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White Cottage / White House

Irish-American Masculinities and Spaces of Home in Hollywood Cinema 1930-1960

A major thesis submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy

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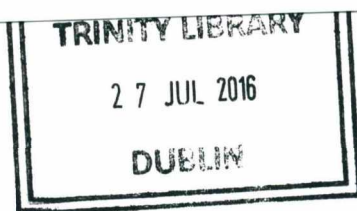March 2015

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Anthony Tracy

March 2015

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Summary

This thesis examines constructions of Irish-American masculinity in classical Hollywood cinema's sound era (1930-1960) across five, chronologically-structured 'modes': James Cagney at Warner Bros; the Catholic priest; sport-themed biopics; the post-war urban cop; and the figure of the Irish-American returned to Ireland. I argue for such constructions to be analysed within a critical discourse of whiteness studies so as to move beyond an 'images of' approach which might too narrowly correlate such representations with the Irish-American historical experience to the exclusion of their wider cultural and ideological functions. Building on existing 'Whiteness' film scholarship of Hamilton Carroll, Richard Dyer, Ruth Frankenberg and Diane Negra and others, I argue that these masculinities function to both reconfigure and reinforce the cultural centrality and hegemony of white masculinity during historical moments of crisis and transformation.

Deploying a textual and contextual approach I examine how Irish-American characters have been imagined by Hollywood in terms of Werner Sollors' formulation of ethnic identity in America as constructed in a tension between 'descent' and 'consent' identities. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's conceptualization of space as 'socially produced' and cognisant of popular culture's role in this process, I argue that cinema offers a unique means for exploring this dialectic in spatial terms. Across a variety of texts and settings therefore, I advance readings of Irish-American masculinities in relation to spaces of descent and consent.

Linking these interpretive frameworks – the cultural and the spatial – is a motif of home. Whether as a site of immigrant tensions and relations, a setting of upward social

mobility, the White House, an enclosed environment of masculine community, or a (nostalgic) space that offers return and respite from the alienation or norms of American manhood, 'home' functions across the five modes examined here as a means of locating constructions of Irish-American manhood within a nexus of shifting social and spatial relations in American society. While a motif of home most immediately functions as the site of intra-familial and descent-consent tensions [in law-themed films such as *Public Enemy* (1931) or *Sergeant Madden* (1939), *Rogue Cop* (1954)] it also works to express the ways in which ethnic identities can enrich 'home' values and sites of white America – in films as diverse as *Boys Town* (1938), *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) and *The Quiet Man* (1953). In both senses, Hollywood draws on the descent aspects of Irish American masculinities (and associations of class/race marginality) to (re)produce a socio-spatial construction of whiteness as an inclusive and elective category composed of both descent-consent elements. Finally, in identifying Federal housing policies initiated in the 1930s (the starting point of this study) and concluding with the phenomenon of 'white flight' to the 'vanilla' suburbs beyond the post-war city (also underpinned by Federal policies), I argue that this linking of home and space across these representations reflects and reinforces a wider politics of race and place in the United States during the period under consideration.

The identities of places are inevitably unfixed. They are unfixed in part precisely because the social relations out of which they are constructed are themselves by their very nature dynamic and changing . . . the identity of any place, including that place called home, is in one sense forever open to contestation. [1]

[1] Doreen B. Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 168–169

Introduction

Reading Irish American masculinities in Classical Hollywood Cinema

Richard Dyer's 1988 essay 'White'[1] represents a seminal and influential intervention in screen and cultural studies of race and its cultural construction in asserting that while 'there has been an enormous amount of analysis of racial imagery in the past decades . . . a notable absence from such work has been the study of images of white people.'[2] Dyer elsewhere foregrounded this 'absent' critical perspective within 'Images of . . .' studies popular within film scholarship from the 1960s onwards when he argued that while such studies have sought to recuperate groups 'defined as oppressed, marginal or subordinate . . . :

> Looking, with such passion and single-mindedness, at non-dominant groups has had the effect of reproducing the sense of oddness, differentness, exceptionality of such groups, the feeling that they are departures from the norm. Meanwhile the norm has continued on as if it is the natural, inevitable ordinary way of being human.[3]

In 'White' - the essay and its subsequent book-length development[4]- Dyer proposed to analyze a wide range of visual culture in light of such perspectives; seeking to disturb 'the norm' by 'making whiteness strange' and in so doing questioning its 'natural' cultural hegemony. Accruing from Dyer's intervention, and in parallel with a range of histories of race in the United States,[5] a varied and growing body of both historic and contemporary oriented screen scholarship has since sought to 'make visible' the ways in

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[1] Richard Dyer. 'White,' *Screen* Vol. 29 No. 4, (1988): 44-65, 45
[2] Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997), 9
[3] Richard Dyer, *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 141
[4] Richard Dyer *White: Essays*
[5] John Warren, "Whiteness and Cultural Theory: Perspectives on Research and Education" in *The Urban Review*, Vol. 31.No. 2 (June 1999): 185–204. Warren identities four principle approaches within whiteness studies: social critique, textual analysis, discursive practice, and racial performance.

which whiteness is constructed within Hollywood cinema and functions as the site of normative American values and identity.[6]

Seeking to historicize and interpret constructions of Irish-American masculinities within Hollywood's studio system during the period 1930-1960, this thesis develops these ideas in arguing that earlier 'images of' studies of this immigrant/ethnic category have failed to fully consider the role and function of such representations in making whiteness 'natural' during an extended period of social transformation in American society.[7] Bracketed by the end of mass immigration and the Great Depression on one side, and the civil rights movement and post-war 'white flight' to the suburbs on the other, this study deploys a range of critical and theoretical perspectives to examine the ways in which whiteness is produced and re-produced within the representational politics of Hollywood's classical era.

Within such a framework, I understand whiteness as a privileged category of identity that is constructed by Hollywood (in tandem with a network of ideological forces) as the embodiment of defining American values; notably the capacity for individual choice and social mobility. Following Stephen Heath's definition of ideology as 'the imaginary relation of individuals to the real relations under which they live',[8] I argue that varied

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[6] This scholarship is now vast. A recent bibliography compiled by the Infinity Foundation, Princeton runs 182 pages: http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/BibliographyOfWhiteStudies/Biliography.pdf
See also: Daniel Bernardi, Michael Green, Oxford Bibliographies: 'Whiteness.'
http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199791286-0125
[7] This study coincides not only with a radical shift in American film production practices from silent to sound but also profound demographic changes. Between 1900 and 1915, more than 15 million immigrants arrived in the United States; about equal to the number of immigrants who had arrived in the previous 40 years combined. By the late 1920s these immigrants and their descendants were firmly settled in America requiring a new model of understanding their relationship to their adopted land. In the pre WWI era the Federally supported Americanization movement set to integrate these immigrants into the American nation understood and constructed as white. As Francis Kellor, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Immigrants in America wrote in 1919, "Americanization is the science of racial relations in America, dealing with the assimilation and amalgamation of diverse races in equity into an integral part of the national life." This thesis argues that from the 1930s on, Hollywood sought to construct a more complex, less hierarchical but nonetheless still racially bounded ideal of American identity and its relationship to immigrant descendants.
[8] Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (London: Macmillan Press, 1981), 4-5: 'This imaginary relation in ideology is itself real, which means not simply that the individuals live it as such...but that it is effectively, practically, the reality of their concrete existence, the term of their subject positions, the basis of their

and shifting cinematic representations of Irish-American male protagonists across this thirty year period reflect and draw on the historical experience of the Irish in America in the construction of a white manhood that is simultaneously inclusive and bounded; both available and chosen.

A precedent for this tension is found in Werner Sollors' influential analysis of the immigrant experience in American literature as dynamically structured 'between consent and descent' identities.[9] Seeking to examine the core dynamics of American identity, Sollors reads a range of immigrant fiction and autobiography as situated within a complex tension between (descent) racial, ethnic, class and familial heritage and a conflicting impulse to *choose* (consent) one's destiny regardless of that heritage. Michael Rogin sums up Sollors' thesis thus:

> The shift from the chosen to the choosing people did not secularize Americaness so much as sacralize the choice of the United States . . . Reincarnating the [Jackson] Turner thesis in postmodern urban form Sollors stands with 'consent,' as he labels it, against 'descent.' But although he sides with the children . . . he calls attention to generational conflict, the loss of the old home in making the new, as embodying the pathos of Americanization.'[10]

Criticising Sollors' emphasis on freedom of choice as 'subsuming race under ethnicity',

Rogin argues:

> That process of national incorporation, whose symbol was the melting pot, operated differently for ethnic than for racial groups . . . To be sure, ethnic groups shared with people of color both racially based nativist hostility and the loss of home. But this commonality did not result in a common fate, for ethnic minorities were propelled into the melting pot by the progress that kept racial minorities out.[11]

My analysis of Irish-American masculinities in Hollywood cinema foregrounds a socio-spatial motif of home as a key site in both locating ethnic masculinities and as a means of

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activity, in a given social order. What is held in ideology, what it forms, is the *unity* of the real relations and the imaginary relations between men and women and the real conditions of their existence.'
[9] Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*, (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)
[10] Michael Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). 54
[11] Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*, 55

recuperating such identities within a model of national incorporation. However, like Rogin, I argue that by imbricating inherited identities and individual choice such narratives function to sustain and reproduce the status and privileges of white patriarchy while obscuring its racial basis in a rhetoric that links 'home' to an emotional discourse of tradition identified with ethnic memory.

In the case studies that follow, a recurring conceptual motif of 'home' functions across a thirty-year period in Hollywood history to examine a dialectical and developing relationship between a range of Irish-American and 'native' or hegemonic masculinities. Within pro-filmic mise-en-scène this is often expressed literally within dramatic tensions/conflicts structured between private and public spaces. This motif also serves to link the ongoing reproduction of whiteness to the social 'production' of space within American society, reinforcing an understanding of the United States as a white homeland. This conceptual linking of cinematic, social and symbolic space permits a polyvalent reading of a range of Irish-American masculinities and the spaces in which they are figured from Depression era immigrant households in ethnic neighbourhoods, a variety of enclosed masculine communities and institutions, to the post-war city and the white cottages of rural Ireland.

* * *

Irish-America [12] has a long history of representation in American narrative film extending from early film through silent and 'classical' sound periods to the present day. A substantial body of scholarship relating to this history has appeared in recent years [13] which this thesis seeks to build on and develop through a chronologically structured

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[12] 'Irish-American' henceforth indicates characters of Irish origin or decent who identify the United States as their home. The term thus encompasses both first generation immigrants and their descendents.
[13] The key works include: Barton (2009), Curran (1989), Frazier (2010), Negra (2006), Rhodes (2012), Shannon (2010).

identification and investigation of five structuring 'modes'[14] of Irish-American manhood in Hollywood film in the period 1930-1960. While such representations can – and have - been read as paralleling the changing historical status of Irish masculinities in the United States between Al Smith's failure (1928) and JFK's success (1960) in seeking the US Presidency[15]- the symbolic apogee of white male achievement - I argue that such representations and their evolution fulfil a broader and more complex cultural function than simply reflecting a progressive 'coming into whiteness' of a specific ethnic group.[16] Developing Henri Lefevbre's[17] conception of space as 'socially produced'[18] I propose a series of case studies that attend to the way in which space functions within cinematic narrative as expressive of wider ideological structures and tensions. I propose that a socio-spatial approach to this representational history produces readings of Irish-American protagonists as embodiments of descent/consent tensions which nevertheless function to reinforce the cultural hegemony of patriarchal whiteness through associations of 'home' values of sentiment, loyalty and tradition. Additionally, drawing on the work of Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau and others,[19] I argue that such links represent and reinforce an underlying correlation between the politics of race

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[14] Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003). This structure emulates Spicer's analysis of masculinity within British cinema since WWII.
[15] Christopher Shannon, *From the Bowery to Broadway: The American Irish in Classic Hollywood Cinema* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2010). Shannon's work is illustrative of this methodological approach, although within a narrower time-frame than mine.
[16] I do not argue that these constructions are independent or non-reflective of the Irish-American experience. This would be to ignore both the clear contextual influence on such stories as well as their frequent basis in biography and personal experience.
[17] Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), 41-42. Soja describes the 'discovery' of Lefebvre's work as prompting the most significant shift in Marxist dialectics in the post war era: 'this least known and most misunderstood of the great figures in twentieth-century has been, above all else and others, the incunabulum of post-modern critical human geography, the primary source for the assault against historicism and the reassertion of space in critical social theory. His constancy led the way for a host of other attempted spatializations from Sartre, Althusser, Foucault ... he remains today the original and foremost historical and geographical materialist.'.
[18] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans Donald Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991)
[19] Such thinkers can be organized within the so-called 'spatial turn' of western philosophy that took hold in the post 1968 context. Prior to this re-orientation, Edward Soja writes, 'with postwar recovery and economic expansion in full flow throughout the advanced capitalist and socialist word, the destabilization of social theory seemed to be at its peak. The geographical imagination had been critically silenced. The discipline of Modern Geography was theoretically silenced.'

and space in twentieth century America; an association that can be located in Federal

housing policies of the 1930s and augments in the aftermath of WWII.[20]

A motif of home within the narratives examined in this thesis gives socio-spatial[21]

expression to obstacles and tensions within historical experiences of immigration: the

conflicting, inter-generational masculinities within the domestic environments of *The*

Public Enemy (1931) *Sergeant Madden* (1939) or *Rogue Cop* (1954); Col. Marty Maher's

arrival in late nineteenth century America and his 'domestication' within the walls of

West Point in *The Long Gray Line* (1955) the juvenile home in *Boys Town* (1938); the

desire for social mobility and a suburban 'model' home in *Shield for Murder* (1954); the

nostalgic return to the ancestral cottage in *The Quiet Man* (1952). But this motif also

functions, I argue, within an ideological project of incorporation to construct a

consolidated national masculine identity that is spatial and racial in character. In my

conclusion I term this construction 'domestic whiteness'; linking private and public,

individual and collective; immigrant and 'native'; marginal and mainstream

masculinities and spaces. Across a range of narratives genres and contexts, 'domestic

whiteness' works to accommodate such tensions within a multi-ethnic but racially

bounded ideal of incorporated twentieth century American manhood.

As I shall argue a key function of Irish-American masculinities within Hollywood cinema

has been to provide a means of re-establishing the cultural legitimacy and authority of

patriarchal white masculinity at the moments of social transformation and crises during

which such representations are most conspicuous: in the aftermath of the

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[20] Notably in the link between Federally backed approval of home loans and white families during the New Deal – outlined in Chapter 2 – and in the increasingly racial construction of American cities and suburbs in the post-war era – Chapters 4 and 5.

[21] Edward W. Soja, "The Socio-Spatial Dialectic" in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (Jun., 1980), 207-225. I take the 'socio-spatial' formulation from Soja, whose thinking develops ideas of Lefebvre. 'Space is not a scientific object removed from ideology and politics; it has always been political and strategic . . . Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies.'

immigrant/race quotas of the 1920s; during the Great Depression; on entry into and return from WWII; and during the social and spatial transformations of the 1950s. Considered cumulatively, these narratives position Irish-American masculinities as emblematic of descent-consent identities which function to enlarge and consolidate the 'naturalness' of whiteness through an association with values and spaces of home.

2. Literature Overview: Hollywood and Irish America

This thesis therefore develops from two inter-related research questions:

- How are Irish-American masculinities constructed[22] during the sound era of Classical Hollywood cinema 1930-1960?[23]
- What factors contribute to such constructions and how do such constructions relate to hegemonic white masculinity?

While there has been significant scholarship dedicated to representations of ethnicity and the Irish in American film (discussed in detail below), this study seeks to provide a history that is both more comprehensive (in terms of period and films surveyed) and integrated than existing studies; linking such representations to shifting social contexts and ideological discourses: specifically the (re)production of hegemonic whiteness. Underpinning such an enquiry is the question of how popular culture and ideology intersect: 'the complex ways that images, myths, social practices, and narratives are bound together in the production of ideology.'[24] In a methodological position akin to my own, Douglas Kellner argues that while,

> All texts are polysemic and subject to multivalent readings depending on the perspectives of the reader ... one [can] situate them in their historical context, to see how they fit into specific genres and promote certain ideological positions. The more perspectives one brings to bear in this reading, the more complete one's reading will be and the better grasp one will have on the text's ideological

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[22] By 'constructed' I refer to a range of features such as types, themes, genres and recurring elements of *mise-en-scene*.

[23] The parameters of this periodization develop from several factors. While Rhodes (2012) and Flynn (2010) have considered the evolution of representations of Irish America from early (1895-1915) and silent periods respectively and Shannon (2010) has examined the 1930s and 1940s, no scholarship has so far attempted to span the entirety of the studio era. My periodization thus offers the possibility of a more integrated analysis than has heretofore been attempted while recognizing a consistent ideological function of Hollywood cinema in American culture.

[24] Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1995), 59. 'I would argue that ideology contains discourses and figures, concepts and images, theoretical positions and myths. Such an expansion of the concept of ideology obviously opens the way to the exploration of how ideology functions within popular culture and every day life and how images and figures constitute part of the ideological representations of sex, race, and class in film and popular culture.'

problematics. This contextual approach uses history to read texts and texts to read history.

Underlying my analysis is a widely theorized position that Hollywood cinema fulfils an important role as 'mediator'[25] of ideology in American society, with an emphasis on its role in the construction and maintenance of whiteness as the dominant racial/cultural identity within that society. Developing Louis Althusser's notion of ideology as an imaginary construct,[26] Elizabeth Bronfen offers a cogent 'seminal analogy' that if 'ideology is a pure dream' then 'the dreams produced in Hollywood are pure ideology:'

> Conceived as a dream, and representing the relationship of the subject to the cultural laws that determine it, ideology indeed found the perfect materialization in the Hollywood dream machine, since from the start Hollywood cinema developed fantasy scenarios that produce and propagate, through home and family romances, the relationship that the American subject maintains with the cultural codes and prohibitions that define it.[27]

A number of scholars have linked such 'dreams' to fantasies of race, notably Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, who argues that 'Hollywood cinema has been centrally constitutive in white America's continuous efforts to shore up iniquitous, inherently unstable categories of race.'[28] This is achieved through what she describes as 'Whiteface', a form of racial masquerade that is performed in Hollywood cinema through the erasure of class and ethnic marks. Foster describes Hollywood as a 'white space', '. . . where class and race are homogenous, sterilized, and largely erased in motion pictures . . . where representation insists that the human race, especially in America, is white.' Within this

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[25] '... although we can talk about ruling class ideology in general, each specific expression of it — ideas, the legal system, the state, movies, ethnic group ideology — is mediated. By mediated I mean that between the general ideology and its expression comes individual and group thoughts, experiences, creativity, needs, and so forth.' John Hess, "Film and ideology" in *Jump Cut*, No. 17 (April 1978) 14-16; Accessed July 5 2012; http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC17folder/FilmAndIdeololgy.html

[26] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001)

[27] Elizabeth Bronfen, *Home in Hollywood: The Imaginary Geography of Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013)

[28] Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *Performing Whiteness: Postmodern Re/Constructions in the Cinema* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 4

analysis, Foster identifies the 1934 Motion Picture Production Code as a key development which she reads as a mechanism 'designed to maintain the borders of whiteness.'[29] My project simultaneously develops and departs from Foster's thesis in accepting that while Hollywood is a 'white space' (a concept I develop both literally and symbolically) that functions to maintain and support racial exclusion, Irishness as a marker of ethnic/immigrant and working-class identity remains a notable exception to her argument of erasure and homogenization. While whiteness, social mobility and American-ness are generally rendered as co-terminus in the films under discussion in this study, there remains an enduring cultural value to Irishness – particularly in the post-war period - that informs and even enriches such associations.

2.1 Representations of Irish-America in American Cinema

The first extended studies on representations of Ireland and the Irish in cinema appeared at the end of the 1980s. *Cinema and Ireland* (Routledge, 1987) co-authored by Kevin Rockett, John Hill and Luke Gibbons and Anthony Slide's *The Cinema and Ireland* (McFarland, 1988) considered 'Irish film' to indicate a broad and transnational category of national cinema that took account not only of works produced in Ireland but also as an expression of the Irish diasporic experience. Rockett's subsequent *Irish Filmography* (1996) developed this approach with sections relating to films produced in Ireland, Australia, Russia, Spain Italy, Holland, Great Britain and USA respectively. Of these, the last provided the largest section. In his introduction Rockett noted that:

> The USA accounts for half of all entries. Or put more dramatically: more fiction films were produced about the Irish by American filmmakers before 1925, when the first indigenous Irish fiction film was made, than in the whole 100 year history of fiction filmmaking in Ireland.[30]

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[29] Foster, *Performing Whiteness,* 31
[30] Kevin Rockett, *The Irish Filmography: Fiction Films 1896 - 1996,* (Dublin: Red Mountain Press, 1997), i

Published the same year, the American Film Institute Catalog, *Within our Gates: Ethnicity in American Feature Films, 1911-1960* (1996) listed some forty entries under 'Irish-American' (the vast majority of which coincided with Rockett's list of USA titles).[31] Clearly therefore, the Irish and 'Irishness' in cinema has a long and complex history within American cinema's representational strategies.

