film review, analysis of the film was absent from the succeeding paragraphs, which instead provided former ‘POW’ Sínead Moore an opportunity to tell Jim Gibney ‘what it was really like.’ In a preface to her story, it was reported that although the former female republican prisoners recognised that the film was well intentioned, they did not endorse its portrayal of their struggle. Gibney’s account of the political conditions which led to Moore’s involvement in the IRA and Moore’s own comments about her prison experiences, as well as the obstacles she encountered after her release solely addressed the historical event, and entirely supplanted discussion of the film. Indeed, Moore’s exclusive attention to history at the expense of the film is evident from her initial comment, when she described how from 1972 the Catholic population were ‘under military siege’ when the British army launched their biggest military manoeuvre - Operation Motorman - since the Second World War.

Complementing Moore’s indifference to the film, and in keeping with his status as a Sinn Féin representative, in his ‘film review,’ Gibney went to great lengths to depict Moore as a victim of British occupation in Northern Ireland; he described in detail the period in which Moore spent her teenage years as one of military siege, and of how the British army ‘built their military fortifications in schools, people’s homes, parochial halls, football grounds owned by the GAA, on recreational grounds, at the corner of streets; anywhere they thought it would give them a vantage over the local community;’ he mentioned that Moore was ‘screened,’ or interrogated, three times before eventually
being arrested when she was eighteen. Moore for her part recalled that at 15, after a gun battle between the British army and the IRA, she was interrogated for the first time. She explained that when individuals were ‘screened,’ they would be detained for anything up to four hours, during which time they would be finger printed, photographed and spread-eagled against a wall for the maximum duration. She recounted her own experience, and vividly recalled how she was thrown out onto the street to make her own way home after her first interrogation. In common with the content of his discussion thus far, Gibney’s contention that Moore’s experience was typical of that of the average teenager of either gender serves his exposition of the British military’s presence in the ‘occupied areas,’ and, unsurprisingly, is not incorporated into a discussion of the film.

In another detailed passage alluding to Moore’s incarceration in Armagh prison, and in which Moore remembered the hardships endured by female inmates – including unhygienic living conditions, poor diet and warders’ brutality - during the period of political protest, Gibney neglected to mention Silent Grace’s representation of these conditions. The failure to account for why Sinead’s husband and the father of her two children was imprisoned for 11 years, demonstrates, in case there were any doubt, Gibney’s disinclination to refer to Republican violence. Considering Silent Grace is barely mentioned in the review, it can be regarded as a pretext to discuss a Republican perspective on the women’s hunger strike in Armagh prison, and to publicise the Catholic population’s subjection to what is presented as an unjust British occupation.

None of the mainstream newspapers – the Irish News, News Letter or Belfast Telegraph - carried reviews of Silent Grace, H3, or Some Mother’s Son. It is worth considering why these films were met with silence in the print media. In the case of Some Mother’s Son, which incidentally received copious media coverage in the Republic and Great Britain, the timing of its UK exhibition only three years after the first IRA ceasefire in 1994 might have compounded the difficulty of addressing the hunger strikers as terrorists, given the levels of international support for their acts of self-sacrifice, or, equally, as victims of the British state’s policies and presence in Northern Ireland. In the cases of H3 and Silent Grace, while they were exhibited at a more stable stage of the peace process, their art-house style and limited release dates would easily account for the
mainstream print media’s failure to review them. *H3*’s exhibition was confined to limited release dates in the Republic, and screenings at the Cherbourg-Octeville Festival of Irish and British film on 15 October 2001, the Irish Film Week in Hungary on 8 April 2002, and at the ‘Cinema of Revolution’ festival in Nantes in December 2003.\(^{359}\) *Silent Grace* was released by UGC in Dublin for a week in July 2004, and was screened at the Galway Film Fleadh and Moscow Film Festival, in July 2001 and June 2003 respectively.

Returning to *Some Mother’s Son*, considering it enjoyed international theatrical release in 28 countries, its lack of coverage in the print media prompts further enquiry. Perhaps the memory of unionist outcry over the volume of coverage granted the 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes in all sections of the media in Northern Ireland, coupled with the volatile state of the peace process, deterred writers from alluding to the subject of the hunger strikes. At the time of the hunger strikes, unionists were extremely vocal at criticising the media in Northern Ireland for alienating Protestants by sympathising with the hunger strikers, and for perpetuating the ‘troubles’ by giving the Republican movement the oxygen of publicity. In broader historical terms, the hunger strikes have been considered as being responsible for further polarising the North’s main communities. Perhaps the print media’s failure to review the films derived from a fear of reviving enmities and divisions associated with the hunger strikes, and memory of its own implication in the divisive aspects of the hunger strikes. The bitterness that continues to rancour between those who supported the end of the hunger strikes and those who objected to this viewpoint continues to divide elements in the Republican community, making it a divisive topic for nationalists and republicans alike up to the present. Given the preoccupation with the victims of political violence across the reviews considered in this chapter, the failure to discuss the hunger strikes in this context indicates the reluctance on the part of reviewers to admit the hunger strikers into a discourse of victimhood. In a society in which public debate has been indelibly marked by the politics of victimhood and the discourse of peace and reconciliation, the anomalous position of the hunger strikers – as both perpetrators of violence and victims of institutional violence – poses awkward questions for journalists in Northern Ireland.
Holy Cross

In the opening statement of a review of Holy Cross in An Phoblacht, the reviewer condemned the drama’s very conception by explaining that it was flawed before filming even began. By identifying as a narrative weakness, or ‘gross distortion of reality,’ the drama’s ‘balanced’ depiction of ‘both sides,’ the reviewer interprets Holy Cross as an over-simplification of an immediate historical reality. Holding the BBC accountable for the version of events portrayed in the drama, by positing that ‘telling the truth has never been its [the BBC’s] objective,’ the reviewer questions the BBC’s professional standards and invokes a discourse of truth-telling. In an acerbic dismissal of the BBC’s research efforts, the reviewer undermined the drama’s version of the ‘truth’ by cynically commenting that, predictably, the BBC dispatched reconnaissance squads to the Ardoyne and Glenbym in search of sound bites to animate a misconceived narrative about ‘two warring tribes.’ The reviewer further undermined the quality of the research performed by these ‘reconnaissance squads’ belonging to the BBC, by quoting from a local source - a former Holy Cross school governor - who criticised the production for presenting the conflict exclusively in terms of sectarianism, rather than of child abuse. The former governor’s observation that the film was morally and factually wrong for reinforcing ‘the old cliché that “one side is just as bad as the other”’ and sanitising the real life scenario in which ‘one side’ victimised pupils of Holy Cross primary school reinforces the reviewer’s earlier criticisms when he identified such efforts to placate audiences as a serious erosion of the standards of a public service broadcaster. By supplementing the governor’s comments with those of Fr. Aidan Troy who said that the situation amounted to ‘child abuse, pure and simple,’ and was ‘totally unprovoked,’ the reviewer strenuously refutes the factual accuracy of the drama, and, by extension, points towards the failure of the BBC to fulfil its ethical responsibility to provide its viewers with a truthful account, or discursive memory, of the event.