Despite such initiatives, detailed histories and discussion of this heritage have, until recently, been surprisingly sparse. For a considerable period the only book-length study of the Irish presence in 'Hollywood' cinema was Joseph Curran's *Hibernian Green on the Silver Screen: The Irish and American Movies* (1989) which the author describes as 'an introductory study [that] surveys and offers some reflections on the symbiosis of the Irish and American movies.'[32] Curran argues that the Irish were probably Hollywood's favoured ethnic grouping (he notes that 21.4% of New York's 1910 population were Irish born) and continued to be represented in a broadly sympathetic manner:

> The Irish not only provided motion pictures with a history of talented performers but they also contributed to the success of American film. The industry reciprocated by making more movies about the Irish than any other ethnic minority.[33]

Although Curran's book ostensibly encompasses American cinema from its beginnings to the date of its publication, it is strongest on three key moments of this representational heritage: an overview of the silent era, the gangster films of the 1930s and the Irish presence in John Ford. It is sketchy on the post-war period beyond noting

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[31] Kevin Rockett, "Emerald Illusions: The Irish in Early American Cinema" in *Journal of Film Preservation*; Vol 87, No 10 (2012) 109-112. In the introduction to *Emerald Illusions: The Irish in Early American Cinema* (2012) its author Gary D. Rhodes claims that Rockett's Irish Filmography is mistaken in treating these films as 'Irish' and he has failed to adequately research the full extent of what he calls 'Irish-themed films.' In his review of Rhodes' book Rockett responded robustly to these charges: 'The value of Rhodes' study, which is an old-fashioned history in the sense that it is primarily a listing of pre- and early cinema Irish-themed shows and films, is in its collation, rather than critical engagement with, or cultural interpretation of, material . . . which will serve as a sourcebook to complement and embellish existing lists of Irish- themed films . . .' By and large I agree with Rockett's assessment and the relevance of this debate here is precisely that the present study develops from a critical engagement and cultural interpretation with Irish-themed films from the sound era.

[32] Joseph Curran, *Hibernian Green on the Silver Screen: The Irish and American Movies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), xvi

[33] Curran, *Hibernian Green,* 18

the Irish ancestry of Grace Kelly and Gene Kelly. This balance of emphasis reflects broader understandings of 'ethnic fade' theories where 'minorities' slowly lose their cultural difference through a process of assimilation:

> By reflecting and sometimes influencing their audience's changing perception of the Irish, motion pictures facilitated their assimilation into American society, helping to raise their status and aspirations[34]

Curran's project thus reflects the dominant and influential 'straight-line' theory of assimilation that has characterized sociologies of ethnicity and many 'representations of' studies during the twentieth century. It takes such representations at face value and does not attempt to differentiate between historical and symbolic levels of meaning. While he accepts that the Irish were Hollywood's 'favourite' ethnic group he does not attempt to understand why, beyond questions of demographics.[35] Nor does it engage with ideas generated by post-structural theory concerning the position of the subject vis-à-vis structures of hegemony or the multiplicity of meanings generated by apparently 'transparent' images.

A more conceptually sophisticated attempt to come to terms with cinematic constructions of Irish-America is Lee Lordeaux's *Italian and Irish Film makers in America* (1990) which finds commonality in tropes and concerns between these two immigrant groups based on their shared Catholic heritage. Beginning with an overview of 'images of' Catholics in the silent era, Lourdeaux structures his monograph as a discussion of four influential American directors: John Ford, Frank Capra, Francis Ford Coppola, and Martin Scorsese. Lourdeaux's study is unified by a privileging of ethnic identity as the determining factor in the cinematic vision of each of these artists: 'John Ford and the

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[34] Curran, *Hibernian Green*, xvi
[35] A good deal of discussion of early representations of the Irish in American cinema (the 28 Irish-themed films produced by the Kalem Company for example) claimed their popularity as subjects as due to the large potential Irish audiences in urban centres. Rhodes did important work to correct this account by showing that 'Irish-themed' films were popular all over the United States and not just in areas where Irish immigrants were gathered.

Landscapes of Irish America'; 'Frank Capra and His Italian Vision of America'; 'Francis Coppola and Ethnic Double Vision'; 'Martin Scorsese in Little Italy and Greater Manhattan'. Of these four, only Ford is Irish (American), but Lourdeaux makes an important contribution in recognizing the distinctiveness of 'a Catholic imagination' at work - a concept he borrows from Andrew Greeley - which emphasizes the difference between Catholic and Protestant world views in terms of an emphasis on community (Catholics) Vs. individual (Protestants); Catholics see the world as a place with God in it whereas Protestants celebrate the difference between God and man. Citing Catholic theologian Richard McBrien, Lourdeaux writes:

> The most readily apparent of Catholicism's three principles [communion, mediation and sacramentality] is communion. WASP Americans have long envied the way the Irish and Italian immigrants enjoy community life in their parishes and neighbourhood.[36]

Lourdeaux acknowledges that there are differences between the Irish and Italians but the (Catholic) theological basis of his thesis insists more upon shared outlook than difference:

> My focus on core values is nothing like the 'images of' approach adopted by Les and Barbara Keyser in *Hollywood and the Catholic Church: The Image of Roman Catholicism in American Movies*. The Keyser's chronicle Hollywood's many images of Irish and Italian priests and nuns. But they introduce ethnic identity and religious culture in only a piecemeal fashion . . . The Keysers' 'images of' approach gleans a film's surface, passing over background, yet essential issues of the narrative schema that organize cultural values.[37]

Notwithstanding the rigor and originality of this approach, Lourdeaux arguably extends this symptomatic reading too far; foregrounding its interpretative framework over

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[36] Lee Lourdeaux, *Italian and Irish Filmmakers in America: Ford, Capra, Coppola, and Scorsese* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 21
[37] Lourdeaux, *Italian and Irish Filmmakers* , 8

historical context.[38] While his emphasis on the cultural background of his chosen film-makers provides a valuable consideration of the structuring power of ethnicity behind the camera, the broader cultural status and function of representations of ethnic identities can be overlooked. Nevertheless, Lourdeaux is correct to assert a dynamic relationship between ethnic and white identities in American film:

> The story of Irish and Italian culture in American film is finally one of reciprocal assimilation. At first filmmakers like John Ford and Frank Capra adjusted their ethnic backgrounds to accommodate Hollywood stereotypes. But once they discovered that the success ethic was a strong common bond between Anglo American and their immigrant cultures, they began to configure new socio-religious values lacking in mainstream society.[39]

A final and more recent 'Irish-American' monograph relevant to my argument is Christopher Shannon's *Bowery to Broadway: The American Irish in Classic Hollywood Cinema* (Scranton University Press, 2010), Broader in focus than Lourdeux, Shannon advances and modifies Curran's study of the field in the most comprehensive monograph study of constructions of Irish-Americans in Hollywood to date. Shannon lays the basis of his discussion – organized by genre and relating mainly to films of the 1930s and 1940s (a far more limited focus than my study) - by reflecting on why, within a few short years, the virulent anti-Catholicism that surrounded the Irish American presidential candidacy of Al Smith, could be transformed into an importance unequalled by other ethnic groups in Irish American themed films from Hollywood and the popularity of popular Irish American actors such as Spencer Tracy, James Cagney and Pat O'Brien:

> How do we account for this seemingly dramatic reversal? Why did Americans who loathed the Irish as politicians love them as gangsters, boxers, working girls and song and dance men? . . . [because of] their ability to present the Irish as

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[38] He argues for instance that *Apocalypse Now* (1979) is about Italian American family conflict and *It's a Wonderful Life* (Capra, 1946) is the story of an Italian village in disguise.
[39] Lourdeaux, *Italian and Irish Filmmakers*, 20

representative of a broader vision of the city as an urban village – fully ethnic, yet fully American.[40]

While this is a productive question, Shannon does not fully address or resolve it for elsewhere he argues that the Irish-American themed films of the 1930s and 1940s overcome the era of Smith by positing 'local heroes' – that is, by not coming into direct conflict with dominant American values.

> Redeemed from the slurs of nativists, the Irish nonetheless never became representative Americans. The New Deal, World War II and Hollywood cinema combined to bring an unprecedented degree of political and cultural unity to American life but America as a nation is only a minor presence in most of these films.[41]

The strength of Shannon's survey, I would argue, is also a limitation in that it stays locked in this closed loop of interpretation, focusing on the tension between individual success and community loyalty in a specifically Irish-American context. Although he makes a valuable distinction between 'stories of ethnicity' like *The Jazz Singer* (1927) 'that dramatize the conflict between the old world and the new' and 'ethnic stories' – 'Irish characters may not always know what to do, but they always know who they are,'[42] Shannon follows patterns familiar from Irish-American studies generally in that he focuses on the historical Irish-American experience and sees this as the primary cultural work of the films he discusses. Although his study does contrast representations of this group with Italian Americans – in the gangster chapter – and WASPs - in the chapter on romantic comedies – he emphasizes the historically located Irish American family as a unit apart from American society and repeatedly argues that it is loyalty to the family that is shown to trump the call to individuality. In his discussion of the

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[40] Shannon, *Bowery to Broadway*, xiv
[41] Shannon, *Bowery to Broadway*, xxxiv
[42] Shannon, *Bowery to Broadway*, xvi

'Bowery Cinderella' narratives of the 1920s for instance, Shannon sees 'a distinctly Irish American story [that] sets itself against American narrative conventions' of the melting pot narratives such as *Abie's Irish Rose* which he considers mainstream and pluralist (and which just happens to feature an Irish and a Jewish family). I would argue however, that despite the importance of distinguishing representations of the Irish from other ethnic groups, Shannon doesn't convincingly explore how such representations attempted to forge a revised sense of what it meant to be an American – indeed how they construct and ultimately reinforce a multi-cultural whiteness - during periods of crises and social transformation. While his choice of films draw on the pre-war historic experience of the (parochial) Irish in America, I believe that a wider periodization and larger conceptual framework is necessary in order fully account for the breath and development of such representations.

In discussing Irish-Americans as a largely undifferentiated identity – i.e. overlooking issues of race or gender and the shifting social conditions shaping such conceptualizations – I would suggest that Shannon's discussion is incomplete. While observing the sudden shift from female to male protagonists within Irish American themed Hollywood narratives, he underestimates the changing politics of race – and the cultural construction of masculinity - in the United States that accompanied the Great Depression:

> Despite its enduring appeal the Bowery Cinderella story had clearly moved from A to B picture status by the early 1930s. Aside from narrative exhaustion, the reasons for this decline are not exactly clear.[43]

As I shall argue this focus on male protagonists/antagonists signifies something greater than 'narrative exhaustion' and represents a paradigm shift in both the construction the

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[43] Shannon, *Bowery to Broadway*, 86.

function of Irish-American characters in Hollywood cinema. In the thirty year period between the defeat of Al Smith and the election of JFK, the socially ambitious female protagonists that domainted representations of Irish-America in silent era films such as *Peg O My Heart* (1922), *Irene* (1926) and *Show Girl* (1928), gave way in the 1930s to a wide range of male central characters and narrative contexts.[44] This thesis proposes that these representations be read not as 'local' but 'typical' American masculinities during periods of tension and anxieties within hegemonic whiteness. Their central function, as I shall argue, is produce whitneess as a cultural space of 'home': simultaneously inclusive and patriarchal status during moments of social transformation.

These book-length studies – Slide, Curran, Lourdeaux, Shannon (along with the important edited collection *Screening Irish America*)[45] have proven important interventions in identifying the scale and scope of representations of Irish-America in classical Hollywood cinema.[46] Each offers original critical frameworks for understanding such constructions, with an emphasis on themes of assimilation, Irish-American history and the Catholic mindset. While each of these are significant, I argue that such themes do not fully interrogate the broader function of these representations within Hollywood's role as a 'mediator' of ideology and that their elision of questions of race and gender and inattentiveness to cinematic *mise-en-scene* fail to satisfactorily account for the prominence, variety and development of such representations. In seeking to address

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[44] The commericial and critical success Kitty Foyle (1940) is a notable exception to this trend but to all intents an purposes it represents a harkening back to an older narrative format both in themes and setting. Christopher Morley's novel was a contemporary publishing phenomenon on its release in 1939 and was inevitable it would be quickly adapted for film and a long running radio series. It tells the story of a young working class woman of Irish descent from Philadelphia caught between two men: one a member of the city's social elite Wynnewood Strafford VI - whose class superiority makes their relationship impossible - and the other a doctor, Mark Eisen – a steady paragon of virtue and stability. Its 'impossible love' narrative updates the 1920s Bowery Cinderella film as a classic 'woman's picture' melodrama.

[45] Ruth Barton (Ed.) *Screening Irish America*, (Dublin; Portland, Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2009)

[46] I have omitted from this critical review Anthony Slide's historical overview *The Cinema and Ireland*, (McFarland, 1988) which contains a chapter on John Ford and is an important precursor to the more developed analysis discussed here. Additionally, there are two notable recent studies of the early and silent era: Gary D. Rhodes, op. cit. and Peter Flynn, "Coming into Clover: Ireland and the Irish in early American cinema, 1895--1917" (January 1, 2008), *Doctoral Dissertations Available from Proquest;* Accessed 30 October 2014: http://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations/AAI3325276

such issues I turn to the discourse of critical whiteness studies which, in recent years, has offered valuable perspectives on the cultural currency of 'Irishness' as a specific marker of ethnicity in American popular culture.

2.2 Ethnicity, Whiteness, and American Cinema

Important early work on ethnicity and American cinema appeared in Lester D. Friedman's 1998 anthology: *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and American Cinema*. In the introduction to that volume Friedman wondered if:

> images of . . . [Irish, Jews, Chinese, Latinos] studies have not ghettoized themselves and looked to the evolution of feminist criticism as a means out of that ghetto by way of enlarging discussion towards ethnicity.[47]

As indicated above, a key influence in the discourse of ethnicity in American culture is Werner Sollors who saw the central drama of the American experience as pivoting on a conflict between 'consent' and 'descent.' Paradoxically – and without irony - Sollors adapts W.E.B. Du Bois' use of Emerson's term 'double consciousness' a "two-ness" of being 'an American, a Negro; two warring ideals in one dark body.'[48] Emerson identified American manhood as essentially performative or split: 'a man must ride alternatively on the horses of his private and public nature, as the equestrian thrown themselves nimbly from horse to horse.'[49] Echoing these intellectual forebears, Sollors invokes a concept of doubleness:

> In 'ethnicity' the double sense of general peoplehood (shared by all Americans) and of otherness (different from the mainstream culture) lives on ... In America ethnicity can be conceived as a deviation and as a norm, as characteristic of minorities and as typical of the country.[50]

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[47] Lester Friedman, *Unspeakable Images: Ethnicity and American Cinema* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991)
[48] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*: Essays and Sketches (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co.; Cambridge MA: University Press John Wilson and Son, 1903), Accessed 10/8/ 2010, www.bartleby.com/114/ 3
[49] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Fate" in *The Conduct of Life* (Maryland: Wildside Press, 2008), 30
[50] Werner Sollors, ed. *Theories of ethnicity: a classical reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), xi.

This double consciousness is helpful in important and obvious respects in advancing the analysis of Irish American protagonists in Hollywood as mediators between ethnic and 'native' masculinities. However such doubleness is not perhaps so binary as is sometimes suggested. In the introductory section to this chapter I noted Richard Dyer's key interventions on the character and construction of whiteness:

> Trying to think about the representation of whiteness as an ethnic category is difficult partly because white power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular . . . It is all the same important to try to make some headway with grasping whiteness as a culturally constructed category.[51]

One of the most notable developments of Dyer's ideas and an important precedent for this thesis' approach to cinematic constructions of Irish-American masculinity as imbricated in the maintenance of whiteness is Diane Negra's work on the resonance of Irish-American signs and identities in American culture.[52] In her 2001 study, *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Stardom*, Negra analyses six 'off-white' (i.e. white-ethnic) female stars as 'paradigms for the cultural construction of gender and ethnicity' across the history of Hollywood film.[53] Arguing that 'The US is a nation that prides itself on the coherence and orderliness of its internal differences and invests deeply in the mythology of a variety of ethnic groups in peaceful co-existence,'[54] Negra understands whiteness as 'fundamentally a form of social approval and power in American culture,'[55] and seeks to 'examine and to theorize a representational pattern . . . in which the figure of the ethnic woman has functioned to 'disturb' the conventions of Hollywood representation.'[56] She sets out to do this within three broad themes: Ethnicity as a discourse of investing Hollywood narratives with greater ideological power;

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[51] Richard Dyer. "White" in *Screen*, Vol 29 No 4 (1988) ; 44-65 doi:10.1093/screen/29.4.44
[52] Diane Negra, *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (London: Routledge, 2001); *The Irish In Us:* Irishness, *Performativity, and Popular Culture* (London and Durham, Duke University Press, 2006)
[53] Colleen Moore, Pola Negri, Sonje Henie, Hedy Lamarr, Marisa Tomei and Cher.
[54] Negra, *Off-White Hollywood*, 3
[55] 'Film professor researches how female stardom links to American views on immigration and ethnicity,' UNT News, October 25, 2001 https://news.unt.edu/news-releases/film-professor-researches-how-female-stardom-links-american-views-immigration-and-ethn
[56] Negra, *Off-White Hollywood*, 21

ethnicity's participation in the thematics of national and sexual incorporation; ethnicity's

capacity to expose or disrupt taken-for-granted notions of American whiteness,

solidarity and heritage. For Negra, 'examining female stars promoted in terms of their

ethnicity will ultimately help us trace the ephemeral discourses of white, patriarchal

hegemony and thereby contribute to a better understanding of women's positionality in

culture.'[57]

More recently, Hamilton Carroll's *Affirmative Reaction: New Formations of White

Masculinity* (2010)[58] offers an analysis of a broad and disparate range of constructions of

white manhood in American popular culture from Eminem to *Million Dollar Baby*. In a

bold development of the work of Dyer, Negra and others Carroll contends that:

> . . . the true privilege of white masculinity - and its defining strategy - is not to be
> unmarked, universal or invisible (although it is sometimes one or all of these)
> but to be mobile and mutable; it is not so much the unmarked status of white
> masculinity that ensures privilege, but its lability . . . its ability to shift locations
> and its ability to change its nature.[59]

Citing Eva Cherniavsky, Carroll argues that whiteness is defined and redefined by its

reaction to 'sociopolitical transformations'; that it may very well be 'the capacity to

incorporate (appropriate) difference that consolidates rather than prostrates white

personhood.'[60] Across a range of case studies, Carroll identifies a 'slight of hand' by which

white masculinity has 'transformed the universal into the particular as a means of

restaging universality.'[61] Relating Carroll's argument to an earlier range of cultural texts,

I propose that Irish-American masculinities in classical Hollywood cinema function in a

similar way to consolidate a 'universal' white manhood through its construction as a

'particular' category – as immigrant/ethnic/working-class. Thus, while such

representations develop from the historical experience of Irish-America and produce

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[57] Negra, *Off-White Hollywood*, 4
[58] Hamilton Carroll, *Affirmative Reaction: New Formations of White Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010)
[59] Carroll, *Affirmative Reaction*, 10
[60] Carroll, *Affirmative Reaction*, 10
[61] Carroll, *Affirmative Reaction*, 10

characters that may seem superficially 'independent', disruptive or even dismissive of hegemonic white norms, I contend that they ultimately function to reassert the 'universality' of such norms - paradoxically – by linking them to enduring 'descent' values and spaces of home.

2.3 Home and the Spatial Production of Whiteness

Henry Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*[62] made a paradigmatic and deeply influential shift in human geographies in proposing that space does not exist in nor of itself; neither as an abstraction nor a 'container' to be filled but a product that is actively produced and reproduced within a social context. Edward Soja characterizes this as the 'socio-spatial dialectic'[63] to replace an earlier paradigm which understood time as the dynamic entity within history and space as static.[64] For William Jenkins, Lefebvre's work revealed how space:

> . . . in both its material and imagined elements, is a social and cultural product that is interwoven with the everyday and ongoing formation of identities whether based on ethnicity, class, gender, race, religion, or combinations of these. Since such identities are now seen as malleable and fluid constructions whose content varies over time and across place, it follows that space is not a given but, to quote one urban historian, "a site of action and always loaded with meaning.[65]

Lefebvre posits that space is produced through a triad dynamic of: 'spatial practice,' (everyday life); 'representations of space' (maps, models etc. - a concrete guideline for how 'thought' can become 'action'); and 'representational space' (which overlays

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[62] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (1974) English trans. Donald Nicholson Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991)
[63] Edward W. Soja, "The Socio-Spatial Dialectic" in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* Vol. 70, No. 2 (June 1980), 207-225
[64] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" in *Diacritics* Vol 16 No 1 (Spring 1986), 22-27
[65] William Jenkins, "In Search of the Lace Curtain: Residential Mobility, Class Transformation and Everyday Practice among Buffalo's Irish, 1880-1910" in *Journal of Urban History* (2009) 35, 97

physical space, making symbolic use of its objects through ideas and imagination etc.)[66]

These actions correspond to what he describes as three 'moments of social space': *lived,*

perceived and *conceived* spaces. As a form with popular and widespread social currency,

cinema can be understood as functioning within this schema in conceiving

'representational space', thereby (re)producing social meanings, but also as a narrative

apparatus *within which* representations of space can be analyzed within a wider matrix

of inter- and extra-textual social relations. As a key cultural force in the creation of

representative space, cinema functions therefore as both a reflection of and participant

within the socio-spatial dialectic.[67]

Combining Marx and Heidegger,[68] Lefebvre argues that the production of space is

controlled by a hegemonic class as a means of reproducing its dominance: 'as a tool of

thought and of action . . . in addition to being a means of production, it is also a means of

control, and hence of domination, of power.'[69] In this respect we can see Hollywood as a

key 'tool of thought and action' in imagining the United States as a 'white space' – to

develop Gwen Foster's term. Thus, my analysis of five modes of Irish-American

masculinity foregrounds a socio-spatial dialectic in understanding how such

constructions relate to the (re)production of whiteness as a hegemonic category.

Within such an analysis Irish-American manhood occupies a singular and complex

position – frequently positioned between domestic spaces linked with the ethnic, the

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[66] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 39
[67] In this intersection of real and imagined space, cinema can be likened to Edward Soja's notion of 'third space': 'For Soja, space must be understood as simultaneously real and imagined (Soja's thirdspace), for it always represents a link between physical, geographical spaces and mental, cultural constructions of space. Soja, a human geographer, is perfectly explicit about the fact that his concept of thirdspace is addressed not only at geography and other disciplines that are concerned by definition with geographical space, but at all disciplines that engage with spatiality as part of the spatial turn.' Kathrin Winkler, Kim Seifert, Heinrich Detering, 'Literary Studies and the Spatial Turn,' *Journal of Literary Studies*, Vol 6, No 1 (2012). 253–270. http://www.jltonline.de/index.php/articles/article/view/482/1215
[68] Stuart Elden, 'Between Marx and Heidegger: Politics, Philosophy and Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*,' *Antipode,* Volume 36, Issue 1, pages 86–105, January 2004. 'The two terms in this title need to be examined, and while the importance of space develops a number of insights from Heidegger, the stress on production shows the political and Marxist nature of this research.'
[69] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 26

domestic, the feminine and indeed the past (exemplified through the recurring tropes of the Irish mother and romance narratives) – and spaces associated with white manhood, agency, mobility and modernity. Mediating between such spaces, the Irish American male's status as a 'white-ethnic' in American cinema facilitates constructions of masculinities which both stand outside of and consolidate whiteness. Central to this tension, I argue, is an iconography of home / domestic space as an interface between descent and consent identities producing a 'domestic whiteness' constructed as inclusive and universal.

3.0 Structure

> Space [...] is a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in a process of being made. It is never finished, never closed.[70]

Structured chronologically, this thesis examines the evolving construction of Irish-American masculinity in Hollywood cinema across five phases between 1930-1960: James Cagney; Irish-Americans and sport; the Irish-American priest; the post-war figures of the Irish-American cop and returned immigrant. In his analysis of male types in British cinema, Andrew Spicer draws on Richard Dyer's distinction between a stereotype (a reductive label that serves to stigmatise the group it describes) and a type (a more varied description which can perform a range of narrative functions) to explore "overlapping and competing constructions which struggle for hegemony, the version of masculinity that is most desirable or widely acceptable."[71] Similarly, I understand such 'modes' as fluid and varied constructions that contrast with the more rigid stereotypes of earlier visual cultures, reflecting a changed cultural status and function for Irish-American masculinities. Central to my overall argument is that this shift from stereotype

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[70] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 9
[71] Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Cinema* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003)

to type corresponds to fundamental changes in structures of race within American society from the 1930s onwards[72] and a corresponding construction of whiteness as an identity and set of values that is simultaneously individual and elective ('particular') and normative ('universal'). Across a range of modes, Irish-Americans function to express and consolidate this tension within a socio-spatial framework of descent and consent identities.

My study begins with James Cagney: arguably the first and best-known Irish-American male type in classic Hollywood cinema. Alongside his unique talents and charisma, his stardom and prolific career at Warner Bros. during the long 1930s (culminating in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* in 1942) can be partly understood as arising from a coincidence of technological and social change: the arrival of sound and the Great Depression. His pugnacious, 'city boy' persona served not only to 'give voice' to urban American but articulated a changed dynamic between hegemonic and marginal (ethnic/working class) masculinities during a period of demographic and social transformation. His mercurial, characters expressed impatience with established social and racial hierarchies and a desire to widen and reconstitute the borders and structures of American manhood. Chapter One ('Our House to the White House: James Cagney and the Emergence of Domestic Whiteness') analyses Cagney's Warner Bros. career by foregrounding the centrality of Irish American identities of his characters that links their evolution and gradual social acceptance to a *mise-en-scene* of domestic spaces. Between Cagney's emergence in *Public Enemy* to *Yankee Doodle Dandy* - the critical and commercial apogee of his Warner Bros. career - his characters can be understood as cultural expressions of a desire to construct a stable, hyphenated masculine identity structured between spaces of public performance and private identity. I propose that while Cagney's disruptive Irish-American characters and persona develop from Anglo-Saxon anxieties about

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[72] Most significantly the demographic rise in second generation 'new Americans' following the introduction of the immigrant quota acts in the 1920s. I consider this more fully in Ch. 1.

threats to hegemonic whiteness posed by immigrant/marginal masculinities (resulting from shifting demographics and the Great Depression), they are not static stereotypes but evolve through the decade. This evolution of character and wider social attitudes to ethnic manhood is structured by descent and consent identities organized around a motif of home. While in earlier films these identities are expressed in terms of dichotomies between private/home and public/performance spaces and identities, they find symbolic reconciliation in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* through the figure of President FDR who welcomes George M. Cohan into the White House as an equal: 'How's my double.' This 'coming home' brings together Cohan's Irish American identity and the iconic incarnation of American national manhood in the symbolic 'domestic' space of American whiteness. The film's concluding patriotic song – 'Over There' – indicates not only an geographical and psychic Othering of the Old World of Europe but correspondingly evokes 'over here' (i.e. the United States) as an inclusive space for American manhood that quietly excludes individuals of colour.

Chapter Two ('Father Knows Best: The Irish-American Priest and Spaces of Masculine Community in 1930s Hollywood') analyses the Irish-American priest as a central and recurring type in Hollywood cinema during the same period. While I argue that the emergence of this figure can, in part, be traced to the prominence and contribution of Catholic priests within the public space of American media culture during the 1930s (notably on radio and as influential figures in the drawing up of the Production Code), I propose that in contrast to Cagney's incarnation of divided contemporary masculinities, the Irish-American priest functions (implicitly and explicitly) as an ethnically coded parallel to President FDR as embodying a unifying presence among wayward or non-conforming young white males. In a series of contemporary-set narratives, the 'New Deal' priest is positioned as a tough but fair figure of male authority, 'hailing' marginal youths into heterotopian spaces of multi-ethnic American manhood - a boys' home, a

parish club, an army unit[73]- where themes of male community and inclusiveness are identified as co-terminus with American democratic values. Developing the conclusion of the previous chapter, I suggest that the ideological function of such figures can be understood within Althusser's concept of *interpellation* - calling individuals to participate in structured communities of American manhood that function as microcosms of the nation:

> ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such as way that it 'recruits' subjects among individuals (it recruits them all) or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing . . .[74]

The films under consideration in this chapter centre on socio-spatial masculine communities within which Irish-American Catholic priests are constructed as benevolent enforcers of hegemonic white masculinity; variations of what Michael Kimmel has described as the 'Genteel Patriarch' archetype that many associate with Presidential manhood.[75] *Boys Town* is the most explicitly utopian expression of an inclusive and protected space of American manhood but each of the films discussed in this chapter construct the Irish-American priest as a protective figure who stands between an often fragile group of working class/ethnic young men and antagonists who threaten to destabilize spaces of 'home' based on 'universal', democratic values. As a figure of 'new' national manhood combining ethnic street smarts and theological authority, the Irish-American priest mediates between mainstream and marginal masculinities through a combination of worldiness and patriarchal legitimacy.

Chapter Three – 'Gentlemen and Gyms: Spaces of Discipline and the Irish-American Body' – grows out of the long association between Irish-American males and sport as a mechanism for social integration and mobility; an association with deep roots in

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[73] *Boys Town* (1938), *Angels With Dirty Faces* (1938), *The Fightin' 69th* (1940)
[74] Louis Althusser, "Ideological State Apparatus" in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Zizek (New York, London, Verso 2012), 130
[75] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (Oxford University Press, 2006)

American cinema. Recalling the corporeal emphasis within Lefebvre's conception of social space,[76] I draw on Foucault's conceptualization of the 'docile body' in analyzing how the Irish-American male body is constructed in these films as mediator between spaces and cultures of descent and consent. This chapter considers three sports-themed films (*The Great John L* (1945) *Gentleman Jim* (1942) and *The Long Gray Line* (1954)) which foreground the ethnic male body as a 'dynamic, mutable frontier' and 'transitional entity' (Lois McNay: 1999, 99). Acknowledging the biographical origins of these narratives I argue that these 'true stories' recuperate ethnic masculinities by foregrounding the body as a mutable and mediating site of American male identity expressed in a dialectical relationship between spaces of immigrant/working class and hegemonic masculinities. In these films, whiteness is 'written' on the body as a cultural rather than racial construct through a range of 'disciplines', achieving universal norms through particular histories.

Chapter 4 (*'Flight and the City*: Ethnicity, Urban Space and the Post-War Irish-American Cop) moves my argument to the post-war era and in its analysis of the Irish-American cop offers a vivid case study of 'relations-between' in the configuration American manhood and urban space. In this chapter and the next, I argue that while a socio-spatial discourse of home remains central to characterizations of Irish American masculinity, this theme is now less centred on resolving tensions between descent–consent identities and the recuperation of marginal masculinities than aligning white masculinity and a contemporary politics of space with a nostalgia for 'home' linked to the Irish-American immigrant experience.

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[76] Kirsten Simonsen, "Bodies, Sensations, Space and Time: The Contribution from Henri Lefebvre" in *Geografiska Annaler*. Series B, Human Geography, Vol. 87, No. 1 (2005), 14. Lefebvre understands the body as mediating between self identity and social identity.

In contrast to the often comic or stereotyped representations of earlier eras - the post-war Irish American cop is constructed as a complex figure of (white) male authority positioned between the ethnic neighbourhoods of the immigrant era and the urban and suburban spaces associated with whiteness, mobility and post war consumer capitalism. Drawing on Michel de Certeau's theories linking space and practices of everyday life[77] (a development of Lefebvre's contributions on lived - socially produced - spaces), I examine contrasting constructions of this figure in relation to spaces of post-war America. On one hand, the ethnic origins of older Irish American detectives are foregrounded in films such as *The Naked City* (1948) and *Union Station* (1950) in order to create idealized figures who combine traditional and modern police 'knowledges' of experience and surveillance in policing the city.[78] In contrast, the younger, flawed Irish-American cops seen in *Rogue Cop* (1954) and *Shield for Murder* (1954)[79] are linked with newer spatial configurations of domestic environments beyond the traditional urban ethnic neighbourhood (high-rise apartments, suburbs etc.). I argue that such characters are expressions of anxieties both around 'deviant' masculinities that seek to attain the material benefits of consumer capitalism outside the norms of American manhood (like the gangster of an earlier era) and the changed socio-spatial structures of post-war American society in which the city becomes increasingly identified as a 'dark' place – morally and racially.

The final chapter ('*I Go Back*: Going Home and Spaces of Enchanted Whiteness') considers a number of post-war Hollywood narratives that centre on the 'return' of Irish-American protagonists to places and spaces of home. In this final representational phase, an earlier immigrant ambition for social integration and mobility within American modernity is (seemingly) replaced by a desire for withdrawal to pre-modern

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[77] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984)
[78] Christopher P. Wilson, *Cop Knowledge: Police Power and Cultural Narrative in Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
[79] Both adapted from novels by Irish-American writer William P. McGivern

settings imagined as spaces of innocence and restoration. In this chapter I argue for an understanding of such settings as reflecting not simply post-war nostalgia for the 'old country' among middle-class Irish-Americans or ethnic Americans in general but the reinforcement of the domestic 'white house' as a utopian and normative space within post-war culture. More particularly I read these narratives of return to Irish domestic spaces in light of 'white flight' to the emerging post-war suburbs and the deployment of an iconography of New England nostalgia in the selling of such suburbs, setting them apart from both the corporate and multi-racial spaces of the city.

This final chapter is structured in two parts. Part I considers the intersection between themes of male anxiety and the city in post-war *film noir* in order to situate the nostalgia of the 'return to Ireland' narratives. Richard Gilmore argues that nostalgia, rather than fear, is crucial to *noir*:

> From the Greek nostos meaning 'return home' nostalgia is a word for the sense that something has been lost . . . Nostalgia pervades film noir because it underlies the desperation and violence that pervade film noir. It is the hidden romanticism of film noir . . . The thing in the idea of nostos is home, or more accurately for film noir, some romanticized idea of what would constitute a sense of finally being home . . . the idea of home is the desire for a return to something from one's childhood, when one simply had a home.[80]

In this section I explore this idea in relation to two *film noirs* featuring a new kind of Irish-American masculine figure: *Asphalt Jungle* (1950) and *The Reckless Moment* (1949). I argue that the hardened but romantic protagonists of these narratives function to illustrate and accentuate the nostalgic element of *film noir* as a search for home; a theme more explicit in the films discussed in Section II. Despite their far-fetched romance and escapism I argue that three films – *Top O' the Mornin* (1949), *The Quiet Man* (1952) and *The Luck of the Irish* (1948) can be read as fantasies of post-war domesticity that seek to reimagine and reinforce white masculinity (an early instance of

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[80] Richard Gilmore, "The Sublimity of Chinatown" in *The Philosophy of Neo-Noir*, ed. Mark Conard (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 119-137, 121

Carroll's 'slight of hand'); alternative nostalgia texts to the police roadblock and death at the end of *Reckless Moment* (where the Irish blackmailer realizes he cannot attain acceptance into the white suburban family) and the climactic death of a melancholic criminal's search for lost innocence on a Kentucky horse farm that concludes *Asphalt Jungle*. Concluding these films in Ireland offers a spatially expressed redemption to counterpoint the fatalism and urban claustrophobia characteristic of *noir*. The 'way out' offered in these films posits a pre-modern space of home and a style of masculinity free of the confines of capitalism and labour along with an idealized and conservative vision of hetero-normative relations. Fulfilling and finally resolving the conflicts of earlier phases of Irish-American manhood in Hollywood cinema, the focal point of these romantic fantasies is the domestic environment – a return to the feminine space of the 'white cottage' that replaces the patriarchal White House of the earlier ethnic/assimilationist narratives as a space of fulfilment and belonging. While the Irish-American themed narratives of the 1930s and 40s featured protagonists who desperately wanted to separate themselves from their ethnic/working-class domestic environments in order to achieve social mobility and assimilation, this last group of films features male characters who wish to 'go home'. While apparently returning us to the earliest images of the Irish in American cinema – *The Lad from Old Ireland* (1910) – these narratives function as allegories for a post-war domestic whiteness in which the white suburban nuclear family would stand as the ideal and norm of American life. By incorporating the spaces and cultures of its immigrant past, these contemporary constructions of Whiteness thus simultaneously recuperate elements once considered threatening to its hegemonic status while reasserting a conservative social structure in its race and gender politics.

* * *

The following chapters therefore trace two representational histories: one relating to Irish-Americans masculinities in Hollywood cinema and, imbricated within that, a history of how whiteness adapts, recuperates and consolidates its status as a marker of normative American identity through discourses of popular culture. Attending to the capacity of cinema to give spatial expression – as well as shape the spatial representation – to social relations I examine how Hollywood participates in the 'production of whiteness' through a socio-spatial dialectic in which tensions between descent and consent identities find expression around a recurring motif of home.

Chapter 1

Our House to the White House:
James Cagney and the Construction of Domestic Whiteness

Grounded in a critique of what Theodore Allen has expressed as 'the White Assumption': 'the unquestioning, indeed unthinking acceptance of the 'white' identity of European-Americans of all classes as a natural attribute rather than a social construct,'[1] critical whiteness studies has sought to investigate and expose the constructions of such 'naturalness' across a myriad of historical social and cultural mechanisms, including cinema. For Allen, whiteness has been 'invented' (and re-invented) at crucial moments of change and challenges to the ruling order in American history – the civil war; the 1890s; the Great Depression[2]. Developing this critical perspective, this chapter argues that a similar phase of crises and re-invention underpins the construction and development of James Cagney's Irish-American characters during his 1930s career at Warner Bros., offering specific and significant instances of Gwendolyn Foster's observation that 'whiteness is a form of social control that erupts and continues to be reinvented in [Hollywood] cinema . . .'[3]

Arising from the intersections of a variety of cultural factors that include a crisis in the economic order following the Wall St crash; shifting demographics; changed immigration policies; and the enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code, I argue that while Cagney's dynamic and mercurial Irish-American characters of the early 1930s can be read as reflecting instabilities within the structures and cultural authority of whiteness (particularly an association between assimilation and social mobility), they ultimately work to recuperate its 'naturalness' within an enlarged

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[1] Jeffrey B. Perry, Introduction to Volume II, Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Class Struggle and the Origin of Racial Slavery,* 2 vols. (London, New York: Verso, 1994 and 1997), 4
[2] Around 1945 I set out to investigate three great social crises – the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Populist Revolt of the 1890s and the Great Depression of the 1930s."Theodore Allen, "The History of My Book", quoted by Jeffrey B. Perry, Introduction, Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Class Struggle and the Origin of Racial Slavery.* x
[3] Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *Performing Whiteness: Postmodern Re/Constructions in the Cinema* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012), 26

construction of 'domestic' American male identity. Representing a decisive departure from earlier stereotypes of the Irish as racially othered, I shall argue that such characters function not so much to challenge the normative status of whiteness in American film and popular culture as to progressively redefine its structures and boundaries. In this chapter, I advance a reading of this process of re-negotiation in relation to a motif of home in four films centering on Cagney protagonists produced over the course of a decade. I argue that physical and symbolic spaces of home – sites of intersection between private and public identities - function in these films to articulate a crisis within contemporary paradigms of American masculinity, expressing both a conflict and evolution in the meaning of assimilation (of 'being-at-home') during a period of profound social transformation.

Writing in the mid 1990s, historian Noel Ignatiev advanced an influential and often controversial paradigm for understanding the Irish immigrant experience in nineteenth century United States as a process of 'becoming' white[4]; arguing that the Irish sought identification as 'white' (and the 'wages'/privileges that accrued from this) through strategies of distanciation from blacks and other racial minorities. As Michael O'Meara puts it:

> Those refusing to follow the Irish in their exclusion of blacks or defense of the color line, were branded 'greasers' or 'guineas' and treated accordingly. The Irish emphasis on race loyalty [thus] . . . demoted the importance of ethno-religious differences – the great obstacles to their own social acceptance.[5]

While a number of scholars have similarly looked to the Irish as illustrative of the benefits of 'becoming white' in intersections between race and class in American immigrant history[6] others have noted that this group – as simultaneously Northern European and colonized – represent a special and complex case that is atypical in American racial history. Catherine Egan, for instance,

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[4] Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995)
[5] Michael O'Meara, "How the Irish Became White", in *North American New Right* (December 26, 2012))Accessed: 10/10/2013), http://www.counter-currents.com/2012/12/how-the-irish-became-white-part-1/

[6] David Roediger, The *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the. American Working Class*, (London. New York: Verso, 1991); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, (Oxford University Press, 1995)

complicates the 'becoming white' thesis by asserting that 'the Irish assumed and sometimes directly argued for their whiteness in *both* Ireland and America [but] the Irish experience of colonialism meant that Irish whiteness was not internally consistent or even coherent.'[7] Complicating Ignatiev's analysis on the one hand and Thomas Guglielmo's 'white on arrival' argument on the other (relating to Italian immigrants[8]), David Roediger has proposed a category of 'inbetweenness' in describing 'the thirteen million so called new immigrants who arrived between 1886 and 1925'[9] and began the 'The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs.' Proposing a more holistic analysis of race and American history, Roediger argues for an appreciation of the myriad forces – individual, social and federal - that shaped this 'journey' and argues for a 'messiness to the plot of how immigrants became fully white.'[10] For Roediger, 'inbetweeneness' - akin to Karen Brodkin's 'conditional' whiteness and Matthew Frye Jacobson's 'probationary whiteness' - indicates a social position 'in between hard racism and full inclusion, neither securely white nor nonwhite.'[11]

For Benshoff and Griffin, James Cagney's career 'dramatized Irish assimilation into whiteness: his roles evolved from rebel outsiders to all-American heroes.'[12] While this chapter eschews a direct correspondence between the Irish-American experience and evolving constructions of Cagney protagonists,[13] it draws nevertheless on Roediger's conceptualization of 'not-yet-white-ethnics.'[14] These characters, I argue, can be read as narrative expressions of 'the messiness of the plot' of

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[7] Catherine M. Eagan, "White, 'If Not Quite': Irish Whiteness in the Nineteenth-Century Irish-American Novel" in *Eire-Ireland: a Journal of Irish Studies* (Spring-Summer 2001), 66-85
[8] Thomas Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)
[9] David Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Verso, 1991), 11
[10] Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*, 8
[11] Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*, 8
[12] Harry Benshoff, Sean Griffin, *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 60
[13] This methodology is central to two important studies of the Irish in American cinema: Christopher Shannon, *From the Bowery to Broadway* and Peter Flynn, *Coming into clover: Ireland and the Irish in early American cinema, 1895—1917* [unpublished PhD Thesis], University of Massachusetts Amherst, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2008. http://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations/AAI3325276
[14] David R. Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History*, (London, New York: Verso, 1994), 192

cultural assimilation/normativity that significantly complicate representations of immigrant ethnicities from the silent era when Hollywood more clearly functioned as 'an assimilation machine.'[15] I go further however in suggesting that this 'messiness' also reflects both anxieties and instabilities within hegemonic structures of race during this period and the emergence of an enlarged conception of 'domestic-whiteness' – inclusive and rooted in traditional values but nevertheless normative and racially defined - in the aftermath of the Depression. I argue that Cagney's evolving screen persona during this period expresses a cultural desire to bridge distinctions between 'ethnic' and 'white' identities during a period of crises and consolidation, expressed through the construction of his characters in tension between public and private identities and spaces.