In addition to reviewing the drama itself, the ‘review’ addressed a number of contextual issues – such as the disproportionate number of grievances experienced by adults and children living in the Ardoyne in comparison to Glenbym, the UDA’s failure to lift the death threats which it placed on parents of children attending Holy Cross school,
and the placing of pipe bombs by the UDA in the vicinity of the school on successive occasions subsequent to the dispute. Through its enumeration of real grievances, the review depicts a very different scenario to that of Holy Cross. Importantly, the review’s discursive parameters are not entirely limited to ‘one side’ since it includes criticisms - even if they are selective and few in number - of the drama emanating from Belfast’s Protestant community. Significantly, similar to the reviewer and Fr. Aidan Troy, the Rev. Ian Hamilton’s criticisms specifically targeted the BBC, rather than the individual filmmakers, for imposing a drama, which he described as ‘a dark piece of work,’ upon a community in whose interests they purportedly operate. In reality, Hamilton, a Presbyterian minister in the Ardoyne area, played a decisive role in defusing tensions between loyalists and nationalists during the Holy Cross dispute. He also joined Fr. Aidan Troy, chairman of the Governors at Holy Cross, and parents, in reciting prayers outside the school. Like Fr. Troy, by expressing a lack of faith in the British state, other public institutions, and child protection agencies, whose inaction is described as ‘far darker than anything the BBC could imagine,’ the reviewer obliquely criticises the BBC. For the reviewer and the religious persons quoted in the review, Holy Cross spectacularly fails to represent the Holy Cross dispute, but succeeds in provoking a range of questions about the role of the BBC in Northern Ireland.

The integration of religious persons’ comments emerges as a feature common to many of the reviews of Holy Cross, and might be viewed as an indication of the political duties performed by the clergy in a society in which a political vacuum has meant that both the paramilitaries and the main churches grapple for power in the different ethnic communities. In the Belfast Telegraph, religious affairs correspondent Alf McCreary referred to a North Belfast Presbyterian minister’s comment that the dramatised account of the Holy Cross dispute amounted to ‘a seriously flawed production.’ The ominous sounding language used by the minister when he described Holy Cross as a ‘dark piece of work’ echoes the language used in the An Phoblacht review. Here, too, the ethical implications of dramatising a real, and in this case recent, event emerged in a criticism that the drama regressively confronted both communities with ‘the raw emotion of 2 years ago as a measure of where people are at now.’ Furthermore, the minister clarified
his disapproval of the drama by perceiving its failure to offer any retrospective clarity about the event as a ‘grave disservice to everyone in the area.’ In this context, executive producer Robert Cooper’s upbeat defence of the film in a statement saying: ‘I don’t think there is a danger it will reignite the situation. Sectarianism exists in Belfast and it’s a very sad fact, which means that we can’t be afraid to ask why,’ exacerbates the grievances of the communities concerned who argued that the drama’s simplification of the dispute by reducing it to age old sectarian enmities served the cynical purpose of enhancing its mass appeal. By contrast, Kathryn Torney, education correspondent for the Belfast Telegraph, relayed the praise bestowed upon the drama by protestant community worker Anne Bill, who described the programme as ‘quite balanced.’ However, the Presbyterian minister’s denouncement of the BBC for shirking their responsibility to the historical individuals concerned is far more convincing than Bill’s timid applause of the drama, and undermines Cooper’s opinion that Holy Cross heroically dealt with the ongoing problem of sectarianism. By criticising Holy Cross for imparting ‘the sense that public ratings matter more than public responsibility,’ the minister contributes to the overall consensus in the print media that the drama exacerbated a volatile situation.

In another review of Holy Cross in The Belfast Telegraph, screenwriter Terry Cafolla’s attempts to defend the drama actually corroborate many of the negative criticisms of the drama already in circulation. In a comment in which he explained how he ‘wanted to put the audience in the position of both communities, to experience the fears, the hopes and the dilemmas they have to live with each day and to give an insight into the decision that the people made and be thankful we don’t have to make those decisions,’ Cafolla’s failure to adequately differentiate the experiences of both communities is evident. Furthermore, Cafolla seems unaware of the ethical and factual compromises made in order to satiate his desire to appeal to as wide an audience as possible by making them ‘part and parcel of the Holy Cross scene from both sides of view,’ Cafolla’s comments unwittingly justify criticisms of Holy Cross appearing elsewhere in the Telegraph, which proposed that as a crowd-pleasing drama in the guise of factual drama, it was an irresponsible abuse of history.
The headline in *The Irish News*, 'Mixed Reaction to Holy Cross Film,' indicates the drama’s relatively positive reception there. One reviewer’s regard of it as a noble effort to translate the ‘problems of Northern Ireland into strong (but balanced) drama’ might be interpreted as a refutation of the criticisms in the *Telegraph* which argued that it sensationalised the children’s suffering for dramatic purposes. However, it was mainly Protestant community workers who were reported to have cautiously welcomed the film, while the Catholic community’s virulent criticisms of the drama, regarding its insensitive timing and the filmmakers’ failure to adequately consult the communities concerned, echoed the discussion of the drama in the *Telegraph.* Although the review initially appeared to be a positive endorsement of the drama, it swiftly transformed into a succession of condemnations; a community worker categorically condemned the drama’s transmission during a period in which Catholic schools were being attacked and arson attacks committed against property belonging to members of staff in Catholic schools; the former governor of Holy Cross school scoffed at the filmmakers intentions to ‘produce a balance between Catholics and Protestants when in actual fact there was no balance,’ since the protests were in reality ‘tantamount to child abuse.’ The former governor’s description of the film’s regurgitation of the clichéd impression that one side was as bad as the other as both ‘factually and morally wrong’ betrays a concern – common to many reviews - about the factual and ethical standards of films concerned with events in recent history.

Another review of *Holy Cross* in the *Irish News* granted Robert Cooper, its producer and former Head of Television Drama at BBC Northern Ireland, an opportunity to defend the drama. To fulfil this goal, rather than focusing on the filmmakers’ position with regard to their responsibilities to the precepts of historical accuracy, Cooper outlined two questions pertaining to the respective communities, one being: ‘Why would you go and stand in a line and scream abuse at children?’ and the other: ‘Why would you, as a parent, choose to take your children through such abuse?’ Zara Turner – an Ulster Protestant playing a Catholic mother in the drama - also promoted *Holy Cross,* arguing that it offered audiences ‘a new perspective on the social and personal situation that people in the Ardoyne and Glenbyrn have to deal with.’ While Cooper and Turner’s
comments fail to equate in either quantity or substance with the volume of cogent criticisms circulating elsewhere in the print media, by offering an alternative viewpoint they widen the parameters of debate about *Holy Cross* and indicate the potential of the print media to accommodate a spectrum of political perspectives.

Copious coverage of *Holy Cross* in the *Belfast News Letter* largely corroborated negative appraisals of the drama by repeatedly denouncing the insensitivity of the approach to its historical subject matter. However, one review distinguished itself from other responses in its view of the activity of watching traumatic drama such as *Holy Cross*, as the ‘key to peace.’ Reviewer Geoff Hill rejected pleas calling for the cancellation of its transmission in order to avoid the renewal of sectarian tensions, and compared such fears to ‘banning War and Peace in case anyone starts a revolution.’ For this reason, and for being a ‘flawlessly scripted film,’ Hill recommended *Holy Cross* as ‘depressing but necessary viewing.’ Hill’s admiration for *Holy Cross*’s portrayal of the fear and loathing in both communities and for inviting viewers to ‘watch, and learn, for all our futures’ sidesteps consideration of the drama’s supposed factual inaccuracies, an issue which provoked vehement and copious condemnations in other reviews. By neglecting this issue, and indeed establishing a parallel between *Holy Cross* and *War and Peace*, a work of fiction, Hill betrays his indifference to the historical reality, which the drama represents. Such ‘amnesia,’ or tactical disinterest in the complexities of the real dispute, circulates an account of the Holy Cross dispute which obscures historical reality and recycles the drama’s clichéd depiction of two warring factions. More than reviewing the film or offering insight into the Holy Cross dispute, Hill’s derivative discussion perpetuates in a contemporary context what Peter Taylor identified in the late 1970s as ‘the official consensus’ in British political circles which regards Northern Ireland as a ‘state in conflict because Catholics and Protestants refuse to live together despite the efforts of successive British governments to encourage them to do so,’ adding that many British politicians believe that ‘we (the British), at considerable cost to the Exchequer and our soldiers, have done all that is humanely possible to find a political solution within the existing structures of the Northern Irish
state: now the two communities must come up with a political solution they are prepared to work and accept themselves ....

The following day’s News Letter bore the headline ‘Anger at Holy Cross Drama,’ offering a different perspective to that propounded by Hill and reflecting the coverage in the Belfast Telegraph. Like the Telegraph, it granted Presbyterian minister the Rev. Norman Hamilton and Roman Catholic priest Fr. Aidan Troy the opportunity to condemn the drama. Judging from their comments, the BBC’s failure to adequately consult the communities concerned either before or during its production prompted their ‘anger’ at Holy Cross. By presenting themselves as eye witnesses of the event – they both acted as mediators between the ‘two’ sides during the dispute, and Fr. Troy has subsequently written a book entitled Holy Cross: A Personal Experience – the religious figures suggested that, unlike them, the BBC had little or no entitlement to narrate the events associated with the Holy Cross dispute. Given their reservations about the quality of the research performed by the BBC, it is hardly surprising that they express anxieties over the application of the factual drama format.

Familiar criticisms of the drama, namely its ‘unfair’ portrayal of the dispute and its ‘disservice to both communities,’ reappeared in another News Letter review. Once again, the Rev. Hamilton’s perspective on the drama was reported. Hamilton focused on the shortcomings in the drama’s informational and ethical qualities, and contended that its lack of analytic depth would solidify sectarian allegiances and ‘freeze the understanding of those who watch.’ The by now familiar criticism of the BBC for failing to properly consult with the communities concerned betrays again the sense of ownership felt by the families affected and their consternation at being divested of that by the BBC. Another review piece in the same day’s paper authored solely by Rev. Hamilton reiterated his criticisms of a ‘seriously flawed production.’ Again, the programme-makers failure to consult the communities was his main concern and he demeaned the programme-makers’ argument about their entitlement to making ‘controversial and challenging drama,’ by accusing them of imposing ‘such drama on the communities most affected by it without some serious attempt to get consent on the content.’ Again, the
BBC’s sidelining of the interests of those most affected was questioned on ethical grounds and viewed as commercially opportunistic, or proof that public ratings matter more than responsibility to the public.

In another review cautioning against the drama’s oversimplification of the contentious nature of the dispute, an additional criticism stated that the timing of its transmission was the equivalent of ‘raking over open sores which have not properly healed.’ The reviewer strongly criticised the BBC’s accommodation of ‘scriptwriters who patronisingly pontificate on the hazards of life in this Province from a safe distance.’ The levels of dissatisfaction with the BBC expressed here and across many of the reviews already studied illustrate its pivotal position in relation to public debate and the formation of opinion in Northern Irish society, as well as the negative esteem in which it is held by significant numbers of the population. Many, particularly nationalists, regard the BBC as an institution which is aligned with the interests of the unionist/Protestant majority, and dismiss its public service role on the basis that ultimate editorial control emanates from London, and the organisation is subject to the authority of the British government. Liz Curtis describes how those working for the BBC were instructed that ‘On Ireland, ..., no one was to be trusted,’ adding that ‘the rules made it compulsory for programme-makers to consult management about all programmes on Ireland, so that the power to decide what would be made and broadcast was centralised in the hands of a few top executives.’ Despite these concerns, the BBC’s identity as a non-commercial public service broadcaster, or as the ‘fourth estate,’ garnered respect in other quarters. However, by producing a drama that in the reviewer’s words dampened ‘the glimmer of hope that does exist for the future,’ the BBC disappointed both the expectations of viewers who subscribed to the ethos of the BBC, and reinforced the prejudices of an opposing viewing constituency.

On the day that Holy Cross was broadcast, the News Letter granted, once more, a member of the clergy an opportunity to comment on the drama. On this occasion, Fr. Aidan Troy expressed extreme annoyance with the production. Troy’s objections – also printed in the Telegraph – related to the negligence of those responsible for
constructing a ‘fictional story’ whose content he feared would re-traumatise the children affected by the Holy Cross dispute. In a by now familiar assessment he propounded that ‘the situation was still too raw, too volatile,’ and that the community was not yet ready ‘to benefit from further analysis, discussion and comment.’ Arguments such as these, and indeed their repetition across several newspapers, demonstrate the degree of resistance in the media and in local communities to both Holy Cross’s timing and its representational strategies. It would seem that neither of the North’s main communities fully supported the programming and editorial policies of the BBC in Northern Ireland. Writing in 1984, Rex Cathcart argued that due to the BBC’s effort to appeal to the whole of society in Northern Ireland, ‘neither community is satisfied, for each manifests exclusive political and cultural attitudes, and harbours the ultimate determination that the other side will not be seen or heard. If there is middle ground, then that is where the BBC in Northern Ireland endeavours to stand.’

Judging from responses to Holy Cross, the BBC continues to occupy a middle ground, which fails to satisfy members of the two main communities.