This foregrounding of such tensions both parallels and builds upon Werner Sollors' reading of ethnicity in American literature,[16] which postulates that identity within such texts is constructed in a dialectical relationship between *consent* – how one's identity is self-made - and *descent* – ancestral and hereditary ties. For Sollors, this is 'the central drama in American culture. Consent and descent are terms that allow me to approach and question the whole maze of American ethnicity and culture.'[17] While Sollors' framework has been subject to criticism - John Brenkman argues that 'he creates the false impression that every group has confronted the dialectic of ethnicity and citizenship equally'[18] - it offers a more nuanced and dialectical paradigm than a simplistic teleology of assimilation within which to analyze the often unremarked but nevertheless consistent Irish-American identities of so many of Cagney's Warner Bros characters. Sollors' analysis of patterns of

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[15] Diane Negra, *Off-white Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (London, New York, Routledge, 1991), 21

[16] Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)

[17] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*, 6

[18] John Brenkman, "Multiculturalism and Criticism", ed. Susan Kamholtz Gubar, *English Inside and Out: The Places of Literary Criticism* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), 98

romance in ethnic literature for instance (in which immigrant subjects reject arranged marriages

for love), finds echoes in narratives discussed below:

> American allegiance, the very concept of citizenship developed in the revolutionary period,
> was - like love – based on consent, not on descent, which further blended the rhetoric of
> America with the language of love and the concept of romantic love with American
> identity.[19]

In his readings of immigrant literature, Sollors has elsewhere noted that the term 'ethnicity' is of

relatively recent origin, appearing for the first time in Warner and Lund's *The Social life of a Modern

Community* (1942).[20] Cagney's numerous and wide ranging Irish-American characters leading up to

Yankee Doodle Dandy (also 1942) might therefore be understood as part of an emerging

contemporary consciousness and acceptance of a hyphenated white American identity, one element

of a wider cultural process to accommodate non 'native' identities within evolving structures of

whiteness while nevertheless retaining its hegemonic status.

James Cagney and Hollywood's Reimagining of Irish-American Manhood

In an analysis of male stardom in the 1930s, Robert Sklar has argued that James Cagney represents

a decisive shift in Hollywood constructions of American masculinity.[21] Defined by Sklar as

exemplary of the new 'city boy' type, Cagney exemplified a tension between the historically

grounded ideal of the cowboy with the realities of modern urban life:

> Both embody the traditional dilemma for the American male-independence and isolation,
> on the one hand, attachment and responsibility on the other. The cowboy, however, was and
> remains fixed in the past, a permanent character, a figure of constancy . . . the city boy was a
> contemporary, one recognizable in daily headlines and in daily life. He was part of their
> volatile present and their unknown future. In the city boy, rigidity is contrasted with
> resilience.[22]

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[19] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*, 112
[20] Werner Sollors, *Theories of Ethnicity: A Classical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1996)
[21] Robert Sklar, *City Boys: Cagney, Bogart, Garfield* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994)
[22] Sklar, *City Boys*, 8

Cagney's characters were invariably defined by the negotiation of these tensions – between independence and attachment; between a 'volatile present' and an 'unknown future' that reflected the instabilities of his era. Throughout the 'turbulent thirties' – as the Great Depression gave way to the New Deal followed by entry into WWII, Warner Bros. produced a prolific quantity of cheaply produced genre films – social problem dramas, comedies, musicals (along with several genre hybrids) – in which Cagney offered a unique and entirely contemporary male star persona. As early as 1932, poet and critic Lincoln Kirstein identified Cagney's significance as a barometer of shifts in contemporary American masculinity when he wrote that the actor was the 'the first definitely metropolitan figure to become national, as opposed to the suburban national figure of a few years ago, or of the farmer before that.'[23] Anticipating the comments of Sklar, Kirstein opined that Cagney signalled a shift in archetype; from the American hero as a:

> lean, shrewd, lantern-jawed, slow-voiced, rangy, blond American pioneer [to] a short, red-headed Irishman, quick to wrath, humorous, articulate in anger, representing not a minority in action, but the action of the American majority-the semi-literate lower middle class.[24]

That Kirstein was attentive to Cagney's Irishness in a way that subsequent critics (and popular memory of the star) overlooked is significant: his characters signalled not only a reinterpretation of the American hero in Hollywood cinema but of Irish masculinity also.[25] Christopher Shannon has noted that '...those willing to acknowledge the significance of Cagney's work have trouble discerning anything particularly Irish or ethnic about his films,'[26] yet a survey of the thirty-seven films Cagney made for Warner Bros between 1931 and 1942, reveals that twenty one - roughly 60% - centered on characters that are marked by their surnames as Irish.[27] In the majority of these

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23 Lincoln Kirstein, "Movie: The American Hero and James Cagney", in *Hound and Horn* (Apr.-June, 1932), 465-67
24 Lincoln Kirstein, "James Cagney and the American Hero," *Hound & Horn* (April-June, 1932), p. 466
(From a collection reprinted by Arno Press, N.Y., 1972)
25 Francis R. Walsh, "The Callahans and the Murphys, (MGM, 1927): a case study of Irish-American and Catholic Church censorship" in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol 10, Issue 1, 1990. 33-45
26 Shannon, *From the Bowery to Broadway*, 19
27 The films with Irish named characters are: *Public Enemy* (1931) - Tom Powers; *Taxi* (1932) - Matt Nolan; *Winner Takes All* (1932) - Jimmy Kane; *Picture Snatcher* (1933) - Danny Kean; *Mayor of Hell* (1933) - Patsy Gargan; *Lady Killer* (1933) - Dan Quigley; *Jimmy the Gent* (1934) - Jimmy Corrigan; *Here Comes the Navy* (1934) Jimmy Corrigan; *The St Louis Kid* (1934) - Eddie Kennedy; *The Irish in Us* (1935) - Danny O'Hara; *Devil Dogs of the Air* (1935) - Thomas Jefferson 'Tommy'

roles, Cagney's characters are placed in distinctly Irish families and communities, and usually cast with other stars of explicitly Irish descent, notably Pat O'Brien (with whom he co-starred on nine occasions) and Frank McHugh. This body of work thus offers the most concentrated and sustained representation of Irish-American masculinity in American film up to that point (and indeed thereafter) by a single actor. Its significance lies in the cultural function of the Cagney persona over the long 1930s in renegotiating the structures of white American manhood.

Transformations of White Manhood in the 1930s

Coinciding with the widespread adoption of sound in American cinema, a narrowly racial conception of whiteness as coterminous with 'native' American-ness began to diminish across a range of cultural discourses, a process copper-fastened by the eventual entry of the United States into WWII. An immediate and tangible explanation for this shift was a discernable change in national demographics as a consequence of the Immigration Acts of the mid 1920s: America was now home to millions of 'New Americans.' As Richard Weiss notes:

> The percentage of aliens in the population was very small. By contrast, the second generation had grown very large . . . The combined population of second generation immigrants and their parents was about 30 million in the early 1930s or approximately one third of the total white population. [28]

Caught between descent and consent/private and public identities, Cagney's numerous Irish-American characters during the 1930s are representative of this second generation. Responding to these 'new' Americans, public intellectuals like Horace Kallen, Randolph Bourne and Louis Adamic were to the forefront in changing attitudes to the status of immigrants and their descendants; a discourse that coincided with the Rooseveltian vision for a more inclusive United States at a

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O'Toole; *Great Guy* (1936) aka *Pluck of the Irish* (UK) - Johnny 'Red' Cave; *Frisco Kid* (1935) - Bat Morgan; *Something to Sing About* (1937) - Terrence 'Terry' Rooney (stage name of Thadeus McGillicuddy); *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938) - Rocky Sullivan; *City for Conquest* (1940) - Danny Kenny; *Torrid Zone* (1940) - Nick 'Nicky' Butler; *The Fighting 69th* (1940) - Private Jerry Plunkett; *The Roaring Twenties* (1939) - Eddie Bartlett; *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) - George M. Cohan; *The Bride Came C.O.D.* (1941) - Steve Collins.

[28] Richard Weiss, "Ethnicity and Reform: Minorities and the Ambience of the Depression Years," in *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 66, No. 3, (Dec. 1979), 566-585

moment of national crisis and re-definition. Speaking in 1934, Daniel W. McCormack, Commissioner

of Immigration and Naturalization, spoke of a 'New Deal for the Alien:'

> The New Deal means a more sympathetic and humane consideration of his [the immigrant's]
> problems and a spirit and friendliness and helpfulness rather than one of antagonism and
> persecution.[29]

Just over a decade earlier (1919) in a letter to the American Defense Society, former President

Theodore Roosevelt encapsulated the attitudes of the preceding generation when he wrote that the

immigrant was obligated to become 'an American' in every respect,

> . . . and nothing but an American. If he tries to keep segregated with men of his own origin
> and separated from the rest of America, then he isn't doing his part as an American. There
> can be no divided allegiance here. . . We have room for but one language here, and that is the
> English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans,
> of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding-house,'[30]

Louis Adamic's influential 1934 article 'Thirty Million New Americans'[31] was illustrative of a

growing acknowledgement of the ethnic heritage of the 'thirty million' second-generation

Americans identified by the 1930 census.[32] Writing at precisely the moment where Cagney's on-

screen Irish-American characters were seen in conflict between their immigrant ties and

mainstream norms, Adamic writes: 'In the past there has been entirely too much giving up, too

much melting away and shattering of the various cultural values of the new groups . . . [in which

the] Americanized foreigner became a cultural zero paying lip service to the U.S.'[33] This shift in

perceptions is also central to the late 1930s US Office of Education broadcasts 'Americans All –

Immigrants All'; 26 radio episodes that outlined the distinctive characteristics and contributions

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[29] Daniel W MacCormack, "The New Deal for the Alien" in *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), 465-469

[30] Letter from TR to Richard Hurd, president of the American Defense Society, January 3rd 1919. Quoted in Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,1992), 134

[31] Louis Adamic, "Thirty Million New Americans", in *Harpers Monthly* (November 1934), 684-694

[32] Edward P. Hutchenson, *Immigrants and Their Children, 1850-1950* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1956), 3. In fact this number was in the region of twenty six million. The combined population of second-generation Americans and their parents was about forty million or approximately one third of the total white population.

[33] Adamic, *Thirty Million New Americans*, 684-691

made by various ethnic groups.[34] An Office of Education booklet accompanying the series lauded

the diversity of American life stating that, 'There is no such thing as a native American . . . we are all

immigrants.' Thus, during the 1930s the United States embraced the immigrant and her

contribution to the American experience as never before, an inclusiveness expressed by Adamic's

vivid statement that:

> Ellis Island must become as much the symbol of the United States as Plymouth Rock,
> [because] the coming of peoples to this continent, voluntarily or in chains, is at the very
> center of our historical process.[35]

But while the 1930s represented a profound change in understandings of America as an inherently

immigrant nation, it is also clear from that to be 'American' continued to be identified with white,

albeit in a more plural and inclusive form than before.[36] During this period whiteness comes to be

understood less as a monolithic construct rooted in hereditary descent than a category of social

belonging defined by accessibility and everyday 'typicality'. Cagney's Irish-American characters can

be read in this respect as expressions of Matthew Frye Jacobson's 're-forged, consanguine

Caucasian race'[37] in the aftermath of the Johnson ('Immigrant Quota') Act of 1924. They can thus be

seen as agents of both destruction and conservation.

> Between the 1920s and the 1960s concerns about the 'major divisions,' would so
> overwhelm the national consciousness that the 'minor divisions' which had so preoccupied
> Americans during the period of massive European immigration, would lose their salience
> and disappear altogether as racially based differences.[38]

[34] Zoe Burkholde, *With Science as His Shield: Teaching Race and Culture in American Public Schools, 1900—1954*,
Unpublished Diss. ProQuest, (2008), 313
[35] Rudolph Vecoli, "Louis Adamic and the Contemporary Search for Roots," in *Ethnic Studies* (1978), 31. In fact, this hope
was only partially fulfilled. David Roediger has argued that by the late 1950s 'Ellis Island Whiteness' would be widely
embraced by large sections of American society - including future President John F Kennedy - as a means of 'enriching' the
category of whiteness rather than developing a fully multicultural society. Central to JFK's ability to combine immigrant
(Ellis Island) and white (Plymouth Rock) privilege was his Irish American ancestry; an identity tension rooted in
performance.
[36] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia:
Temple University Press, 2006), 3. - Cagney's function in Hollywood cinema during this period can, I believe, be linked to
what George Lipsitz has described as 'the possessive investment in whiteness [which is] reproduced in a new form in
every era'. That is to say his apparent – ethnically coded - disruption of whiteness serves to reinforce its racial 'invisibility'
while at the same time excluding people of colour from such contestations.
[37] Matthew Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard
University Press, 1998), 96
[38] Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 92

To illustrate this transformation of emphasis, Jacobson points to the 1936 novel *Gone With the Wind* and a scene where Scarlett O'Hara, 'the most famous Irishwoman in American history,' is described as possessing 'magnolia white skin-that skin so prized by Southern women and so carefully guarded with bonnets, veils and mittens against the hot Georgian suns.'[39] For Jacobson:

> The notion that Irishness, like other 'ethnic' whitenesses, was a cultural trait rather than a visual cue became deeply embedded in the nation's political culture between the 1920s and the 1960s.[40]
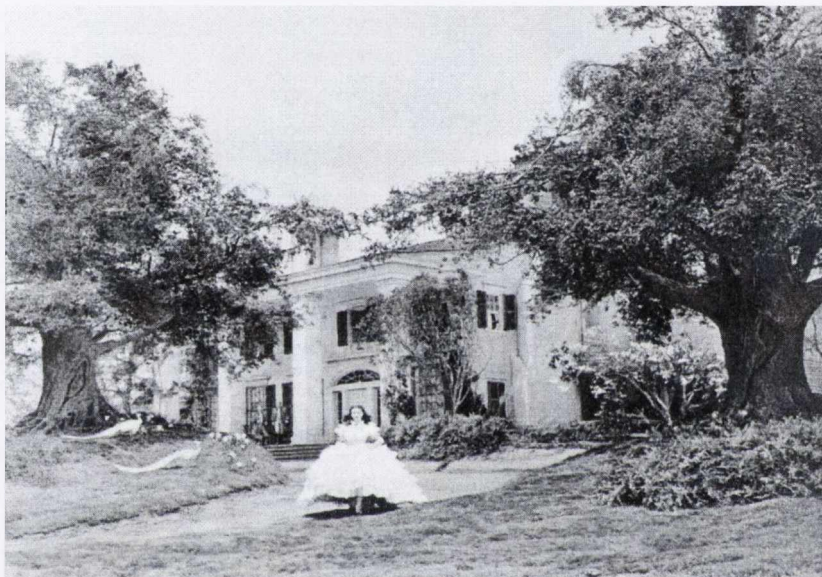
Figure 1 The 'white house' of Tara linking spaces of Irish ancestry and 'reimagined' whiteness in 1930s America

In their constant construction in relation to immigrant origins and the private/domestic realm Cagney's protagonists share this 'ethnic whiteness', counterbalancing their dynamic and often disruptive behaviours with ties to family and descent. In contrast to *Gone With the Wind*'s melancholic yearning for a lost 'white' house which is identified with a mythological understanding

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[39] Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1937), 3
[40] Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 92

of Irish history[41] (an association central to my final chapter), they express tensions within an evolving construction of a contemporary 'domestic whiteness' in which a dynamic ethnic/working-class manhood seeks to locate itself in 1930s America.

Framing this thematic reading, it is striking therefore that Cagney's Irish-American persona at Warner Bros is book-ended by two images of home in narratives centered on confrontations between ethnic and 'native' white masculinities. The actor's breakthrough performance in *The Public Enemy* (1931) concludes with a vivid and shocking scene: Tom Powers - 'self-made' prohibition gangster - is kidnapped from hospital, murdered by rivals and, wrapped in bandages, dumped on the doorstep of his mother's house. A decade later, *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942) offers a dramatic contrast in status and setting: the iconic George M. Cohan, its middle-aged popular musical star sits quietly and confidently in the White House where President Roosevelt personally presents him with a medal of honour for patriotic services. While the first image is a darkly humorous visual pun on stunted masculinity – the violent Powers parodied as a 'Mummy' boy - the second offers audiences a portrait of Oedipal fulfilment: the 'father' of the Union welcoming the Irish immigrant's son into the symbolic space of national manhood. In the first, Cagney's criminal masculinity in the city streets of Chicago – identified with an excessive attachment to ethnic ties and a refusal to assimilate - is punished and his lifeless body dumped at the family home space wrapped in peeling bandages. In the second, exemplary patriotism is recognized and rewarded inside the symbolic home of white American manhood. This journey – from ethnic house to white house – structures this chapter's discussion of four Cagney protagonists during the long 1930s. Linking cultural and spatial identities, 'home' functions in these texts to articulate tensions and transitions within structures of assimilation into normative (white) American manhood and the emergence of

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[41] Geraldine Higgins, "Tara, the O'Haras, and the Irish Gone With the Wind", in *Southern Cultures,* Vol 17, No 1 (Spring 2011), 30-49. 'Tara being the name of the seat of the ancient – pre-colonial – kings of Ireland. In a more complex reading (with implications for the role of Irishness within pre-war American fiction narratives), Geraldine Higgins suggests that Scarlett's 'ethnic identity goes beyond authorial happenstance to a revulsion of Southerness ... [and her] "mixed blood" help to position her, like Gerald, at the racially ambiguous intersection of whiteness and blackness in the novel.'

'domestic whiteness': a construction of white identity as national, inclusive and rooted in tradition while maintaining its racial boundaries.[42]

Houses of Whiteness

In linking a recurring motif of home and domestic space with a 'reforged' construction of whiteness, my analysis of Cagney proposes a cultural discourse parallel to the emergent 'racialization' of residential space in the United States identified by several urban historians as the consequence of housing policies developed under FDR's New Deal;[43] a relationship between constructions of Irish-American manhood, whiteness and spaces of home in Hollywood cinema that runs through this thesis. For many such scholars, the formation of the Federal Housing Administration in 1934[44] forged an association between 'good' housing, whiteness and American values that intertwined a seemingly liberal social agenda with the fiscal conservatism of the banking sector.[45] Responding to the Depression-era housing and employment crises through the provision of mortgage insurance, 'the FHA helped racialize investment patterns throughout the United States by refusing to insure home mortgages in those urban neighbourhoods it identified as high risk: into the very neighbourhoods, that is, into which black Americans had been ghettoized.'[46] This was achieved through a classification system derived from 'Residential Security Maps' (created by the Home

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[42] David Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness: How Hollywood's Immigrants became White* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 234. He argues that a range of Federal and cultural forces during the 1930s, "brought new immigrants more fully into the hopelessly intertwined traditions of exclusion-based white nationalism and inclusive efforts at reform," so that, by 1945, the boundaries between white and black were firmly fixed. I see these films as part of such a process.
[43] Karen Jane Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002)
[44] Philip F. Rubio, *A History of Affirmative Action, 1619-2000* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2009), 94. Writing of the New Deal's influence on racial politics, Rubio writes: 'During a time when the effects of Capitalism had already begun to create massive social upheaval, a state sanctioned set of programs in two parts reasserted what could be called a 're-invention' of whiteness. These programs elevated white status in all spheres of social life as they further degraded the status of 'blackness.'
[45] Clarissa Rile Hayward, *How Americans Make Race: Stories, Institutions, Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 5. Hayward writes of a deep seated historical 'narrative of Americans as a home-owning people' which overlapped substantially with a 'racial identity narrative' which 'assumed, very often without making the case for, a normatively significant divide between 'the black and white races'. These narratives coincided and achieved legitimacy, according to Hayward, through the establishment of the Federal Home Administration (1934).
[46] Rile Hayward, *How Americans Make Race,* 67

Owners' Loan Corporation [HOLC]) that graded investment security for prospective mortgage lenders on a four-point scale within which stable, predominantly white populated areas scored highly.[47] James Greer argues that 'the FHA consistently denied non-whites, most notably African-Americans, mortgage insurance,'[48] linking its policies to an earlier American hierarchy of race dating from the 1910s and 1920s. The basis of these real-estate principles can be traced in the works of Fredrick Babcock and Homer Hoyt, analysts of real estate value and prominent members of in the FHA and HOLC. Greer notes that:

> Consistently, they argued that in the dynamic, expanding, and private market driven American city, a number of factors inevitably brought about the decline of real estate values . . . Real estate appraisal standards were, especially as popularized by Hoyt, explicitly founded in a Nativist and racist calculus . . . Native born whites were at the apogee of this scale and blacks and Latinos were most emphatically at its nadir.[49]

Such market driven calculations proved central influences in the formulation of federal policy thereby 'producing' in a very literal sense, a national space that was racially organized:

> Just as zoning and community planning standards were imbued with Nativist and racist analysis, New Deal housing financing programs adopted nearly identical standards in the implementation of mortgage insurance. New Deal agencies . . . were agents—in a critical, formative period—of racial segregation and consistently so along many fronts.[50]

While the latter part of this statement is broadly agreed upon, Greer arguably simplifies shifts within the cultural and political boundaries of whiteness during the 1930s that fundamentally altered earlier 'nativist' definitions and which offer context to the films under consideration here. While racial segregation between white and non-white communities may have been an effect of housing policies, whiteness as a social construct was nevertheless in transition. Coinciding with the radical changes in demographics outlined above, David Roediger remarks that the immigrant family

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[47] Rile Hayward, *How Americans Make Race*, 66

[48] James Greer, 'Race and Mortgage Redlining in the United States,' paper presented at the Western Political Science Association Meetings, Portland, Oregon March 22-24, 2012. 4-5. Accessed 12/10/2014. http://wpsa.research.pdx.edu/meet/2012/greer.pdf

[49] Greer, 'Race and Mortgage Redlining in the United States' 5

[50] Greer, 'Race and Mortgage Redlining in the United States' 5

home gradually came to be understood as a space of transition into an enlarged construction of whiteness:

> As they lived with race and called on the state for aid, the immigrant house, increasingly defined as a 'white house' became a key site for the making of race. As houses were constructed, so too was the idea . . . that African Americans were anti-neighbours and that all Europeans could unify around that realization.[51]

While such socio-spatial developments are not referenced in the four films examined in this chapter (in ways that can be more directly felt in my discussion of films from the post-war era), their influence can be felt: each use domestic spaces to locate tensions between ethnic/working class male identities and constructions of whiteness during a decade of social and spatial transformation.