**Omagh**

In comparison to Holy Cross, Omagh provoked neither a controversial nor voluminous response in the Northern Irish print media. Merely two reviews, both appearing in the Irish News, covered the film, which, given its international success at the Toronto Film Festival by winning the Discover Award, seems surprising. A far greater response was generated in the print media elsewhere; in Great Britain, it was covered in The Times, the Evening Standard and The Guardian, and in the Irish Republic, the Irish Times and The Sunday Business Post attended to it. In one of the Irish News reviews, journalist Frank McNamara praised the film for restoring his ‘belief in drama’s ability to ask powerful and provocative questions.’ McNamara balanced his admiration of the film between its emotional strengths, describing it as a ‘harrowing feature length drama,’ and extolling its political function in the ‘Fight for Truth and Justice.’ Another review in The Irish News endorsed Omagh in a similar fashion, as demonstrated by its headline: ‘Evocative Account of the Omagh Bombing.’ Although brief in length, the review strongly communicated the film’s positive contributions to the support group’s campaign.
for justice. Its inclusion of a statement by Michael Gallagher, the father of one of the dead, which said ‘I hope the drama will help bring our struggle to a wider audience who will get the message that hope comes out of despair,’ indicates the centrality of historical individuals to victim discourses. Ironically, although the support group and filmmakers welcomed publicity, there was general reluctance on the part of the print media to review the film. Perhaps reviewers were hesitant to participate in a discourse of which the Omagh Support and Self Help Group and the families of the dead have claimed ownership. Given this sense of ownership commanded by support groups of the atrocity, reviewers might have been reluctant to assume the responsibility of reviewing a film, which in many regards, especially considering its endorsement by the support group, was beyond reproach.

Conclusion

The limits of the ‘sayable’ operative in the print media exert fewer restrictions on discursive activity in comparison to that of the audio-visual media, where the fields of appearance and speech are subject to more stringent surveillance by state interests. The legal and generic criteria to which the films in this thesis, and films concerned with historical events more generally, subscribe are nowhere in evidence in the highly subjective forms of cultural memory which the wide ranging reviews jostle to project. Unlike their filmic and televisial counterparts, little inhibits the film reviews from producing subjective, under-researched conjecture about the past and from pejoratively commenting upon the politics of a film’s production. Despite these relative discursive freedoms available to the print media, on the evidence of the reviews examined in this chapter, the opportunity to say more regularly resulted in the saying of less. A high proportion of the reviews under-utilise the greater discursive scope available to them, as compared to audio-visual representations, to reproduce preconceived ideas from sectarian perspectives about the historical events concerned. Rather than simply reviewing these films, the film reviews offer competing interpretations of the historical events, and while many perhaps widen the limits of public debate, or construct ‘desirable’ cultural memory of historical trauma in the spirit of peace and reconciliation, a significant number circulate detrimental irredentist discourse in the public sphere. However, regardless of
whether or not the reviews enact regressive or progressive tendencies, collectively they constitute the loci of some of the most compelling preoccupations of public discourse in contemporary Northern Ireland – namely the politics of remembering historical trauma, and variously play out the issues of who is entitled to remember the past and how the past should be remembered.

While certain reviews refute a given film’s method of shaping historical memory on the level of narrative and/or imagery, as previously discussed at length, a great many others overlook the actual film in favour of using the review as a platform from which to enunciate an independent version of historical memory. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the remarkable variations in the emotive tenor and historical preoccupations of German, French, Israeli and US responses to Schindler’s List demonstrate the centrality of context to a film’s signification; while the US reviews performed more traditional film reviewing practices, the discursive practices in the other cases demonstrated the extent to which ‘Both the film and all the discursive polemic which surrounded it are part of the process by which motifs of history and memory – collective and individual, personal and political – struggle for a place in contemporary consciousness, and in doing so themselves contribute to its redefinition.’ It was also mentioned how the prevalence of victim and perpetrator discourses largely dictated the calibre of the responses in the German and Israeli contexts. In the context of the film reviews examined in this thesis, the discursive practices operating across the reviews, enacting historical remembrance or redefinition, similarly shape and are shaped by victim and perpetrator discourses particular to the Northern Irish context. It was argued throughout the thesis that film and television works representing events which occurred during ‘the troubles’ attempt to ‘work-through’ historical trauma. By contrast, the reviews exhibit a greater tendency to ‘act out’ historical trauma, and subsequently emerge as contributing less positively to discourse about the past than their filmic and televisual counterparts. Relentlessly reiterating the sectarian divisions which continue to stymie debates about the past in Northern Ireland’s public sphere, for the most part, the reviews enact the discursive persistence of historical trauma in that society.
Conclusion

This thesis argues that since the cessation of paramilitary activities in Northern Ireland, beginning with the first IRA ceasefire in 1994, a visible ‘democratisation of public life’ is evident in how the past has been discursively revisited, via the media of film and television. The politics of remembering historical trauma in a ‘post-conflict’ context, which has proven to be both a celebrated and contentious issue of public debate in Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic and Great Britain, is pertinent to all of the filmic and televisual objects of study. In its incessant reiteration of the discursive significance of the films as cultural memory, the thesis implies that in the absence of judicial redress, in the majority of cases of historical injury, these films make the ‘truth’ public, and thus enact an audio-visual ‘truth commission,’ which in some respects shares similar aims with South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Jacqueline Rose pinpoints the difficulties faced by the Commission in South Africa by asking: ‘How do you at once recognise the fullness and extent of historical accountability and draw boundaries around it, how do you let it flow (in the words of Roelf Meyer of the National Party: ‘wrongs … flowed from apartheid’…), while also keeping it in, if not its proper, then at least a definable, precisely accountable, place?’ These films are similarly challenged and limited by their historical task, since, even in the most successful cases, the films cannot fully provide either absolute accountability for the wrongs which they address, or solutions to historical trauma.

While it is difficult to qualify the discursive magnitude of these films’ representations of historical trauma, it is generally accepted that prior to the first paramilitary ceasefire in 1994, memorial activity and sites of commemoration, dealing with the ‘troubles,’ were fewer in Northern Ireland as compared to the ‘post-conflict’ time period in which these films were produced. In ‘post-conflict’ Northern Ireland, commemorative acts and art have permeated so many areas of public life that emphasis has shifted from the necessity of remembering the past to the importance of being vigilant
about how that past is remembered. Considering that a narrative preoccupation with the past is common to all of these films, they may be perceived as barometers of how the past is being discursively remembered not only in an audio-visual culture, but also in a broader public sphere.

Together, the films studied in this thesis represent the various traditions of violence - state, paramilitary, and sectarian - which have occurred in Northern Ireland since the beginning of 'the troubles' in 1969. If interpreted as a unified body of work, emanating from a post-conflict society, these films operate in unison to remember the North's violent heritage, in which the state, paramilitary organisations and individuals acted as perpetrators of violence. However, although the activity of remembering the past is common to all of the works, the mode of addressing historical trauma and the extent of narrative complexity differs greatly among the films. At this point, it might be therefore useful to briefly and individually re-evaluate the films, and to consider the ideological valences and historical credibility of the cultural memory which the films in turn construct.