The Public Enemy and the Uncanny Home

Although not his first film role, Tommy Powers was Cagney's star-making performance: making full use of sound's capacity to give voice to an urban vernacular and packed with incident and violence, it represented a radical challenge to existing structures of American masculinity. In the film's opening scenes a young Tommy and Matt Doyle are seen knocking hats of middle-class gentlemen in a department store and – later - defiantly submitting to a beating from his father, who (wearing the uniform of a Chicago street cop), represents an older mode of assimilation and patriarchal order. As an adult, he holds his brother Mike's 'uniform' apprenticeship to assimilation (as a tram conductor while pursing night school) in similar distain.[52] Linking these rejections is Tommy's desire for privileges of whiteness (mobility and materialism) without submitting to established patterns of 'Americanization.' While the narrative concludes that this rebellious rejection of white patriarchy cannot be endured by mainstream society (explicitly so in its closing cards), it does not fully convince that Tommy is an unequivocal 'enemy' of American values; his charismatic

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51 Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*, 8-9
52 James A. Kaser, *The Chicago of Fiction: A Resource Guide*, # 480, Kubec and Bright, *The Public Enemy*, np. The novel – but not the film – explains that Michael is named after his father who is shot down in the line of duty, thus accentuating Tommy's deviance from the familial association with American values.

individualism constructed as an errant but vital trait in comparison to his brother's anemic Americanism. It is this 'domestic' conflict that lies at the centre of the film's ambivalence towards hegemonic norms of American manhood in the immediate aftermath of the Wall St. Crash.

Christopher Shannon has differentiated *The Public Enemy* from the other films in the classical gangster trilogy of the early 1930s identified by Robert Warshow[53] through an emphasis on the relationship between the gangsters and their respective communities:

> The story of the rise and fall of the Irish American gangster Tommy Powers could not be further from the destructive individualism of Rico Bandello in *Little Caesar* and Tony Camonte in *Scarface* ... *The Public Enemy* is less a morality tale on the consequences of blind ambition than it is a fable of the duties and obligations imposed by membership in a community not of one's own making.[54]

For Shannon, the Irish American background of Powers is an overlooked element in his rise and fall which has been too often minimized by genre histories of the Hollywood gangster which have been too ready to lump all three together as 'ethnic': 'Despite his hostility to authority Tommy needs acceptance by his family and community in order for his success to feel complete.'[55] In this reading, a sense of 'place or locality' constitutes a slowing down of the assimilation process as Irish American communities insulate themselves from the impositions of Americanization and where loyalties remain local. As Shannon puts it: 'Irish Americans may not always know what to do but they know who they are ... In these films ethnicity is not who you are but where you are.'[56]

However, I would argue that the film's relationship to space as a locus of ethnic identity and loyalty is more complex than Shannon suggests. Central to this complexity is an appreciation that the Powers' home is not simply a space of retreat from 'public' values but paradoxically – in the

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53 Robert Warshow, *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre and Other Aspects of Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001)
54 Christopher Shannon, "Public Enemies, Local Heroes: The Irish-American Gangster Film in Classic Hollywood Cinema" in *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter, 2005), 48-64, 54

55 Shannon, "Public Enemies, Local Heroes, 54
56 Shannon, "Public Enemies, Local Heroes, 54

characters of Tommy's father and brother (as cop and soldier respectively) - a space of descent which houses conflicting performances of Irish-American masculinity. Despite the amount of time spent in public, metropolitan settings, the contested character of this private space is central to the film's dramatic conflict as Tommy rejects established cultural trajectories of assimilation into white manhood (patriarchal and underwritten by force) while retaining family loyalties (maternal and unconditional). Strikingly Tommy is not fully 'at home' in either. While the more unequivocally 'foreign' gangsters Rico Bandello (*Little Caesar*) and Tony Camonte (*Scarface*) are rendered literally homeless – abject and on the run in the alien spaces of the city – Tommy's demise is framed in familial rather than social terms. While Rico ends up drinking and sleeping in a cheap flophouse (before dying in the gutter) and Tony holes up against the forces of law and order in his fortified hideout (before also dying in the street), *The Public Enemy* is structured by a dynamic of departure and return to his family home which locate Tommy's transgressions in relation to the private sphere and give expression to a complex dynamic between descent and consent identities. This spatial interplay suggests that Tommy's death and his brother's diligent efforts at cultural assimilation be read not as diametrically opposed masculinities but as different sides of the same coin; expressing a crises in the structures of white American manhood. For all its moralizing against crime, the film does not present us with an attractive alternative to Tommy's contradictory ambitions to retain ties to his ethnic past while also achieving the 'American dream.' By contrast, Mike's dutiful commitment to assimilation is constructed as a joyless submission to hegemonic norms of American manhood with little benefit to self, community or – despite military service - nation.

In *The Public Enemy* the difficulty of being 'at home' is a central and structuring narrative concern. The early scene in which Tommy's father orders him inside for a strapping establishes the Irish-American homestead as a site of both maternal indulgence and patriarchal values. The domestic

space as a site of conflict between second generation ethnic masculinities recurs in several subsequent scenes between the adult Tommy and his brother: when Mike enlists in the US Army and is forced to leave home he tells his brother to 'try to stay home a little more' – the implication being to stay off the streets – but then he punches him; when Mike returns from war he publically condemns his brother's activities and Tommy leaves the family home after a bitter confrontation; and, subsequently, when Tommy brings money to his Ma before being thrown out by Mike once again: 'You ain't welcome in this house. That money is blood money and we want no part of it'. This 'house' is neither fully ethnic nor fully white; its values remain uncertain and open to contestation. In between these scenes, Tommy occupies a variety of 'half-way houses' structured by surrogate father, then mother, figures: the Red Oaks Club run by Puttynose for his 'boys'; Paddy Ryan's bar; the Washington Arms Hotel; the (ironically titled) Congress Hotel (with Gwen); Jane's apartment – where he spends the night in the older prostitute's bed. These unhomely spaces of the modern metropolis stand in cold counterpoint to a fantasy of home evoked by Tommy's devotion and repeated return to his mother; a longing for childhood shelter that seems tantalizingly within reach in the film's final scene as she prepares for his return: 'Oh its wonderful. I'll get his room ready. I knew my baby would come home'. He does, of course, but in the most ironic sense since the home she represents does not exist.

In his focus on the centrality of the ethnic community to understanding *The Public Enemy*, Christopher Shannon has suggested that Mike Powers:

> ... may be the weakest link in the narrative chain of community that the film otherwise successfully realizes ... it is difficult to accept that he is of the same neighbourhood, much less the same family, as Tom.[57]

While this may support Shannon's wider thesis, it fails to grapple with the role and function of Mike Powers and the Irish-American home as a space where the tensions of assimilation are played out

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[57] Shannon, "Public Enemies, Local Heroes, 54

at a historical moment when the structures and norms of white American masculinity are under pressure and re-negotiation. Tommy's performance of American manhood is attractive but illegitimate, constructed as unsanctioned, anti-social and childish (through an emphasis on his stunted sexuality). In searching for a fast route to success, it seeks to replace hegemonic 'consent' masculine values of character - discipline, hard work and patriotism (exemplified in the film's representation of the puritanical Mike) - with an ostentatious and ersatz 'performance' of success (the core 'wage' of whiteness). As Bruzzi puts it: 'The assumed gangster's image cannot offer power to control or define identity. Clothes only make the illusion of the man.'[58]

Tommy Powers' in between manhood, caught between private and public spaces and identities explains why the film ends twice: first in the streets, then again at the family home. Avenging the death of his life-long pal Matt, Tommy steals pistols from a gun shop and marches into the Western Chemical Company - headquarters of gangster 'Schemer Burns' - where he kills or seriously injures his rivals. Shot and wounded in the shootout himself, he staggers onto a rain-drenched street. The low camera angle suggests an epic conclusion as he falls to the ground yet his final line undercuts such an interpretation: 'I ain't so tough.' This self-aware puncturing of his own hollow public manhood leads to a reconciliation with Mike who, along with their mother, visits the heavily bandaged Tommy in hospital in a tender scene of family reunion. Finally, it seems that competing modes of second-generation manhood, of diametric attitudes to consent and descent, are to be reconciled and stabilized. But this is a false and ultimately unachievable hope, later confirmed when Tommy is kidnapped from the hospital and killed by rival gangsters. In a perverse replaying of the family reunion, his bandaged body is dumped at the door of the Powers' house (his mummified corpse an obscene parody of the Egyptian purification ritual). This disquieting juxtaposition of home and death produces a profound sense of the 'uncanny' as Freud conceived of it in the

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[58] Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing Cinema: Clothing and identity in the movies* (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), 94

aftermath of WWI. Defining *heimlich* as 'Friendly, intimate, homelike; the enjoyment of quiet content, etc., arousing a sense of peaceful pleasure and security as in one within the four walls of his house,' Freud proposes that it is a word 'the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich* . . . something which is secretly familiar which has undergone repression and then returned from it . . .'[59]

Tommy's 'return' from the city streets provokes an experience of the uncanny because it links home with death: expressing a crisis in relations between private and public, ethnic and assimilated, descent and consent masculinities. While on the one hand the ending reasserts the norms of hegemonic white manhood (subscribed to and upheld by his father and brother), Hollywood's compulsory restoration of this order (through the death of the 'public enemy') is ambiguous and unconvincing. Mike's oddly determined, vengeful march towards the camera suggests that his seemingly unshakable embodiment of normative manhood is less stable than the film's concluding title card would have us believe.[60] (The shooting script, but not the final film, suggests that Mike is about to change sides and take the law into his own hands).[61] Having fought to defend the American ideal of democracy on the battlefields of Europe and augment his own passage into national manhood in the process, Mike Powers now finds himself in a home(land) that is simultaneously familiar and *unheimlich*. Situating this experience of the uncanny in Michael expresses anxieties in the structures of white masculinity discussed above, in which his return from WWI functions as a parallel to the social uncertainties and cultural transformations of the early 1930s. It is Mike, not Tommy who now is caught in-between. Thus, while the film's conclusion insists that the 'enemy' has been expunged and a (white) hegemonic order restored, the ambivalence of this ending

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[59] Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 17: An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, 'The Uncanny' (1919), (London: Vintage Books, 2001). 217-253
[60] 'The END [sic] of Tom Powers is the end of every hoodlum. 'The Public Enemy' is, not a man, nor is it a character -- it is a problem that sooner or later WE, the public, must solve.'
[61] Bob Herzber, *The Left Side of the Screen: Communist and Left-Wing Ideology in Hollywood 1929-2009* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011) 12. In the original screenplay, Mike opens a suitcase he brought back from the war, grabs two grenades and strides in fury out the front door. The scene was cut from the final film by William Wellman.

intimates an instability within norms of American manhood and a failure to produce a national space of domestic whiteness adequate to shifting social structures.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

Parallel to its central conflict between second-generation masculinities, *The Public Enemy*'s 'unhappy ending' links Tommy's failure to sexually/emotionally mature and form a successful romantic relationship (with the assumption of marriage) with Gwen (Jean Harlow) to (heterosexual) norms of American manhood. As noted, an association between marriage (domesticity) and assimilation is integral to Hollywood narratives dealing with Irish-American themes during the 1920s and 1930s which (following Sollors' observations)[62], link 'the concept of romantic love with American identity.' As a parody of the Hollywood star system, *Lady Killer* (1935)[63] also links 'becoming white' to a romantic/domestic subplot, but in ways that problematize earlier 'melting pot' fantasies. Bridging pre- and post- Production Code constructions of the street-wise Cagney persona, the film is a highly self-reflexive text that clearly parallels the actor's personal success story from New York's Lower East Side to Hollywood icon (what Dyer describes as the 'extraordinary/ordinary paradox'[64]) while simultaneously exposing the constructed nature of whiteness and stardom 'as fantasy mechanisms that attempt to work in terms of racial superiority/exteriority . . .'[65] While a development on Cagney's city boy persona and less fatalistic than *The Public Enemy*, the film also fails to reconcile public and private male ethnic identities within the domestic sphere and offers a self-conscious undermining of the 'natural' construction of whiteness in popular culture. While – in the pattern of Hollywood 'melting pot' narratives - a domestic union between the couple is intimated at the film's conclusion, it feels more of an

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[62] Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture,* 112

[63] Based on Rosalind Keating Shaffer's story "The Finger Man", screenplay by Ben Markson and Lillie Hayward, Directed by Roy Del Ruth.

[64] Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979), 42-43

[65] Sean Redmond, "The Whiteness of Stars: Looking at Kate Winslet's Unruly White Body" in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader* eds. Sean Redmond, Su Holmes (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 263-274; 267

obligation than earned.

The narrative centres on New York cinema usher Dan Quigley (Cagney) who, impatient with his position at the bottom of the social ladder gradually rises – in a satirical take on the Horatio Alger myth – to become a rich and famous Hollywood star via a life of crime. In an elaborate 'sting' that acts as the bridge between the criminal milieu and the world of the movies he masterminds the staging of an accident in which he is knocked down by a rich widow, asks to be taken inside her house and proceeds to 'case it out' in order to return later and rob her valuables. The elaborate set-up includes casting a fake physician and a prop ambulance and relies on Quigley's ability to credibly act injured. Although the ruse succeeds, the police soon catch up, forcing Quigley to escape first to Chicago (the setting of *The Public Enemy*), and then, finally to Hollywood's sound stages where he quickly graduates from extra to leading man. This westward movement coincides with Charlie Kiel's observation that:

> It is no coincidence that the star system emerged at the same time as motion picture production was shifting its central operations from the East Coast to the West. The ongoing relocation of film personnel to the Los Angeles area facilitated the identification of movie-star lifestyles with the geographical (and symbolic) site of Hollywood. Hollywood thus became synonymous with a particular lifestyle; it was not simply where movies were made, but where those who made movies chose to live. Moreover, that life assumed a special quality reinforced by the physical separation of movie stars from the rest of the United States.[66]

In the film, Hollywood functions as a simulacra for the United States as utopian promised (home)land; a place of opportunity for the ambitious 'foreigner' where individualism can triumph over inherited ties and traits. A central feature of this fantasy is whiteness; linking race, stardom, social mobility and consumption. These elements coincide in Quigley's romance and engagement to the unequivocally white movie star Lois Underwood (Margaret Lindsay) which replays the popular 1920s ethnic/class Cinderella narrative trope, representing a 'coming home' into whiteness

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[66] Charlie Kiel, 'Stars and Movie Culture in the 1920s,' Accessed March 21st 2015. filmreference.com
http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Romantic-Comedy-Yugoslavia/Silent-Cinema-STARS-AND-MOVIE-CULTURE-IN-THE-1920s.html

through marriage. However, in a satirical re-visiting of Tommy Powers' unapologetic and unreconstructed ethnic/working-class identity, the ideological fantasy is fundamentally undermined by Quigley's inability to 'repress' corrosive past identities and pass un-problematically into white domesticity.

Figure 2 The social construction of whiteness: Cagney in brownface 'at home' in *Lady Killer*

When Quigley first arrives in Hollywood (in a parallel to the immigrant experience) he is cast as 'himself': ethnic, urban, unrefined. On set he mistakenly takes his lunch in the dressing room of Ms. Underwood. A feminine (white) counterpoint to his urban (ethnic) male, he confesses, 'You're changing my ideas about what a movie star is like.' In a subsequent scene we see him in 'brown-face,' made-up as a native American. The incongruity of the scene is played for laughs (Cagney describes himself as Chief 'pain in the ass' in Yiddish!) but represents a decisive shift in the film's representational politics that signals Quigley's path towards middle class whiteness. In assuming the identity of Hollywood's earliest and most enduring Other, the film anticipates Michael Rogin's

'white face: black noise'[67] discussion of Jewish and Irish variety artists in the late nineteenth century who put on blackface in order to take it off.[68]

This understanding of whiteness (and the privilege accruing from it) as socially constructed is further developed in a conversation with Lois who explains that movie stardom is less a 'given' quality than a commodity generated and sustained by the consumerist impulse of fandom. Inspired by this insight Quigley begins to write his own fan mail, achieving promotion from (minority) extra to leading man. In the process, his socio-ethnic background is quickly erased as his star persona is (ironically) constructed in relation to traditional markers of heroic white masculinity. In one advert, he is shown endorsing hunting rifles: 'Dan Quigley, Famous He-man of the screen says, 'On all my hunting trips I use a Winston True Bore shotgun. If you want the game limit, take my advice." In a pastiche of Richard Dyer's observations on star 'availability' and 'artificial authenticity,' another cover reads, 'Dan Quigley, My Life behind the Screen.' While these fan letters, interviews and star endorsements serve to offer a glimpse of the 'real' person 'behind the screen', they function in the film to satirize the iconic and immutable status of Hollywood whiteness, and in the process, problematize the 'naturalness' of assimilation. In short they call into question the traditional dynamic between consent and descent identities outlined in the introduction and begin a process towards a construction of whiteness understood as incorporating ethnic manhood.

In a self-reflexive dissection of Hollywood stardom as the ultimate expression of the 'culture of personality' identified earlier, Quigley acquires a set of markers linking iconic white manhood with material success and cultivated taste: his clothes and appearance (a trim moustache and blazers), a more refined verbal expression, and the sophistication of his surroundings. But just as this

[67] Michael Rogin, "Blackface, White Noise: The Jewish Jazz Singer Finds His Voice" in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Spring, 1992), 417-453
[68] Rogin's title deliberately echoes (and inverts) Franz Fanon's classic text *Black Skin, White Masks* which deploys a psychoanalytic methodology to argue that through the process of colonization, native peoples are forced to wear masks of the colonizer.

reframed persona is established, the film takes an unpredictable turn: Quigley's masquerade begins to crack, revealing his less than 'clean' origins and history. A series of repressed instincts break through, undermining his 'assimilation' into Hollywood whiteness and his future marriage with Lois.[69]

The first of a number of 'performance breakdowns' takes place at Hollywood's legendary 'Cocoanut Grove' (sic) nightclub; the fabled locus of white stardom at the height of the studio era. Quigley encounters a critic who made derogatory comments after violent threats - "I'll cut your ears off of you and mail 'em to your folks" – he forces him to eat the review in the abject environment of the men's room before, it is suggested, he flushes his head in the toilet. Even more outrageous is a coarse practical joke that he orchestrates at Lois's characteristically grand movie star home: a symbolic expression of 'domestic whiteness' that aligns social mobility and material privilege with racial iconicity. As her refined inner circle gathers for her birthday, Quigley has a menagerie of exotic animals delivered (escaped monkeys, a band of yodelers, and an elephant) in a vividly literal expression of the return of the repressed that links his presence within the genteel star's (white) house to these 'wild' and non-civilized creatures.[70] Several close-ups of the monkeys emphasize the defilement of this 'civilized' space while Quigley laughs hysterically. The 'joke' appalls Lois and brings about a decisive break in their romantic plans.

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[69] In its satirical undermining of hegemonic social categories in American society, the film can be seen as an instance of wider tendencies in Hollywood cinema of the period evident in the Marx Bros., Screwball and various comedy hybrids. See: Henry Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts?: Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).
[70] Another linking of Quigley and 'animal' behavior occurs when the gang members visit Dan in his apartment. Spade picks up a picture of Lois, making a comment on how Dan is now "rubbing noses with all the big shots in the picture business." Dan chuckles and off-handedly remarks: "Well, call it noses if you like."