Without ostensibly engaging in a comparative analysis, Chapter 2’s discussion of the representation of Bloody Sunday in two films, which were concurrently produced, reveals the stylistic and narrative variances between the works. Sunday represents Bloody Sunday as both a public event and subjective memory, while Bloody Sunday presents the event in the form of an impersonal, historical record by simulating its televised liveness. Bloody Sunday’s visual properties approximate public memory through its newsreel-verité style, and seeming restriction to observable fact. To achieve this latter effect, it restricts its narrative content to scenes set in the public arena to which cameras at the time would have been privy, with the exception of a minority of scenes occurring in private. Its narrative’s recourse to the conventions of dramatic realism, however, especially in relation to character, does muddy its documentary style and content. Although Sunday’s visual text similarly represents iconographic archival, or public, material, the latter half of the film presents the subjective memory of two eyewitnesses – a civilian and a paratrooper, thereby lessening the factual authority of the
image in favour of constructing character interiority.

Although both films position themselves in a close relationship to historical evidence, their mode of interpreting and addressing Bloody Sunday differ in significant ways. Bloody Sunday does not represent the British military as unilaterally in favour of killing innocent civilians, nor does it directly implicate the British government. However it does represent the unprovoked murder of innocent civilians by certain members of the parachute regiment, and its cinema-verité film style, from which it derives an archival appearance, allows it to present this content as seemingly incontrovertible evidence. Sunday, by contrast, enacts a more radical interpretation of British involvement, both military and governmental, on the day and during the Widgery Inquiry. However, by employing the conventional mode of social realism used in television drama to communicate its narrative content, it presents itself less as an informative, historical argument, than as narrative entertainment, albeit of a sobering kind. While both films use televisual modes of address, those of news coverage and television drama, and equally foreground the innocence of Bloody Sunday’s victims, Bloody Sunday’s innovative formal approach renders it a more convincing cultural memory. Although the critical analysis of Sunday appraises it as a site of cultural memory, that of Bloody Sunday identifies how it excels in this regard.

In chapter 3, the victim emerges as a more controversial figure, since the victim is not an innocent civilian, but a convicted paramilitary, or ‘terrorist,’ whose victim status derived from their being subject to state violence in Northern Ireland’s prisons, which was why, at the time, republican discourse referred to the prison regime as ‘the breaker’s yard.’ As well as representing prisoners’ active engagement in symbolically reconfiguring the republican movement, these films, in varying measures, sympathetically represent convicted paramilitaries so that they may be remembered as victims, having been subject to the state’s biopolitical manoeuvres in the prison. The analyses of H3 and Silent Grace rely strongly upon Kristeva’s theory of abjection to discuss how the films represent the corporeal transgressions undertaken by prisoners during the blanket and dirty protests to resist the subjugation of their bodies by
individuals occupying the upper echelons of the prison hierarchy. Of the two films, *H3* remembers in more detail the political and corporeal reality of the prisoners’ incarceration. Although *Silent Grace*’s narrative addresses the prisoners as victims, it is less concerned with the political significance of the prison protests than with exploring interpersonal relationships in adverse conditions. Far from approaching an accurate representation of historical trauma, *Some Mother’s Son* is more akin to an exercise in forgetting the hunger strikes. Santner’s notion of ‘narrative fetishism’ suggests that its narrative address of mothers overcoming their private traumas constructs a situation of ‘intactness,’ or in other words, by presenting the mothers as victims, the narrative distracts from the historical trauma of the hunger strikes and the political circumstances in which they occurred. Of the three films explored in chapter 3, *Some Mother’s Son* emerges as a less ‘desirable memory’ than the other two works, in so far as its replication of the narrative style and content of mainstream film disables it from responding to the ethico-political challenges of representing historical trauma.

In chapter 4’s analysis of *Holy Cross*, everyone is a victim. Its concern for narrative balance by portraying both sides as perpetrators and victims of sectarian violence, seems misplaced when it is considered that the real life situation, which it supposedly represents, derived its drama from the very lack of such balance. While its portrayal of two warring sides might be representative of intercommunal relations in urban areas in Northern Ireland more generally, it mitigated the particularity of the Holy Cross dispute, since the targeting of Catholic children by Protestant loyalists distinguished it from other examples. Lacan’s interpretation of desire as ‘the desire of the other’ accurately describes the narrative desire and content of *Omagh* and the *Prime Time Investigates* programme. In both works, characters seek recognition of their victim status, and filming techniques foreground these characters, who represent the victims of Real IRA paramilitary violence.

Although these works are formally very diverse, they can each be situated at a point along the drama-documentary spectrum. Criticism of audio-visual representations of violence in Northern Ireland which employ the narrative structures of
the thriller and melodrama, on the basis of their inability to accommodate the complexities and nuances of political reality, is entirely valid for a great many films pertaining to Northern Ireland and its violent traditions. However, these films offer a corollary to mainstream explorations of political violence, and represent a body of work whose address of the past is relatively attuned to the vagaries of representing history on the cinema and/or television screen. Although the sophistication with which the individual films address history varies greatly, they commonly adopt a drama-documentary format, and, more often than not, reject the popular narrative modes which have traditionally been employed in filmmaking about the 'troubles,' and which have proved extremely limited in terms of their ability to address political realities. Although the increasing frequency with which the past is being represented via the drama-documentary format does not signal the replacement of other, mainstream narrative modes, it does provide an alternative audio-visual avenue to revisit historical events.

As already mentioned, the dissimilarities between these works are as significant as their similarities. Unlike the critical analysis of a film depicting a recent atrocity, such as the Omagh bombing, discussion of representations of Bloody Sunday and the Hunger Strikes identifies the iconographic imagery which features in these texts. In the extended time period between the historical occurrence of these events and their filmic representation, the informed viewer will be familiar with a range of iconic references to the events. The visual texts of representations of more recent events examined in this thesis engage the viewers' familiarity with historical corollaries to their scenes without recourse to similarly iconographic imagery. Since these events are within closer temporal proximity to their representations, they have not, as of yet, acquired iconic status or become as embedded in the public imaginary in the manner of earlier events. However these differences do not articulate whether or not these works remember historical trauma, but rather indicate the incomparable methods of representation employed in the various drama-documentary films, and the challenges of interpreting the films as a unified body of work.
However, the formal and narrative specificities of the works do not annul their common performative function. Their performative role may be perceived as being measured by complexity with which they discursively work-through historical trauma, by avoiding stock narratives and motifs associated the conflict in Northern Ireland, and situate themselves in a dialectical relationship to related socio-political realities contemporaneous to their moments of production. All of the films, to greater and lesser degrees, intervene in a historical crisis, in which the lack of consensus about how to remember the past has threatened socio-political cohesion and aggravated sectarian tensions. The content of critical responses to the films in the print media of Northern Ireland attests to the contemporary discursive significance of particular historical events, and the lack of consensus about the past in present day Northern Ireland. Far from remedying the historical crisis, at best, the films perform remembrance of the past in such a way that discursively works through historical trauma, while at worst, some, or elements, of the works perpetuate the historical crisis by forgetting or misremembering a historical event. The latter tendency is common to an overwhelming majority of the film reviews examined. In the case of the films themselves, while they all purport to remember historical trauma, the degree to which a performative function is realised varies according to each case. While this thesis acknowledges that all of the objects of analysis address the past, its primary goal has been to untangle the ineluctable relationship between the strength of a film or film review’s performative function and its mode of addressing historical trauma.
Endnotes

1 This Prime Time programme includes the first television reconstruction of the afternoon on which Robert McCartney was murdered by members of the IRA. Prime Time: McCartney Murder, RTE 1, 26 May, 2005.