Figure 3, 4 'Return of the repressed': a hysterical Cagney and monkeys on the loose inside Lois' Hollywood home in *Lady Killer*

In a parallel eruption of the repressed, Quigley's old New York gang catch up with him and threaten to expose his criminal past. When he refuses to co-operate,[71] they make true on a threat of blackmail and Quigley is arrested. Fearing that they will be 'tainted' by this association, he is fired by the studio and abandoned by Lois. Having lost none of his street-smarts, he cunningly turns the tables on his blackmailers and is eventually exonerated by Police Chief O'Brien (Frank Sheridan). In the romantic comedy and 'melting-pot' tradition, the narrative closes with Quigley's reunion with Lois Underwood and the proposal of marriage suggesting that he is now ready/worthy to participate in the white domestic ideal.

Lady Killer shares a generic structure with similar 'Hollywood' themed films from the 1920s in its narrative of a working-class 'everybody' becoming a celebrity (e.g. the Colleen Moore vehicle *Ella Cinders* [1926]) but in its foregrounding of an unpleasant and aggressive street-wise male protagonist it contrasts strongly with plucky and winsome female protagonists trying to 'make it' in

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[71] His refusal leads to one of the film's most famous scenes in which Quigley is shown brutishly dragging his old flame Myra (Mae Clarke) across his apartment by her hair: an elaboration of their equally vicious grapefruit scene from *The Public Enemy*.

a man's world who achieve social mobility and integration into whiteness through marriage. In this respect it offers a particularly vivid illustration of Sean Redmond's observation that:

> When one reaches for idealized whiteness; when one acts out the representation of what it means to be a white star, to become a white star; when one sees or bears witness to the representation of the idealized whiteness in and through the images and intertexual relays of the idealized white star . . . one is demonstrating how whiteness, or this idealized form of whiteness, is a social construction and not an apriori, naturally powerful exterior subject position at all . . . the fissure that results from the play of whiteness potentially opens it up to contestation and critique.[72]

But while it satirizes Hollywood's construction of iconic American manhood it ultimately affirms the hegemony of whiteness in its 'happy ending' that positions white domesticity as both inclusive and normative but which requires the suppression of 'descent' ties and behaviors.[73]

While this happy ending signals a development of the Cagney persona in which he achieves social acceptance and mobility and through 'forgiveness' and marriage to Lois, the film's ironic undermining of whiteness and Hollywood itself, undermines the credibility and romance of this convention. As with *The Public Enemy*, the conclusion illustrates instability within Hollywood's earlier assimilation paradigm capable of accommodating descent and consent identities in a manner that reflected wider demographic and social changes. As the decade wore on however, conflict between these identities becomes less pronounced.

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The Irish in Us (1935) signals a decisive shift in the Cagney persona that not only reflects pressures arising from the enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code in 1934[74] but a less

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72 Redmond, *The Whiteness of Stars*, 269
73 Steve Garner, *Whiteness: An Introduction* (London: Wiley, 2008), 87. This is a particular variation on the long discourse of 'Othering' central to whiteness which has historically been constructed within a range of associated binaries linking 'cleanliness, redemption and the moral economy.'

hierarchical construction of white masculinity that seeks to accommodates both ethnic loyalties and social mobility (literally and symbolically) within the same house. The immigrant domestic space again serves as the setting for second-generation fraternal conflict but in contrast to *The Public Enemy*, Cagney's dynamic protagonist resolves individual ambition with family loyalties within a New Deal ideal of inclusivity (that nonetheless maintains racial exclusivity).[75] The film's balancing of descent and consent values under the same roof thus unites inherited/communal and the acquired/individual identities in the construction of a new American manhood.

Figure 5 Gendering *descent / consent*: The pugnacious Cagney and one of his many 'Ma's' at home in *The Irish in Us* (1935)

The Irish in Us (1935) incorporates familiar elements of the Cagney persona – an urban setting, an immigrant family context and home and a restless ethnic/working class masculinity - but the character of Danny is discernibly less anti-social and aggressive than protagonists in films like *The*

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[74] In July 1934, the Motion Picture Production Code, in place since 1930, began to be rigorously enforced by the Production Code Administration, aka 'The Hays Office'.
[75] T. Winter speaks of 'an identification of masculinity with whiteness' during the 1930s and notes that, 'as white masculinity became more ethnically inclusive, the lines of racial difference persisted. Important labour and welfare legislation of the New Deal, such as the 1934 Federal Housing Act, the 1935 Social Security Act and the 1936 National Labor Relations Act all intended to bolster the male role of breadwinner and provider, privileged whites.' T Winter, 'Whiteness', B. Carroll (Ed.), *American masculinities: A historical encyclopedia*. (492-495). (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.) 439

Public Enemy, Lady Killer or the later *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938). The narrative centres on an

intergenerational Irish-American family; three single O'Hara men – Danny (Cagney), Pat (Pat

O'Brien) and Mike (Frank McHugh) who (like the Powers' boys) continue to live at home with their

mother Mrs. O'Hara (Mary Gordon). Although this set-up displays resemblances to the 'melting pot'

dramas of the 1920s referred to earlier, the narrative emphasis here shifts from the earlier films'

focus on socially ambitious daughters to an inward-directed story of three sons whose deepest

commitment is to their mother. This structure facilitates not only the popular and repeated

collective casting of Cagney, Pat O'Brien and Frank McHugh but also indicates the fading

significance of the 1920s assimilation narratives and a changed cultural function for Irish-American

themed films. While the O'Haras are associated with familiar clichés of Irish-American identity (a

doting mother, images of shamrocks, and sentimental songs like 'When Irish Eyes are Smiling')

their ethnicity has been softened to what Herbert Gans would later term a 'symbolic'[76] level to

construct a tight-knit ideal of the 'typical' working class family; an influential configuration that will

be reproduced in other films from the decade and beyond WWII featuring Irish-American and other

ethnic identities.[77]

In keeping with the Cagney persona, Danny is a street-wise opportunist who stands apart from his

two brothers who are represented more stereotypically, with career paths determined by ethnic

loyalties and traditions. Pat is a cop and Mike a fireman while Danny believes – despite evidence to

the contrary - that he will one day score a great success as a boxing promoter. As was the case with

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[76] Herbert J. Gans, 'Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and cultures in America,' in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 1, (1979), 1-20. Although he uses it to illustrate how post 1960s whites Americans have drawn on symbolic elements of their (distant) immigrant past, I draw on Herbert Gans term 'symbolic ethnicity' here to draw attention to the way in which these ethnic markers 'colour' the film's white working class family.

[77] George Lipsitz explores the prevalence of 'urban ethnic working-class situation comedies' in the homogenized culture of 1950s America: 'The focus on the family . . . involved a special emphasis on mothers. Images of long-suffering but loving mothers pervaded these programs and publicity about them.' *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1990). 54. In films such as *The McGuerins from Brooklyn* (1942) and *The Catered Affair* (1962), as well as post-war TV and radio serials like *The Life of Riley, The Honeymooners, Hey Jeannie* and *Father Knows Best*, Irish-Americans are posited as representative of 'traditional' white working class values within an extended family unit also centred on the mother where the ambition for individual financial success is secondary to communal well being.

The Public Enemy, Danny's freewheeling instinct and impatience with convention contrast him with his brothers. Although Pat and Mike repeatedly encourage him to take the police examination and provide for Ma when one of them marries and moves on from the family home, he flatly refuses: 'I don't want to be a cop'. Danny has higher ambitions than 'tribal' security. Redirecting the gangster's entrepreneurial instincts[78] in the context of the Great Depression he wants to succeed on his own terms in pursuit of the American Dream. The tensions within this ambition are expressed spatially in the film between the spaces of the Irish-American home - identified again with the mother and collective ties of descent - and the boxing ring – a public space of individual competitiveness.

As is common in the 'double plot' narrative of classical Hollywood cinema,[79] the abstract nature of Danny's ambitions takes form in a romantic subplot. Pat's girlfriend Lucille Jackson (an ideal of feminine beauty played by the unequivocally 'white' Olivia de Havilland) is daughter of boss Captain Jackson (John Farrell MacDonald), and her class-bred etiquette and manners are comically contrasted with the O'Hara brothers' lack of refinement during a dinner at the family home where she is brought to meet Pat's mother. Despite the fact that honest and steady Pat (O'Brien) hopes to marry her, when Danny and Lucille meet at the Fireman's Ball, they confess their mutual attraction. Hurt by this development, Pat decides to move out of the family home to the great distress of Mrs. O'Hara who wishes to maintain harmony and unity between her sons. Upset at having broken up the family, Lucille lies to Danny that she is no longer interested in him. The film's final act takes place at a boxing match police fundraiser where Danny's protégé Carbarn Hammerschlog (Allen Jenkins) is scheduled to fight. Through a series of comic incidents he becomes too drunk, leaving Danny – as his manager - with no option but to take to the ring himself. Realizing he is on the losing end of his opponent's punches, Ma insists that Pat gets into Danny's corner and tell him that Lucille

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[78] Humbert S. Nelli, *The Business of Crime: Italians and Syndicate Crime in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 257-258. Nelli uses the term 'entrepreneurial crime' to describe the gangsters of the 1920s and 1930s whose activities were largely fostered by the Volsted Act.

[79] David Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures," in Philip Rosen (Ed), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 17 – 34. 20

does love him. Inspired, he trounces his opponent, becomes Champ, and is reconciled with Lucille and his brother.

As with *Lady Killer*, Cagney's character Danny finds success through a masculinity that emphasizes individualism over ethnic and work-class ties. This effort differentiates him from his brothers (who remain limited by ethnically-coded structures of family and profession) and moves him beyond the safe and familiar setting of the family home towards a new domesticity linking marriage and social mobility: he wins 'the girl' (explicitly marked as white middle class) and 'the purse'. Unlike *The Public Enemy* or *Lady Killer* though, this success is not in conflict with his origins - his mother and brothers are enthusiastic and vociferous supporters at the boxing finale and remain united to the end. *The Irish in Us* thus positions Cagney's Irish-American family masculinity – as a fulcrum between the past (the lament for 'Danny Boy') and the future - his marriage moving him beyond his immediate family's domestic setting and culture (perhaps to one of America's emerging white suburbs). The 'Us' in the film's title thus might be read as directed at Louis Adamic's 'thirty million new Americans' who, by the mid 1930s, constitute enlarged and consolidated communities of normative whiteness.

The structuring tensions of Cagney's Irish-American persona between descent and consent identities are finally reconciled in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, his final and most successful[80] Warner Bros film of the long 1930s.[81] A war-time bio-pic whose subject functions as a populist rallying call at a moment of national unity, the film also represents the culmination of the motif of domestic space in

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[80] The film won Cagney his only Academy Award in a career in which he was nominated three times: *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938); *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942); *Love Me or Leave Me* (1955).

[81] Paul McDonald, *The Star System: Hollywood's Production of Popular Identities* (London: Wallflower Press, 2000), 65. Cagney refused to sign a new contract after the film and decided instead to form an independent company – Cagney Productions – with his brother. The failure of this company led Cagney to return to Warner Bros. in 1949 but on a non-exclusive contract and greatly improved terms.

Cagney's film of the period in its narration of George M. Cohan's life from within the White House: symbolic setting of American patriarchy.[82]

* * *

The role of George M. Cohan offered Cagney a long-sought opportunity to shed his street-tough persona, demonstrate his under-used song and dance skills, and dispel accusations of Communist sympathies accrued during the 1930s.[83] While its production and release can be read as a timely hybrid of two of Warner Bros most popular (and populist) 1930s genres – the bio-pic and backstage musical[84] - *Yankee Doodle Dandy* also represents a triumphant and symbolic 'coming home' for Cagney's dynamic Irish-American persona; a war-time reconciliation of the tensions found in earlier films within a re-constituted paradigm of national white manhood.

Writing about the unique qualities of American popular culture in 1924, Gilbert Seldes reflected on the contributions of George M. Cohan to late nineteenth century America:

> The high spirits and sophistication of the Cohan revues have not frequently been equaled on our stage, for the whole of Cohan's talents were poured into them without reserve . . . he advertised himself and ridiculed his own self-advertisement . . . Throughout he was the high point of Cohanism, of that shrewd, cocksure, arrogant, wise, and witty man who was the true expression of the America of Remember the Maine!, the McKinley elections, the Yellow Kid, and Coon! Coon! Coon![85]

Performing since he was a child in the family vaudeville, Cohan achieved unrivalled success as a composer and performer on Broadway stages during the twenty-year period from his first hit musical *Little Johnny Jones* (1904) (which included the song 'Yankee Doodle Boy') until 1926, by

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82 Jeff Smith, *The Presidents We Imagine: Two Centuries of White House Fictions on the Page, on the Stage, Onscreen, and Online* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009); Justin S. Vaughn, Lilly J. Gore, eds. *Women and the White House: Gender, Popular Culture, and Presidential Politics* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2012) - For an elaboration on constructions of the American Presidency and the symbolism of the White House in popular culture.

83 Marc Eliot, *Reagan: The Hollywood Years* (New York: Harmony Books, 2008), 168. Eliot describes the film as "a political self-purge" for Cagney.

84 David Thomson explains, 'The film was based on a stage-play by Walter Kerr in 1939 which George M. Cohan had tried to have adapted for the screen without success. By 1941 however the project had a topical resonance, brought into even shaper focus by the bombing of Pearl Harbor four months before its gala premiere in May 1942 which raised $4.75 millions dollars in war bonds.' *Have You Seen...?': a Personal Introduction to 1,000 Films including masterpieces, oddities and guilty pleasures (with just a few disasters)* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

85 *Gilbert Seldes, The Seven Lively Arts* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1924), 137-138

which time he and Sam Harris had produced almost forty shows. While his career experienced something of a slump by the end of the decade, his vitality, optimism and populism chimed with the FDR's spirit of reliance during the 1930s and he was cast in twice in Presidential roles during the decade: onscreen as both Presidential candidates in the Norman Taurog comedy *The Phantom President* (1932) and back on Broadway for the first time in a decade as a song and dance Roosevelt in the political satire, *I'd Rather be Right* (1937).[86] No offense was taken: in 1936, President Roosevelt presented Cohan with a Congressional Gold Medal[87] (the first entertainer to receive this honour) in a highly symbolic gesture that united ethnic entertainer and WASP President within the 'New Deal' of collective American purpose. Despite such recognition, Hollywood reportedly demurred when Cohan approached with a proposed bio-pic after his screen role in *The Phantom President*, but with the onset of war his status as an emblematic figure of American patriotism recast earlier perceptions about his 'old fashioned' populism and, in the last months of his life he achieved screen immortality through Cagney's rousing portrayal.[88]

Scholarship on the Hollywood Musical has stressed its resistance to analysis; acknowledging how its foregrounding of entertainment distracts from and displaces ideological enquiry. In separate, seminal analyses of the genre, Jane Feuer and Richard Dyer have responded to such pleasures in different ways while arguing that Hollywood musicals share structures that relate entertainment to

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[86] Thomas S. Hischak, *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical: Theatre, Film, and Television* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 363-364. The first and only time Cohan appeared in a musical he had not written, this highly topical musical ran for 290 performances.

[87] On May 28, 1936 the Committee on the Library of the House of Representatives reported favorably on H.R. 4651, to award the Congressional Gold Medal to entertainer George M. Cohan. After some controversies about whether an entertainer should receive the accolade, President Franklin D. Roosevelt awarded Cohan the medal on May 1, 1940. Accessed on 1st May, 2014. http://artandhistory.house.gov/highlights.aspx?action=view&intID=468

[88] The relationship between Cohan and Hollywood was complicated. He went there in 1927 as an actor but his personal and professional style didn't meld with the production processes of the studios system. A *Life* magazine article from 1940 reported that 'At different times Hollywood has offered George M. Cohan more than $100,000 to dramatize the story of his life and Cohan, who doesn't like Hollywood has refused. Last summer he gave his story to a group of Catholic students for nothing. What resulted was a musical biography, *Yankee Doodle Boy* built around Cohan's own songs. Its authors are Walter Kerr 27 and Leo Brady 21.' 'Cohan's Life,' *Life* magazine, May 27th 1940. 77-79

utopian ideals of community. Dyer characterizes the utopian impulse in entertainment as the image

of:

> 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives
> don't provide. Alternatives, hopes, wishes-these are the stuff of utopia, the sense that things
> could be better . . . '[89]

But he also argues that the musical (as entertainment) 'does not present models of Utopian worlds

[but] what utopia would *feel like* rather than how it would be organized . . . using representational

and non-representational signs.'[90] For Dyer, utopian feelings of abundance, energy, intensity,

transparency, and community permeate the non-narrative aspects of entertainment and he argues

that these "categories of sensibility" act as temporary answers to social tensions or inadequacies in

society.[91]

In her analysis of the practice of 'creation and erasure' of ideological content in Hollywood

musicals, Jane Feuer argues that 'the creation of "folk" relations *in* the texts serves to "erase" the

mass entertainment substance *of* the texts . . . [achieved] through a valorization of "community" as

an ideal concept.'[92] The musical masks its ideological form and content through a foregrounding of

the spontaneous, bricolage, the amateur, the backstage community. Feuer states that while the

musical often exhibits a patina of self-reflexivity in drawing attention to its constructed nature, this

is not a modernist strategy: musicals ultimately deflect an analysis or ideological questioning:

> ... the musical presents its vision of the unfettered human spirit in a way that forecloses a
> desire to translate that vision into reality. The Hollywood version of Utopia is entirely
> solipsistic. In its endless reflexivity the musical can offer only itself, only entertainment as
> its picture of Utopia.[93]

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[89] Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia" in *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 1992), 19-36
[90] Dyer, *Entertainment and Utopia*, 21
[91] Dyer, *Entertainment and Utopia*, 23-26
[92] Jane Feuer, "Hollywood musicals: Mass art as folk art", in *Jump Cut*, No. 23, (Oct. 1980), 23-25. Accessed 10 October 2014. http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC23folder/MusicalsFeuer.html

[93] Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 84

While it is a musical produced during the Hollywood heyday of the genre, *Yankee Doodle Dandy* offers a particular case in its narrative grounding in biography; its songs function to historically situate and structure its central character's unfolding narrative of success as well as 'entertain.' While the musical numbers are clearly 'segmented' from the film's narrative, the film nevertheless accords with Dyer and Feuer insofar as it articulates a utopian 'structure of feeling' in which entertainment resists ideological readings; or rather in which ideology is made synonymous with entertainment through Cohan's iconic patriotism. Adapting Feuer, it can additionally be argued that the construction of Cohan's 'rags to riches' narrative from entertainer with roots in family vaudeville (which foregrounds ethnic/immigrant character and themes) to showbiz icon, masks the film's ideological content and provides a 'folk' authenticity to his patriotism and support for military involvement 'Over There.' In these respects *Yankee Doodle Dandy* can be described as the most ideologically stable and conservative of Cagney's films from the period.

As I have suggested, a central element of the film's utopian structure by 'representational and non representational signs' (Dyer) is its narration from within the White House, where the older Cohan recounts his life story to an admiring FDR: 'How's my double'? This setting - free of Depression-era experiences of 'scarcity, exhaustion, dreariness, manipulation, or fragmentation,'[94] - represents a symbolic space of American democratic ideals; Cohan's celebrated for his embodiment of a productive tension between exceptional individuality and collective loyalty. In contrast to the films discussed above, this 'domestic' setting is no longer a site of conflict or contestation between modes of American masculinity, but one of an inclusive and united national manhood.

Having established this narrative frame (a trope repeated in Marty Maher's meeting with Dwight Eisenhower in John Ford's *The Long Gray Line* – Ch. 4), the story begins with a flashback to 'about

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[94] These are the social failures identified by Dyer which are counteracted by the musical. Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment* (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), 26

sixty years ago' (the late nineteenth century) and a theatre placard advertising 'Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Cohan "The Irish Darlings."' Jerry (Walter Huston) is introduced performing onstage in a 'Leprechaun' costume of a stovepipe hat, buckled shoes, white stockings, knee-length britches, a dark coat and cape. He dances a jig while singing a comic tune, 'Larry O'Leary is me name'. This exposition also establishes a relationship between public/private identities and spaces as we see Jerry dash from the theatre to the house where his wife has just given birth to their son George. Still wearing the costume of the stage Irishman he gets caught up in a parade of Civil War veterans marching on July 4th through the streets of Providence, Rhode Island (Nelly Cohan's hometown[95]). The encounter not only establishes Cohan's birth and background but provides a structural bookend to a similar moment at the end of the film when, upon leaving the White House, George M. Cohan will also be caught in a parade of American soldiers – this time marching off to World War II. The opening scene thus frames not only the life of Cohan but gestures towards the transformations in the United States between the Civil War and WWI - a crucial period of national consolidation and nation-making – and offers a parallel with changes in American demographics and society in the inter-war period between the film's setting and production. In both marching scenes, the ethnic male is symbolically absorbed into a 'domestic'/national collective of American military manhood. The difference however lies in the contrast between the descent-consent dynamic of their mutual identities: on his way home from the theatre the father is still Othered (expressed through his costume) in relation to a hegemonic norm of masculinity while the son has just left the 'white house' and is identified with the 'father' of the nation. Over the period of the narrative Stage Irish has given way to Patriotic American, closing the loop between private and public, descent and consent, immigrant and American.