2 Fairclough describes orders of discourse as ‘socially structured configurations of discursive practices associated with particular social spaces.’ Norman Fairclough, Discourse and Social Change (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 89. This thesis considers the drama-documentary as one among many discursive practices which constitute an ‘order of discourse,’ or the totality of memorial activity, which addresses common socio-political issues within a specific historical period in Northern Ireland, namely since the first IRA ceasefire in 1994.

3 I take a defining feature of critical activity to be an engagement with the significatory organization of television programmes themselves, with the use of images and language, generic conventions, narrative patterns, and modes of address, to be found there. This requires a reading or analysis which foregrounds the critic’s own interpretative resources as a specialist in the medium and does not work with a notion of ‘data’ or of ‘method’ in the manner conventional in the social sciences. John Comer, Critical Ideas in Television Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 7.

4 Georgio Agamben’s term ‘bare’ or ‘natural’ life designates those who are excluded from the political community and who are regarded not as citizens, but as biological or ‘creaturely life’. In Northern Ireland, as in other parts of the world, the ‘sovereign exception’ unveiled itself during internment, sanctioning the exclusion of certain individuals, notably members of the IRA, from the political community.


6 Ibid., 27.


8 Ibid.


10 Ibid., 28-29.

11 Ibid., 29.

12 Ibid., 55.

13 Ibid., 60.

14 Ibid., 55.

15 In this thesis, ‘systems of knowledge and belief’ are considered synonymous with the term ‘cultural memory.’

16 Norman Fairclough, Media Discourse, 56.


18 John Comer, Critical Ideas in Television Studies, 392.

19 Ibid.


22 John Comer, Television Form and Public Address, 51.

23 Ibid., 52.

24 Ibid., 4.

25 Derek Paget refers to Bill Nichols term ‘discourse of sobriety’ in Derek Paget, No Other Way to Tell It: Dramadoc/Docudrama on Television (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 130.

26 John Comer, Television Form and Public Address, 37.

27 Derek Paget, No Other Way to Tell It: Dramadoc/Docudrama on Television, 169.

28 John Comer, Television Form and Public Address, 37.

29 Ibid., 44.


31 George Gerbner in ibid., 7.


33 John Comer, Television Form and Public Address, 39.


Nicola King, *Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*, 17.


Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 3.


Ibid., XX.
77 Ibid., 15-16.
79 Shoshana Felman, Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History, 205.
80 Diana Taylor, 'Staging Social Memory,' in Psychoanalysis and Performance, 231.
81 Ibid., 223.
82 Ibid., 231.
83 Gregory Ulmer, 'The Upsilon Project,' in Psychoanalysis and Performance, 211.
84 Ibid., 210.
87 Ibid., 115.
89 Ibid., 1-2.
90 Ibid., 1-2.
91 Allen Feldman, Formations of Violence, 15.
92 Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror, 15.
96 Ibid., 6.
98 Georgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, 123.
99 Ibid., 175.
100 Ibid., 175.
102 Allen Feldman, Formations of Violence, 27.
103 Ibid., 28.
106 Ibid., 311.
108 Ibid., 39.
109 The chief coroner was quoted in "Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972 – A Summary of Main Events", http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/bsunday/sum.htm (accessed February 15, 2005).
110 This comment was made by Prince Charle’s secretary in "Bloody Sunday,’ 30 January 1972 - A Chronology of Events,” http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/bsunday/chron.htm (accessed March 10, 2005).
112 A summary of Helen Gilligan’s project along with other examples of commemorative art using alternative materials and techniques are contained on the cain website. http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ (accessed January 6, 2005).
113 Bloody Sunday was co-produced by the film-making arm of the TV and media group Granada, Hell’s Kitchen and Portman film.
114 McGovern also wrote the screen-play Hillsborough, which looked at the Hillsborough disaster which took place in a Sheffield football stadium in the UK in 1989. A human crush resulted in 96 deaths, all of the dead were Liverpool Football Club fans.

Derek Paget, *No Other Way to Tell It*, 194.

Ibid., 177.

Ibid., 208.


Derek Paget, *No Other Way to Tell It*, 194.


Dominick LaCapra uses the term ‘working through’, a psychoanalytic term borrowed from Freud, across much of his work.


Ibid., 8.


This phrase is used to refer to a character in *Bloody Sunday* who is in all likelihood based on Private Mike Edwards, who provided evidence during the Saville Inquiry that ran contrary to other soldiers’ testimonies.

The British army suffered considerable humiliation during the battle of the Bogside in mid-August 1969.

This statement was made by Arthur Harvey QC, who represented most of the bereaved family, as part of a deposition in which he stated that a premeditated shoot to kill policy in Northern Ireland was conceived by high-ranking members of the British military in the weeks preceding Bloody Sunday. The statement was reported in a section entitled ‘Inquiry hears of “killing policy” claim,’ of the BBC news website (accessed October 16, 2006).


Ibid.


Richard Kilbom, *Staging the Real: Factual TV Programming in the Age of "Big Brother"*, 155.

Ibid.


The final stage of the film’s post-production was completed at the Digital Film Lab in London. 


Michel Bakhtin was the first to discuss ‘double voicing’ in relation to a photograph.

This Q & A session is part of the ‘special features’ on the *Bloody Sunday* DVD.


Robert Burgoyne argues that representations of historical events erase organic memories. He expresses concern over the propaganda effects such representations might entail.


In *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at US History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) Robert Burgoyne argues that representations of historical events erase organic memories. He expresses concern over the propaganda effects such representations might entail.

Richard Kilbom, *Staging the Real: Factual TV Programming in the Age of "Big Brother"*, 154.
Eric Santner uses the phrase ‘thanotic dose’ in ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’ to describe how art can produce anxiety in safe quantities so that an individual can work through the trauma without being overwhelmed by it.

Dominick LaCapra, History and Memory after Auschwitz, 41.


John Corner, Television Form and Public Address, 94


In their introduction to a book on memory studies, Radstone and Hodgkin describe belated witnessing as the sole method of witnessing a traumatic event, since its traumatic impact at the moment of its occurrence precludes any such conceptual activity. Susannah Radstone and Katherine Hodgkin, eds., Regimes of Memory (London: Routledge, 2003), 10-11.

Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History, 6.

Ibid.

Ibid., 204.


Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History, 69.


Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History, 70.


This view was expressed by Keith Jeffrey on a channel four website devoted especially to topics relating to history. http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/H/history/n-s/sunday2.html (accessed April 28, 2005).

Ibid., 269.

John Corner asserts that ‘This is partly due to the particular, public character of the ‘truth ethics’ of television, and the ways in which both dramatized documentaries and documentary dramas play off the strong presence in television schedules of mainstream documentary output’. John Corner, Television Form and Public Address, 93.


Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman, Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History, 205.

Ibid., 223.

Ibid., 231.

Ibid., 231.

Ibid., 207.


In a US context, Maureen Turim says that the ‘flashback became both a reminder of scenes they had witnessed in newsreels and through newspapers, the collective memory of history inscribed through visual and textual sources, and a supplement to that memory. (Turim: 127)


Ibid., 423.

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This phrase refers to the ‘blanket protest’, when, beginning on September 15, 1976, Republican prisoners refused to wear the prison uniform, choosing instead to enwrap themselves in their blankets. By 1979, almost a third of Republican prisoners had joined the blanket protest.

The 1981 hunger strikes were motivated by five demands that were deemed necessary by the prisoners to reinstate their political status. These demands were as follows: The right not to wear prison uniforms; The right not to do prison work; Free association for political prisoners; educational, recreational and visiting facilities; and full restoration of remission.

George Sweeney, Journal of Contemporary History 28, 436.

Prior to this, there had already been three internment periods in the Northern state’s short history: 1922-1924, 1938-1945, and 1956-1961. In the 1970s, internment occurred on an unprecedented scale. Also, single court judges along with other emergency measures demonstrated the extension of the state’s biopolitical power and the diminution of citizens’ rights. Deemed necessary in the interests of state security, the Special Powers Acts were passed as a temporary measure in 1922 before being becoming permanent law in 1933, these granted unlimited powers to the Minister of Home Affairs.


This information is included in a chronological account of internment on CAIN Web Service, http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/intern/chron.htm (accessed April 12, 2005).

Ibid.


Ibid.


There was extensive news coverage of the Hunger Strikes in the press, radio and television in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain at the time of their occurrence. Theatrical dramas were also written and produced; the Diary of a Hunger Striker, written by Peter Sheridan, was originally produced by the Hull Truck Theatre Company in November 1982. The Irish premiere took place on the Peacock stage of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin on 5 February 1987; in 1985, a co-production between the Royal Court Theatre and the Liverpool Playhouse Theatre, staged Ourselves Alone, a play by Anne Devlin which explores the effects of the 1981 hunger strikes on Northern Ireland politics from the perspective of three sisters. However, there was an absence of television drama about the Hunger Strikes. In an early academic study of television and terrorism, the authors argues that the constant threat of state intervention engendered an internal form of self-censorship in the BBC, which in turn stymied the production of critical perspectives on Northern Ireland.


Ibid., 209.

These quotes appear in chapter 8 of John McGuffin, Internment (Tralee: Anvil Books, 1973)

Ibid., 174.

Slavoj Zizek, Welcome to the Desert of the Real, 93.

Likewise, the US refused to regard terrorist attacks on the US as apolitical while also refusing to consider their political motivations. See Slavoj Zizek, Welcome to the Desert of the Real, 93.

Slavoj Zizek, Welcome to the Desert of the Real, 93.

In a special report in The Guardian, ‘Nobody is talking’, G2 Guardian, 18 February, 2005, James Meek noted a correlation between the 1981 hunger strikers in Northern Ireland and those who have been subjected to legalised torture in Abu Ghraib. When a case relating to abuses carried out in detention
centres in Northern Ireland was brought before the European Court of Human Rights in 1977, the court ruled that although Britain had breached article 3 of the European Human Rights Convention, it had not actually tortured the prisoners. The court concluded that the five techniques of sensory deprivation amounted to ‘inhuman and degrading treatment’, not torture. Thirty years later, a US military lawyer, Diane Beaver, quoted this document in support of US entitlement to inflict pain and suffering on foreigners suspected of engagement in subversive activities. The states collusion in maltreatment of prisoners has ensured that no British soldier or member of the RUC has been convicted for killing or ill-treating persons in Northern Ireland since 1968.


Ibid., 65.


Ibid., 51.


Those who lived on Robben Island included the mentally ill, lepers and prisoners. Their geographic isolation was intended to exclude them from the rest of society. The dehumanising treatment endured by prisoners on the island has been well documented. On Mandela’s arrival, the wardens shouted, ‘this is the island. Here you will die like animals.’ http://www.robben-island.org.za/departments/heritage/gallery/mandela.asp (accessed March 23, 2005).


Ibid., 37.

Ibid., 49.


Ibid., 49.


George Sweeney, ‘Irish Hunger Strikes and the Cult of Self-Sacrifice,’ 424.

Ibid., 429.


Ibid., 4.

Ibid., 4.

Ibid., 71.

Such systematic humiliation of prisoners clearly violated Article 3 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ratified by the United Kingdom in 1951), which provides that: 'No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.'


Ibid., 17.


John Hill, ‘‘Some Mother’s Son,’’ *Cineaste* 23, no. 1 (1997): 44.


Ibid., 147.


Although ‘normalisation’ was being promoted, the administration of justice in Northern Ireland anything but ‘normalised’. In an extract of a ‘Report of the Commission to consider legal procedures to deal with terrorist activities in Northern Ireland’ (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1972). http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/hmso/diplock.htm (accessed may 16, 2006), it states: ‘Detention of terrorists is now subject to an extra-judicial process which provides important safeguards against unjust decisions; but however effective these may be in fact, they can never appear to be as complete as the safeguards which are provided by a public trial in a court of law.’

John Hill, ‘‘Some Mother’s Son,’’ 45.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

The Regeneration and Reform Initiative (RRI) was announced on May 2 2002 as part of an initiative in which the government agreed to transfer to the Northern Ireland Executive a number of exceptionally significant security assets including the Crumlin Road Gaol, the Maze Prison including Long Kesh, security force bases at Magherafelt, Malone Road in Belfast and the Ebrington Barracks site in Londonderry. http://www.newfuturemazelongkesh.com/ (accessed November 20, 2006)


In the above-mentioned report, one interviewee stated that Northern Ireland has ‘the most sophisticated victim support system anywhere, ever’.

Wilson, J. ‘‘In Their Own Words.’


Numerous instances of abuse of a sexual, verbal and physical nature against Catholic school children and their parents are catalogued throughout journalist Anne Cadwallader's book; *Holy Cross: The Untold Story* (Belfast: The Brehon Press, 2004).


Peter Shirlow, 'Who Fears to Speak: Fear, Mobility, and Ethno-sectarianism in the Two 'Ardoynes.'


John D. Cash. 'The Dilemmas of Political Transformation.'