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[95] It is well established that George Cohan was born on the third of July but changed the date for showbusiness reasons. 1880 census records suggest that both were born in the United States to Irish-born parents, making George M. third generation Irish on both sides. His father Jeremiah was born in Boston in 1846 at the height of the Irish famine (his parents having emigrated in the late 1830s and married in the US) and his mother, Ellen Costigan ('Nelly') in Providence in 1855. http://www.recordclick.com/genealogy-researcher-salutes-george-m-cohan-july-fourth/

In the film's opening sections George is constructed as a typical pugnacious Cagney figure in conflict with an established practice of (Irish-American) masculinity; here embodied by his father:

> Jerry: I've been in this business a long time and I've never met a performer who, in the long run, wouldn't rather be a great guy than a great actor. That is, until I made your acquaintance.
> George: Can't I be both?

Unlike *The Public Enemy* or other films considered earlier, this conflict is one of style rather than principle even if the tensions – between communal sensitivities ('great guy') and individualism ('great actor') - remain constant. The central narrative of *Yankee Doodle Dandy* is that there is, in fact, a way to 'be both' within the conception of American manhood articulated by the film's US President. While Cagney as Cohan builds on earlier Irish-American characterizations, the internal social and economic crises of the 1930s are no longer of central concern to an outward-facing United States in 1941 and in which Adamic's concept of 'new Americans' is anachronistic. Thus although the Cagney protagonist is once again distinguished by a vital, embodied individualism and entrepreneurial spirit, these elements are now no longer in corrosive conflict with communities of family or broader American society; on the contrary, such qualities are seen to rejuvenate and sustain such communities. While earlier texts expressed an impatience for social mobility and access to the privileges of whiteness, social conflict is replaced with a narrative focus on show business success. At the same time, Cohan's decision (uncommented upon within the text) to move away from his father's 'hibernicon'[96] displays of stage Irishness to patriotic-themed popular entertainment, links social mobility (success) with absorption into 'national' white manhood located in consent.

As I have argued, spaces of home function to express the social tensions and transformations within which Cagney's Irish-American characters are constructed during the 1930s as they attempt to

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[96] Travelling Vaudeville shows which combined dioramas (backdrops) of famous Irish settings and landscapes with a variety of Irish–themed performances.

negotiate a path into the privileges of whiteness while retaining ties to descent identities. In contrast to earlier films, the Irish-American family at the centre of *Yankee Doodle Dandy* is never placed in a domestic setting: in a parallel to 1930s mass migration (widely represented in visual and written culture of the period[97]) their nomadic profession keeps them forever 'on the road.' While the mother again plays a mediating role between contrasting styles of Irish-American masculinity, she refers to the moral unity of their troupe/family rather than a traditional sense of 'home': "We may have to take a lot of hard knocks and make a lot of sacrifices, but if they want our act they'll have to take him too. We're not breaking up our act or our family."[98] Nevertheless, their act *is* broken up when George is subsequently fired by Albee and deciding they'd be better off without him, he goes to New York to pursue a career as a composer/song-writer. Modifying earlier narratives containing moments of similar intra-familial crisis, the Cagney character's hot-headed individualism is positioned here not as socially destructive but rather an expression of self-sacrifice that leads - ultimately - to their collective benefit when the now famous George invites his family to perform on Broadway. Indeed it is Broadway – the 'Great White Way' – that functions in the film as a 'coming home' for the Cohans; the pinnacle of success and acceptance at a national level.

Cohan's move to New York expresses a shift from nineteenth century to twentieth century models of entertainment; from the regional vaudeville circuits with their travelling acts of families and

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[97] James N. Gregory, "The Dust Bowl Migration", in *Poverty in the United States: An Encyclopedia of History, Politics, and Policy*, eds. Gwendolyn Mink and Alice O'Connor (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2004) Accessed 1 October 2014. http://faculty.washington.edu/gregoryj/dust%20bowl%20migration.htm Gregory argues that 'the Dust Bowl migration became something of synecdoche, the single most common image that later generations would use to memorialize the hardships of that decade.' Gregory locates the origins of this image in a 1935 article by economist Paul Taylor for Survey Graphic magazine and postulates that one of the principle reasons why the image came to occupy national status was that some 95% of the approx. 400,000 migrants from the 'Dust Bowl' were white. Surprisingly and contrary to received wisdom, Gregory states that, 'Many of the people moving west were not farm folk. At least half had been living in a town or city and doing some kind of blue-collar or less frequently white-collar work before unemployment or stories of California opportunities encouraged them to pack the car and hit the road.'
[98] There is an echo in this comment of Ma Joad's famous defiance from Steinbeck's 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath* adapted for film in 1940 by John Ford: 'They can't wipe us out; they can't lick us. We'll go on forever, Pa, 'cause we're the people.' Like Joad, Mrs Cohan sees unity of the family as paramount to survival. Late in Ford's film Pa Joad admits that: 'You're the one that keeps us goin' Ma. I ain't no good no more and I know it. Seems like I spend all my time these days thinking of how it used to be. Thinking of home.'

friends to the more centralized, mass-culture practices of Tin Pan Alley and the Broadway show. Cohan's talent – and cultural significance - the film's narrative suggests, lies not only his musical/dancing abilities but his anticipation of a shift in business practices and the emergence of a new order: "You don't know it, boys, but your days are numbered. You're making room for the likes of me." In the context of the film's framing narrative, this shift – from the *regional* to the *national* 'stage' - also parallels developments in American identity under FDR's extended presidency, linking New Deal federalism and war-time patriotism with a consolidated understanding of white American manhood. Cohan's transfer from vaudeville to Broadway marks a move away from nineteenth century Irish routines grounded in blackface and ethnic stereotypes to the forging of a twentieth century national popular culture grounded in accessibility for 'the people':

> Woman: To what do you attribute your continued success, Mr. Cohan?
> George: Oh, I'm an ordinary guy who knows what ordinary guys like to see... Front row center! The greatest show on earth. The people!

Ideological populism within the 'folk' structure of the Hollywood musical thus aligns Cagney's Cohan with the 'ordinary guy' persona of FDR which similarly – via the medium of radio – directly addressed the people during the Great Depression (discussed in the next chapter).

With this in mind (and in an intertextual revision of earlier constructions of masculine conflict within domestic settings) the White House functions in the film therefore not only as the residence of the president of the United States but as the film's symbolic expression of a national 'domestic' space constructed as accessible and egalitarian. Having jokingly described Cohan as 'my double' (on account of his stage impersonations but with evident ideological resonances of democratic equality), he expresses profound shifts in understandings of immigrant/ethnic identities outlined above in which private/public and descent/consent relations are no longer in opposition:

> - Well that's one thing I've always admired about you Irish-Americans. You carry your love

of country like a flag, right out in the open. It's a great quality.

Over the next two hours, for the benefit of the President and the viewing (war-time) audience, Cohan recounts his rise from humble beginnings to national figure with a mixture of humility and bravado that reinforces a link between the American myth of individual success and 'love of country'. As the character Erlanger (George Barbier) puts it in the film:

> - George M. Cohan has invented the success story. And every American loves it because it happens to be his own private dream. He's found the mainspring in the Yankee clock - ambition, pride, and patriotism.

While this may explain the cultural significance of the public Cohan, the film is at pains to foreground the underlying private ('backstage') qualities of the man and his unstinting loyalty and devotion to his family and wife Mary. In contrast to the divisions between private and public in earlier Cagney films, both realms and their respective spaces constantly intersect throughout the narrative. Significantly, the most emotional moment in the film for Cohan is not receiving the congressional medal but the death of his father where Cohan utters for the final time his signature line: 'my mother thanks you, my father thanks you, my sister thanks you and I thank you.' This understanding of personal success as part of a larger effort, finds a wider application in the closing scene with the President – a surrogate/national father figure - and his final absorption into the crowd of soldiers marching off to war, resolving conflicts between individual success and social solidarity that eluded characters played by Cagney at the beginning of the 1930s.
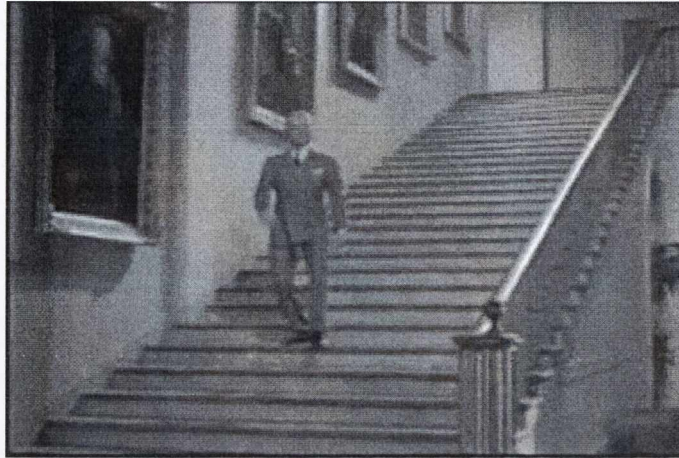
Figure 6 The embodiment of 'Domestic Whiteness': Cagney/Cohan dances 'downstairs' past a gallery of American Presidents inside the White House.

At the end of the film, Cohan leaves the Oval office and jauntily skips down the staircase past a gallery of past Presidents (beginning with Washington and Jefferson) before being handed his coat by two African American doormen. Having risen from a vaudeville 'nobody' to descending the White House stairs as a 'somebody' recognized and celebrated by America's historic white elite, Cohan functions to link patriarchy and patriotism with popular entertainment:

> - A man may give his life to his country in many different ways, Mr. Cohan. And quite often he isn't the best judge of how much he has given. Your songs were a symbol of the American spirit. *Over There* was just as powerful a weapon as any cannon, as any battleship we had in the First World War. Today, we're all soldiers, we're all on the front.

Yet these scenes unconsciously articulate an ideological paradox: the White House as a space of masculine inclusiveness in which an Irish-American entertainer (and man of 'the people') can rise to equal terms with a 'homely' President is also a space staffed and served by stereotypical, unchanging and servile African Americans. On his arrival and departure Cohan comes into contact with the film's only (speaking) African American character; a smiling and benevolent elderly butler

whose speech and manner are typical of the 'Uncle Tom' stereotype as described by Donald Bogle[99]:

> - Well, it musta been thirty-some years ago. I was valet for Mr. 'Teddy' Roosevelt. He got me a seat up in the gallery. The play was *George Washington, Jr.*, and you was just singin' and dancin' to all about the grand ole flag. Mr. Teddy used to sing it in his bathtub.
> - That was a good old song in its day.
> - Yas, sir, it was. And it's just as good today as it *ever* was.

This interaction works, I would argue, to construct Cohan's 'coming home' to the White House as both the climatic resolution of the tensions that structured his characters during the 1930s and to reinforce a conceptualization of 'domestic whiteness' in which hegemonic categories of gender and race are reconstructed as normative within a utopian paradigm of American inclusiveness.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that James Cagney represents a foundational 'mode' of Irish American masculinity in Hollywood cinema of the sound era, representing a decisive shift in representational practices from figures of unambiguous Otherness to a mediating and dynamic figure of consolidation. I have argued that in spite of the tempestuous nature and prolific output of his Warner Bros career of the long 1930s, an inter-textual development in his protagonists can be linked to a shifting construction of normative whiteness during this period of social crises and transformation. As a means of tracing this development within a broader context of the representation and function of Irish-American masculinities, I have taken Werner Sollor's ethnic dialectic of descent and consent relations as a structuring framework within which to consider the evolution of Cagney's characters. I have argued that while the Cagney films from the early part of the decade tend to place such values in opposition, that as the decade proceeds we gradually begin

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[99] Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in Films* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 5-6. 'Always as toms are chased, harassed, hounded, flogged, enslaved, and insulted, they keep the faith, n'er turn against their white masses, and remain hearty, submissive, stoic, generous, selfless, and oh-so-very kind. Thus they endear themselves to white audiences and emerge as heroes of sorts.'

to see a range of structuring dichotomies - descent and consent, private and public, working class and social mobility – constructed in less conflicting terms as a less rigid conception of American whiteness comes into being. This reflects a number of contextual factors during this decade - including the implementation of the Production Code, shifting demographics, social impact of the Great Depression and eventual entry into WWII - that combine to produce a paradigmatic shift in attitudes towards ethnic masculinity.

In keeping with the motif of home identified throughout this thesis and cognisant of Federal Housing Administration policy that had the effect of 'racializing' residential space during the 1930s (a theme more fully developed in my final chapters) – I have proposed in this chapter that the development of the descent/consent dynamic in Cagney's Irish-American protagonists across the long 1930s be read in relation to domestic space. Such settings function as literal and symbolic spaces of contestation between evolving structures of white American masculinity and reconfigure whiteness as a category of social relations that coincides with hegemonic 'domestic' values of the nation. While Cagney's stardom resonated with contemporary concerns linking race and social privilege, the prevalence of domestic spaces in the films examined here point up an enduring tension in his characters between public and private identities and a desire for their reconciliation within an unstable structure of social relations. With the onset of war we see this process complete and an earlier imperative for 'straight-line' assimilation gives way to a more complex understanding of American manhood. Nevertheless, as I have argued, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*'s celebration of harmonious consent/descent identities within an inclusive 'White' House masks not so much an end to whiteness as racially constructed in the United States as its normalizing through association to popular entertainment and recuperation of second and third generation 'Caucasian' immigrants. Here, as elsewhere in Hollywood's representational regime, Irish American masculinity works to secure this 'domestic whiteness.'

Chapter 2

Father Knows Best:
The Irish-American Priest and New Deal masculinities

The Catholic priest is one of the most recognizable modes of Irish-American manhood in Hollywood cinema. While the emergence and prominence of this figure as a central dramatic figure was relatively late – the mid 1930s - and relatively limited - lasting approximately a decade and a half, the significance of this type was profound both in terms of cinematic constructions of Irish-American manhood and the cultural status of Catholicism. As late as 1928 for instance, the Irish-American Presidential candidate Al Smith had been defeated in his bid for occupancy of the White House on the basis of his perceived unsuitability as a Catholic. As Christopher Shannon notes: 'Al Smith's cultural sins were legion, but none greater than his religion.'[1] A number of commentators have convincingly suggested that the emergence of the celluloid priest coincided with the wider influence of Catholicism within Hollywood during the 1930s. Thomas Doherty's important study of 'Hollywood's Censor' Joseph Breen is exemplary in this regard, arguing that 'Breen made certain that Catholicism infused the main currents of Hollywood cinema, both as underlying vision (Code) and visible presence (the two fisted priests and beatific nuns).'[2] My argument here builds on such research but resists its narrow application in proposing Irish American priests are 'invented' by Hollywood not simply to appease an influential Catholic lobby but as idealized figures of white manhood constructed in response to the crises within white hegemony during the 1930s precipitated by demographic shifts and the Great Depression. Constructed as charismatic and ecumenical masculine figures of interpellation, and mediating between ideals of 'national' manhood in the Progressive Era and the 1930s, they function to construct (sometimes literally) a 'home' for socially marginal and disruptive American

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[1] Christopher Shannon, *Bowery to Broadway: The Irish in Classic Hollywood Cinema* (Scranton: University of Scranton , 2010), 101

[2] Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 198

masculinities during a period of societal transformation. In this role they act as bridging figures between 'native' and enlarged cultural understandings of whiteness.

It is no coincidence that the Irish-American priest protagonist emerges as a preeminent figure of consolidation in Hollywood cinema against a backdrop of a decade of social and political crises. Along with the three films under discussion here, notable instances of this figure include Spencer Tracy as Fr. Tim Mullen in *San Francisco* (1936), Preston Foster as war-priest Fr. Donnellan in *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), Pat O'Brien as *Fighting Fr. Dunne* (1948), Bing Crosby's Oscar-winning performances as Fr. Chuck O'Malley in *Going My Way* (1944) and *The Bells of St Marys* (1945) and Karl Malden's longshore priest in Elia Kazan's *On The Waterfront* (1954). Christopher Shannon has argued that 'the figure of the Catholic priest found its greatest popularity when presented in a local thickly Irish-Catholic setting,' and that the Crosby films, 'expressed general communal values in a way that resonated with Protestant small-town America, but their commitment to a local urban idiom established Irish Catholicism as the dominant religious presence in American popular culture.'[3] My discussion broadens Shannon's analysis (which focuses heavily on *Going My Way*) by returning to three texts from the earlier phase of this cycle – *Boys Town* (1938), *Angels With Dirty Faces* (1938), and *The Fighting 69th* (1940); narratives that centre on anti-social male antagonists within spaces of collective male identity that are both realist and idealized. Such 'intruders' function to bring into relief the fragile, sometimes heterogeneous, but fundamentally 'American' character of such communities. Frequently inspired by historical individuals - notably Fr. Flanagan and 'Fighting' Fr. Dunne – and underpinned by FDRs New Deal inclusivity, the Irish-American catholic priests offered Hollywood figures of 'ethnic' male authority whose moral outlook was broadly in keeping with the dominant ideological thrust of the

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[3] Shannon, *Bowery to Broadway*, 102

day. This coincidence of ethnic/ethical voices with the ideals of white Presidential manhood served to increase the appeal and legitimacy of both.

In the three films discussed in this chapter, the urban priest – positioned between the 'huddled masses' of his immigrant past and the social reformism of the New Deal articulates 'common sense' values of justice / equality / patriotism within a variety of contexts of young American manhood. Although he can be seen as a parallel figure to the Irish cop in his urban framing and social role (as well as the basis of both in the Irish-American immigrant experience) he differs in significant respects. While the cop's authority is underwritten by the repressive threat of force and incarceration, the authority of the priest is rooted in potential - offering redemption and the quasi-religious promise of 'new life' for the young men under his care. Common to both representations however is an awareness of the ways in which – as Henri Lefebvre argued - social relations and space intersect, or as Tim Cresswell puts it: 'the social and the spatial are so thoroughly imbued with each other's presence that their analytical separation quickly becomes a misleading exercise.'[4] Thus a tension between traditional norms and new paradigms of American masculinity finds cinematic expression through, on the one hand, the prison cell – the archetypal space of coercion and punishment of modernity – and, on the other newly constituted spaces of inclusive, national manhood - a boys home; a parish hall; an army unit – in which the Irish American priest functions as a (father) figure of leadership and social reform. I read the cinematic construction of such spaces as gendered 'heterotopias': 'actually realized' utopias that 'can be used for reflection because they are manifestations of aspects of utopian imagination that are local and real . . .'[5] articulating the reasserted democratic values of the New Deal.

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[4] Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 1996), 11
[5] Peter Johnson, "Thoughts on Utopia" in *Heterotopian Studies* (2012), 16.; Accessed 15 February 2012. http://www.heterotopiastudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2.2-Thoughts-on-utopia-pdf.pdf

The term heterotopia was coined by Foucault to describe:

> a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable . . . In contrast to the utopias, these places which are absolutely other with respect to all the arrangements that they reflect and of which they speak might be described as heterotopias.[6]

Foucault argues that while such places 'assume a wide variety of forms,' it is nevertheless 'possible to classify them into two main types': *heterotopias of crises* - 'that are reserved for the individual who finds himself in a state of crisis with respect to the society' - and *heterotopias of deviance*, occupied by individuals whose behaviour deviates from the current average or standard.'[7]

I argue that the three spaces 'apart' within the films analyzed here can be broadly understood as 'heterotopias of crises' which function to re-imagine but also reconfirm a hierarchy of American national manhood located in whiteness as both racial and cultural signifier. Within such spaces, the Irish American priest is constructed as a morally independent figure who seeks to replace existing social structures and the spaces of control with 'democratic' environments of inclusiveness and self-determination. Yet, as I shall also argue, while such films offer audiences liberal figures of male leadership distanced by their immigrant background and Catholic views from the elites and power structures of white patriarchy whom they are often shown to antagonize, their radicalism can be read more as a matter of style than substance. In the discussion that follows therefore, these films are read as 'New Deal' narratives of recuperation that postulate a normative (white) manhood predicated on the individual's participation in community – and, by extension, nation – building rather than race or social background.[8] While the Irish-American priest functions as a 'shepherd' for

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[6] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 350-357; 352
[7] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', 352
[8] John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, (Swallow Press, Ohio UP/New York, Henry Holt & Company, 1927). Dewey articulates an influential connection between community and nation that resonates with subsequent New Deal politics and of value in understanding the function of films such as *Boys Town*.

marginalized manhood, such communities are bounded and strikingly devoid of men of colour. Thus, in spite of their melodramatic 'lost sheep' narratives, I argue that Hollywood's Irish-American priest narratives offer support for Kyle Kusz' view that:

> It is crucial to maintain a trenchant gaze even on those representations of whiteness that may appear, at first glance, to be marginal, un-oppressive, de-privileged and otherwise somewhat powerless for they may also function to re-secure the dominance, normality and centrality of whiteness in unique ways.[9]

The depiction of Irish-American Catholic priests during this period marked a radical departure from cinematic representations of Irish manhood as inferior or social disruptive towards figures of intellectual male leadership, guidance and reconciliation comparable to Abraham Lincoln; the historical ideal of white American manhood most often invoked and represented by Hollywood during the 1930s. A similarly inclusive 'father' figure to the nation, it is notable that the Civil War President featured in thirty Hollywood films during the decade, leading one commentator to name it 'the decade of Lincoln'[10]. Like the paternal 'Uncle Abe', Hollywood's Irish-American priest protagonist is constructed as 'a visionary with a common touch'[11] and functions as a figure of unity within 'houses divided' - spaces of male community threatened from within. Drawing this parallel a step further, Gerald J. Prokopowicz has noted that the historical Lincoln 'expanded the definition of whiteness in his time to encompass previously excluded ethnicities,' and, during the famous debates with Stephen Douglas articulated an inclusive vision of America as 'an outlet for free white people everywhere, the world over-in which Hans and Baptiste and Patrick, and all other men from all the world should find new homes and better their conditions in life.'[12] I shall argue that, at a

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Concerned about the breakdown in community relations and structures Dewey spoke of the local community becoming the 'Great Community' giving a structure of relations to the otherwise anonymous 'Great Society' produced by urbanization and modernity.