Peter Shirlow, 'Who Fears to Speak: Fear, Mobility, and Ethno-sectarianism in the Two 'Ardoynes.'

Dan Keenan, 'PSNI urges leaders to ease tensions after Belfast clash,' *The Irish Times*, September 3, 2005.

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Klein described the analysand’s withdrawn, unemotional attitude or detached hostility as that of the process of splitting. She claimed that ‘the violent splitting off and destroying of one part of the personality under the pressure of anxiety and guilt is in my experience an important schizoid mechanism.’ Juliet Mitchell, The Selected Melanie Klein (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 195.

Peter Shirlow, “Who Fears to Speak: Fear, Mobility, and Ethno-sectarianism in the Two ‘Ardoynes.’”


James McAuley, ‘Unionisms Last Stand?’

Peter Shirlow, “Who Fears to Speak: Fear, Mobility, and Ethno-sectarianism in the Two ‘Ardoynes.’”

John Cash, “The Dilemmas of Political Transformation.”


Ibid., 80.


Paul Greengrass, quoted in ‘Omagh: the Drama.’


Derek Paget, *No Other Way to Tell It: Dramadoc/Docudrama on Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 89.

Michael Eaton in ibid., 197.

A report entitled ‘Future Policies for the Past,’” written by Brandon Hamber, Dorte Kulle and Robin Wilson, which appeared on the CAIN Web Service commissioned by ‘Democratic Dialogue,’


Ibid., 22.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., 184.

Ibid., 184-5.

http://www.iep.utm.edu/l/lacweb.htm


Ibid., 51.


Following Bill Rolston, who concentrates on Belfast’s newspapers in a study of the print coverage of the Northern conflict, analysis of reviews of the relevant films in the context of this thesis focuses on Northern Ireland’s major newspapers, with the exception of An Phoblacht, which is printed in the Republic of Ireland, but which merged with the widely circulated Belfast based Republican News in 1978. Bill Rolston, ‘News Fit to Print: Belfast’s Daily Newspapers,’ in *The Media and Northern Ireland: Covering the Troubles*, ed. Bill Rolston (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990)


Although An Phoblacht is neither a daily nor weekend publication, and does not strictly belong to Northern Ireland’s print media, as Ireland’s biggest selling political weekly and its lineage with Republican News, it is also included in this study.


Barbie Zelizer subdivides reception to Schindler’s List in the US media into three categories; technique, genre and issue. The attention accorded the film’s technique and generic affiliations contrasts with overwhelming preoccupation with the ‘issue’ of the Holocaust in the Israeli and German contexts to the exclusion of the film’s aesthetic properties. Barbie Zelizer, ‘Every Once in a While: Schindler’s List and the Shaping of History.’ in ibid.: 21.


Jim Gibney, ‘Death of innocence,’ 15.


An example of this melodramatic style appeared in a recent Telegraph article in which he identifies former Taoiseach Charles J. Haughey as an ‘arch chancer’ and identifies finance Minister Brian Cowen’s view of Northern Ireland as ‘a deeply green-tinged fantasy.’ Eric Waugh, ‘A less-than free state?’ Belfast Telegraph, May 25, 2007 http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/columnists/eric-waugh/article2581746.ece (accessed June 11, 2007)


John Horgan argues that although this paper adhered to an ‘impeccably Unionist’ editorial line following partition, its targeting of both communities is a response to the inability of the market to sustain two evening newspapers. Horgan also considers the activities of the moderate Unionist – Jack Sawyer - during the 1960s to bring about ‘a rapprochement between the leaders of the two communities’ as instrumental in its popularity in both communities. John Horgan, Irish Media: Critical History (London: Routledge, 2001), 101.


Slavoj Zizek’s argument about the need to remember historical trauma ‘properly’ is discussed in chapter 4. Slavoj Zizek, Welcome to the Desert of the Real (London: Verso, 2002), 22.

Bill Rolston, ‘News Fit to Print: Belfast’s Daily Newspapers,’ 157.


Ibid., 162.


Ibid.


Martin Spain, ‘Don’t Miss This Movie,’ *An Phoblacht*, September 27, 2001.

Brian Campbell, ‘Telling the hunger strike as we saw it,’ *An Phoblacht*, September 27, 2001, 11.


This event co-organised by Nantes University and the local art house cinema. Dr. Lance Pettitt introduced the film and discussed it with the audience after.


Ibid.


In the US context, Butler describes the public sphere as being constituted ‘in part by what cannot be said and what cannot be shown. The limits of the sayable, the limits of what can appear, circumscribe the domain in which political speech operates and certain kinds of subjects appear as viable actors.’ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, xvii.

Natasha Lehrer, ‘Between Obsession and Amnesia,’ 223.

Dominick LaCapra describes ‘acting-out’ as an inability of coming critically to terms with the past because of an inability ‘to resist the total consumption of the self by a given identity that threatens to prevent any form of renewal’. He adds that This process is not purely individual or psychological but linked, in however undogmatic and mediated a manner, with ethical, social, and political concerns. Dominick, LaCapra. *History, Theory, Trauma: Representing the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 12.


Dominic Bryan, a social anthropologist at Queens University Belfast, has carried out research on the symbolic and ritual importance of Loyalist parades, notably those of the Orange Order, who annually commemorate the Battle of the Boyne on July 12. More currently, he is exploring alterations in the public reception of and the government’s policy toward parades since the signing of the Belfast Agreement.

Bobby Sands used the term ‘the breaker’s yard’ to describe the H Blocks as a location where the British government extended its violent efforts to suppress the republican movement, he writes: ‘As I stepped out of the van on arrival there they grabbed me from all sides and began punching and kicking me to the ground. Not one single word had been spoken, not even so much as a threat. I was a Republican blanket-man and that was all the go-ahead that was needed.’ in Bobby Sands, *One day in My Life* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1982), 61.
Derek Paget refers to Andrew Goodwin and Paul Kerr who do not regard drama documentary as a generic category, but rather as a debate, and quotes Kerr, who states that it is a debate about genre distinctions. He continues the discussion by quoting a practitioner—Leslie Woodhead, who said that ‘I find it most helpful to think of dramadoc as a ‘Spectrum’, with all the blurry edges that implies. I can appreciate the value to your students of having access to a more defined taxonomy, but as a practitioner of this odd trade, I’m only too conscious of adapting the form anew for every dramadoc I’m involved with.’ Derek Paget, *No Other Way to Tell It: Dramadoc/Docudrama on Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 95.


In the introduction to *The Jameson Reader*, the editors describe Frederic Jameson’s methodological approach to film and other cultural activities, by saying that he ‘encourages us to regard the work or the cultural product as first and foremost a symbolic act. In other words, we should view the work as performative in the sense that it intervenes in a concrete social situation or problem and attempts to arrive at some sort of response or solution.[...] Texts or cultural objects are thus dynamic agents engaged in mutually constitutive relations with the societies in which they are situated.’ Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks, eds., *The Jameson Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 9.
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