[9] Kyle Kusz, "BMX, Extreme Sports and the White Male Backlash" in *To the Extreme: Alternative Sports, Inside and Out*, eds. Robert E. Rinehart, Synthia Syndor (New York: SUNY Press, 2012), 158

[10] Mark S. Reinhar, *Abraham Lincoln on screen: Fictional and Documentary Portrayals on Film and Television* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2009)

[11] Andrew Piasecki, "Abraham Lincoln in John Ford's 'The Iron Horse'" in *Hollywood's White House: The American Presidency in Film and History*, eds. Peter C. Rollins, John E. O'Connor, (Lexington: University Press Kentucky, 2003), 65

[12] Gerald J. Prokopowicz, *Did Lincoln Own Slaves?: And Other Frequently Asked Questions about Abraham*

similarly fraught historical moment, the Irish-American Catholic priest also invites 'free white' men of various ethnicities (including 'Patrick') to find 'new homes' and 'better their conditions.' Such protagonists differ from foundational figures of American patriarchy in that they are neither Protestant Yankee law-makers nor potential Presidents: their white authority, as Matthew Frye Jacobson puts it, derived more From 'Ellis Island' than 'Plymouth Rock.'[13] Linking these ideals of masculine leadership - founding and immigrant 'fathers' - is the contemporary presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the ideological ethos of inclusiveness and nation building underpinning the New Deal project (1933-1938).

Hollywood's construction of the Irish-American priest protagonist foregrounds a paradigm of 'Catholic' (i.e. inclusive) American manhood that derives from a context of socio-political crises and demographic transition that can be understood as a development of Hollywood's assimilation imperative[14] which Diane Negra has noted was particularly to the fore during the preceding decade.[15] Thus, while his marginal status and immigrant origins are often central elements of the narratives in which he features, he is constructed as a conservative figure of social reform and consolidation: recuperating a normative white manhood across a series of quasi 'home' environments. In his role as both guardian and defender of such spaces, the Irish-American priest can be read as an early cinematic instance of what Hamilton Carroll has described as the ability of American whiteness to maintain its dominant status through cultural mutability. Writing of media constructions of white masculinity in the neoliberal age,

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Lincoln, (New York: Vintage Books, 2009), 171. The phrase comes from the 1858 'Alton Debate' between Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas. See: Paul M. Angle, ed. *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858*, (University of Chicago Press, 1991), 390

[13] Mathew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006)

[14] Diane Negra, *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (London, New York: Routledge, 2001)

[15] The Americanism Committee of the Motion Picture Industry was founded in 1920.
'The Immigrant and the Movies" in *The Touchstone Magazine* (July 1920) 327-328. Accessed 1 July 2012. http://www.oldmagazinearticles.com/Immigrant_assimilation_article_pdf

Carroll suggests that 'White masculinity has responded to calls for both redistribution and recognition by citing itself as the most needy and the most worthy recipient of what it denies it already has.'[16] In the films under discussion here we see a comparable pattern where marginal male groupings are held up as fragile communities of 'new' American manhood susceptible to threat from both socially disruptive figures (urban, criminalized) as well as excessively conservative figures of WASP or institutional authority constructed as hidebound and 'old-fashioned.' Rebuffing these twin threats, the humanist figure of the Irish-American priest is identified with a young, vulnerable but courageous white manhood located in democratic and collective values and posited as the mainstay and highest ideal of American citizenship at a moment of cultural transition.

Cultural Constructions of Hegemonic Manhood

The construction and wider cultural function of the Irish-American Catholic priest within the films under consideration here can be fruitfully approached in relation to R W Connell's conceptualization of *hegemonic masculinity*:

> The configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and subordination of women.[17]

James Messerschmidt further defines this 'idealized form of masculinity' as a historically defined structure:

> [that] emphasizes practices toward authority, control, competitive individualism, independence, aggressiveness . . . With it we are able to explain power relations among men based on a hierarchy of masculinities . . .'[18]

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[16] Hamilton Carroll, *Affirmative Reaction: New Formations of White Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 10

[17] RW Connell, *Masculinities* (2nd Edition), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 77

[18] James W. Messerschmid, *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory* (Lanham, Ml: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 1993), 82

Connell is also careful to emphasize that the relationship between *hegemonic masculinity, subordinated masculinity*, and femininities is a "historically mobile relation":

> Hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. The interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works[19]

Importantly for the discussion here Connell argues that 'hegemony does not refer to ascendancy based on force', nor does:

> Hegemony mean total cultural dominance, the obliteration of alternatives. It means ascendancy achieved in a balance of forces, that is, a 'state of play'. Other patterns and groups are subordinated rather than eliminated . . .The winning of hegemony often involves the creation of models which are quite specifically fantasy figures such as the film characters played by Humphrey Bogart, John Wayne and Sylvester Stallone.[20]

These three observations – the mobile nature of hegemonic masculinity, its relation to force and the creation of models in cinema, have clear consequences for my analysis of the Irish-American Catholic priest in Hollywood cinema of the 1930s. The priest acts as an unconventional but unequivocal figure of interpellation that 'hails' from within the ideological status quo but proposes normative American masculinity as a matter of 'common sense' choice rather than cultural inheritance. The monolithic stature of traditional modes of hegemonic authority is softened through its association with marginal masculinities but remains nevertheless strongly conservative. While the Catholic priest may come into conflict with, or be distinguished from, existing modes of hegemonic masculinity within the wider cultural realm he nonetheless reaffirms the primary status of social order based on equality upholding wider beliefs about masculine ideals in American society.

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[19] RW Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 183
[20] Connell, *Gender and Power*, 184

The Great Depression and the Crises of (White) American Manhood

The greatest social impact of the Wall Street crash was the sudden and cataclysmic mass unemployment of the Great Depression. National unemployment figures rose dramatically from 1.5 million in 1929 to almost 13 million in 1933, nearly one quarter of the total work force.[21] Robert McElvaine is among many scholars who have argued that this cataclysmic social disaster overwhelmingly affected men, particularly in the first half of the decade, giving rise to attendant anxieties about the structures and meanings of normative manhood. For McElvaine:

> The self-centered, aggressive, competitive male 'ethic' of the 1920s was discredited. Men who lost their jobs became dependent in ways that women had been thought to be.[22]

With Herbert Hoover's response to the crisis considered wildly inadequate, Franklin D Roosevelt was elected President in 1932 on the promise of a more radical approach and interventionist policies and his first one hundred days in office were characterised by a profusion of new initiatives and laws; a reaching out and into the American heartland as no administration had done before. While historians have long praised the scope and swiftness of these legislative interventions, Suzanne Mettler is among a revisionist trend argues that from the outset, the New Deal had an overtly racial and gendered bias which clearly positioned white masculinity as the focus of a centralized welfare policy and the keystone identity in the construction of a federal, national consciousness:

> Policy and institutional developments in the New Deal divided Americans, as social citizens, under two distinct forms of governance. Men, particularly white men, were endowed with national citizenship, incorporated into policies to be administered in a centralized, unitary manner through stylized routinized procedures. Women and minority men were more likely to remain tied to state structures . . .[23]

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[21] At decade end it reached to 9.5 million (17%) in 1939. *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1957 (United States Bureau of the Census, Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1960)*
[22] Robert S. McIlvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 340-41
[23] Suzanne Mettler, *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), 5

Or, as African-American interviewee Clifford Burke more bluntly put it in an interview

with Studs Terkel:

> The Negro was born in depression. It didn't mean too much to him, the Great
> American Depression, as you call it . . . It only became official when it hit the
> white man.[24]

In his recollections, Burke also linked American manhood and race in his assessment of

white men's response to the loss of earning power:

> He couldn't stand bringing home beans instead of steak and capon. And he
> couldn't stand the idea of going on relief like a Negro . . . Why did these big
> wheels kill themselves? They weren't able to live up to the standards they were
> accustomed to, and they got ashamed in front of their women . . .[25]

Through the collective initiatives and programmes of the 'New Deal,' Roosevelt

envisioned a re-definition of national American identity achieved through a 'decisive

break ... with the old regime of dual federalism, and the transformation of a more

centralized administrative state whose reach extended into the lives of ordinary

citizens.'[26]Nevertheless, as comments by Mettler, Burke and other historians have

suggested that New Deal discourse was overwhelmingly directed at one section of the

American populace: Roosevelt's iconic 'forgotten man at the bottom of the economic

pyramid.'[27] was assumed to be white. (Jim Powell goes so far as to suggest while 'FDR's

New Deal policies weren't conceived with racist intent, they certainly had racist

consequences'). [28] While this is complicated and contested historical terrain, it serves to

not only illuminate the fraternal communities in the films analyzed in this chapter as

macrocosms of the nation but also the dramatic function of the 'forgotten man'

characters who stand outside of them and in whom the Irish American priest retains a

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[24] Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression*, (New York: The New Press, 2013) 82.
[25] Terkel, *Hard Times,* 83
[26] Suzanne Mettler, *Dividing citizens: gender and federalism in New Deal public policy* (Cornell University Press, 1998), 3
[27] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Forgotten Man"; Radio Address, April 7, 1932. Reprinted in *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Vol. 1; 1928-32. (New York: Random House, 1938), 624
[28] Jim Powell, *FDR's Folly: How Roosevelt and His New Deal Prolonged the Great Depression* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004), 118; *Cato Institute, Commentary,* 'Why Did FDR's New Deal Harm Blacks?' Accessed 20 August 2012. ; http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/why-did-fdrs-new-deal-harm-blacks

diligent, if oft-tested, faith.

Catholicism and 1930s America

'Catholic characters, spaces, and rituals', writes Colleen McDannell in *Catholics in the Movies*, 'have been stock features in popular films since the silent picture era.' McDannell suggests that as:

> An intensely visual religion with a well defined ritual and authority system, Catholicism lends itself to the drama and pageantry – the iconography - of film . . . As the religion of many immigrants, Catholic characters represent outsider status as well as the 'American way of life'. Rather than being marginal to American popular culture, Catholic people, places and rituals are central. At the movies, Catholicism - rather than Protestantism - is *the* American religion.[29]

It is striking that in the films considered in this chapter, it is not the visual or ritual qualities of Catholicism – as McDannell identifies them – that primarily account for its 'central' role in 1930s Hollywood. In fact, the spiritual and symbolic elements of Catholicism are minimized in the majority of representations, which emphasize maverick individuals over the modalities of faith. Such individuals, as I have suggested, function as figures of masculine interpellation in the reinforcement of normative whiteness within the context of Hollywood's New Deal efforts to create what Giuliana Muscio recognizes as a unified American consciousness through national cinema.[30] But how and why did the Irish-American Catholic Priest come to occupy such a sudden and iconic role in this process? In responding to this question it emerges that a number of cultural developments during the mid 1930s marked out this figure as eminently suitable to reconciling the tensions of the Rooseveltian project, melding traditional, nineteenth century American masculine values with an inclusive and 'unified consciousness' that was appropriate and necessary to the current moment. In addition

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[29] Colleen McDannell, *Catholics in the Movies,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14
[30] Giuliana Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997)

to the crises in masculinity arising from the Great Depression, significant demographic shifts that altered the racial character of the general population, the growing influence of a powerful Catholic lobby on the content and moral tone of Hollywood product, and the emergence of popular Catholic priest personalities in American mass media also contributed. While collectively these factors represented a disturbance and reevaluation of the hegemonic model of American manhood as a figure of independence and self sufficiency (as well as the moral and political influence of WASP elites that had exerted such influence during the 1920s)[31] – they did not, as I shall argue, undermine the dominant status of white masculinity within the broader culture. On the contrary, the Irish-American Hollywood priest functions as a mechanism for the reconstruction but not deconstruction of such structures.

Arguably the fundamental factor in the emergence of the Irish American priest type as a public figure of authority and influence was a considerable rebalancing of the minority/majority population ratio. By the turn of the twentieth century Roman Catholics had become the largest denomination within American religious life with approximately 7 million adherents.[32] By 1928 (just as sound was introduced into American cinema) that number had more than doubled to over 18.5 million practicing Catholics - 16% of the population. Finke and Stark link such statistics to the immigrant waves of the late nineteenth century and conclude that, 'when they finally did arrive by the millions, the immigrants kept the faith.'[33] Several historians have noted[34] that the Catholic Church achieved a high degree of loyalty primarily through a strong parish structure that ensured the preservation of ethnic subcultures and a trained clergy. This

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[31] John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988)

[32] Roger Finke, Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: winners and losers in our religious economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 121

[33] Finke, Stark, *The Churching of America*, 122

[34] Colleen McDannell, 'True Men as We need Them: Catholicism and the Irish American Male,' *American Studies* Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall, 1986) 19-3; William L. Smith, *Irish Priests in the United States: A Vanishing Subculture* (Washington: University Press of America, 2004)

(very often) Irish born and educated priesthood differed markedly in character from

their Protestant counterparts:

> Whether they were sent from abroad or recruited locally, the Catholic clergy were
> not of genteel social origin nor did they aspire to a comfortable salary. Priests,
> nuns and brothers were ready to go wherever they were sent and to do whatever
> needed to be done.[35]

This portrait of a mobile, practical and unpretentious clergy with strong ties to their

community would be a distinguishing feature of Hollywood's 'everyman' Irish-American

priest.

Secondly, deriving their authority from such demographic shifts, a small but powerful

group of Irish-American Catholic men exerted a profound and decisive influence on

Hollywood content from the outset of the sound era. Several film historians[36] have

explored the Catholic intervention in the formulation of the Production Code in 1930

where, with the support of lay Catholics Martin Quigley (publisher of trade journal

Motion Picture World) and Joseph Breen (future director of the Legion of Decency),

Jesuit priest Fr. Daniel Lord drafted of a list of acceptable representational practices that

would have a lasting effect on the tone and content of American cinema during the

studio era. An enormously dynamic and energetic figure, Lord's involvement with the

Production Code can be understood within his wider engagement with American

cultural life across a range of media.[37] As Professor of Dramatics at St Louis University,

he created and directed 'elaborate pageants that often involved hundreds of

participants'; he was editor of the *Queen's Work* Catholic magazine (from 1925);

religious consultant to Cecil B de Mille's *King of Kings* (1927), the writer of many books

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[35] Roger Finke, Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006). 122
[36] Alexander McGregor, *The Catholic Church and Hollywood: Censorship and Morality in 1930s Cinema* (New York: IB Tauris, 2013) ; Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996) ; Matthew Bernstein, *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era.* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press), 1999
[37] David J Endres, "Dan Lord, Hollywood Priest" in *America* Magazine (December 12th 2005) Accessed 2 September 2012. ; http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=4533

and hundreds of pamphlets and a zealous champion of the Catholic literary revival.[38] As the child of a Protestant-Catholic 'mixed' marriage,[39] Lord embodied a new style of American Catholicism, one that was confident, educated and convinced of its importance to American life. In both beliefs and style he impacted on Hollywood's view of Catholic clerics.

While Richard Maltby has argued in his discussion of the origins of the Production Code that 'Lord's voice was only one of several raised in the writing of the code and its history as a document is the history of the attempted and failed compromise of those competing voices,'[40] (including reformers from various Protestant traditions and the [secular Jewish] MGM Head of Production, Irving Thalberg), Alexander McGregor has placed American Catholics at the forefront of influence in Hollywood during the long 1930s:

> . . . the American Catholic Church understood itself to be embroiled in a war, if not outright siege, from various aspects of the modern, secular world . . . The ultimate ambition of this war was for the American Catholic Church to win 'control' of the United States' primary area of cultural production, cinema, and to use it to engender a pro-Catholic social moral code among the entire US population . . .[41]

The force of Catholic intervention in the persons of Lord, Breen and Quigley was such that Protestant pressure groups who had done so much in the 1920s to exert influence on movie censorship, faded from prominence. Partly this was a consequence of the switch to sound which as Scott Nyman has noted 'changed everything' as studios began to move from regional censorship battles to formulating a national solution in a bid to

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[38] Arnold Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem: The Catholic Literary Revival and the Cultural Transformation of American Catholicism, 1920-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1990), 31

[39] 'His protestant father traced his ancestors to William the Conqueror and the first American settlers. His mother was second generation Irish-American . . . Lord credited his mother with his lifelong interest in drama, music, and literature.' Sparr, *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem*, 34

[40] Richard Maltby, "The Production Code and the Hays Office" in Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993),47

[41] Alexander McGregor, *The Catholic Church and Hollywood: Censorship and Morality in 1930s Cinema* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 2

minimize threats to their increased production costs.[42] Through the adoption and enforcement of the Production Code and the unprecedented power of the Legion of Decency (founded in 1934 to evaluate the moral content of movies for Catholic audiences and re-enforced by means of a pledge which was signed by 21 million),[43] Catholic involvement in the shaping of American cinema increased dramatically. This move to the centre of cultural influence would not only impact on screen content but position the Irish-American priest as a key figure in the articulation and maintenance of normative American values for a new era.

A third and final contributor to Hollywood's 'invention' of the Irish American priest was the emergence of two maverick Irish-American clerics who became national media figures during the 1930s: Fr. Fultan Sheen and Fr. Charles Coughlin. We do not have the scope here, nor is it necessary, to offer extended analysis of their contributions beyond the manner in which they established their 'immigrant' culture message as aligned with mainstream values by combining social reform and moral conservatism.

Fultan Sheen - best known for his later TV shows *Life is Worth Living* (1951-1957) and *The Fulton Sheen Program* (1961-1968) - came to national prominence with his long-running nightly radio show *The Catholic Hour* (1930-1950) (the heyday of the New Catholic Left), a broadcast devised by the National Council of Catholic Men as a means of explaining Catholicism to the American public. Anthony Burke Smith writes that while:

> Most of Sheen's early talks were primarily spiritual and apologetic in nature ... By the late 1930s [they] served as a popular expression of the Catholic philosophy of social reform. His 1938 series, 'Justice and Charity' drew a record 6,000 letters in

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[42] Scott Eyman, *The Speed of Sound: Hollywood and the Talkie Revolution 1926-1930* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 20

[43] Alexander McGregor, *The Catholic Church and Hollywood : Censorship and Morality in 1930s Cinema* (London: I B Tauris, 2013), 17. The Legion of Decency pledges, arranged by the Rev. John J. McClafferty, began: 'I condemn indecent and immoral motion pictures, and those which glorify crime or criminals.' First published in the 17th January 1941 issue of the Catholic Herald. McGregor reports that the Legion 'was established with an enormous $35,000 stipend form the Church ... it's self appointed task was to police the censorship process of Hollywood films and ensure the moral exactness of the final product.'

January and over 8,590 the following month.[44]

Sheen, like the majority of Catholic clerics who came to prominence during this period, articulated a philosophical position derived from the writings of St Thomas Aquinas that understood and considered human relations in universal terms. This position was extraordinarily influential in changing the perception of the Catholic religion in American society, from one aligned to one or even multiple 'minority' ethnic groups to a code of unchanging beliefs that applied equally to all men and women. During the 1930s this position was inflected by the hardships of the Great Depression and the Catholic Church's social teaching exerted a general and widespread influence. Crucially, it found common cause with the politics and vision of FDR; a point we shall return to below.

The second, more controversial, 'radio priest' Fr Charles Coughlin had begun broadcasting in the late 1920s and had an audience of over 40 million by the mid 1930s.[45] Discredited by his vitriolic anti-Semitism by the end of the decade, Coughlin nonetheless exerted a considerable influence through his weekly radio show and the periodical *Social Justice* in creating a radical voice for American Catholicism that sided with the most marginal and disaffected of society. Central to Coughlin's rise and early popularity was his unalloyed enthusiasm and public support for Roosevelt and the New Deal:

> Reading Coughlin's sermons and his letters to the White House one has the impression that he ascribed miraculous powers to Roosevelt, that he saw in Roosevelt's presence at such a critical instant in American history and indeed the world's the guiding hand of Providence. Coughlin's saying, 'Roosevelt or ruin,' rang out like a church bell across America.[46]

However, with Coughlin's growing radicalization and support of European Fascism, this

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[44] Anthony Burke Smith, "Prime-Time Catholicism in 1950s America: Fulton J. Sheen and 'Life Is Worth Living'" in *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Summer, 1997), 57-74; 61

[45] Ronald H. Carpenter, *Father Charles E. Coughlin: Surrogate Spokesman for the Disaffected* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988)

[46] Albert Fried, *FDR and His Enemies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 57

relationship soured and eventually turned Coughlin into one of Roosevelt's most tenacious and troublesome critics and enemies. It is enough to acknowledge here however the interlocking relationship of these influential public masculinities who commanded widespread recognition and popularity in the early/mid 1930s by emphasizing the marginalization of the common man and moral/ideological necessity for his recuperation. Fr. Fulton Sheen and Fr. Coughlan thus shared a visibility, influence and moral/ideological outlook comparable and often linked with the President of the United States who, like them, sought to speak directly to the hearts and minds of ordinary Americans through the mass medium of radio. This unprecedented association between Presidential and Catholic masculinities and the motif of American citizens being invited into the newly centralized 'home' values (Roosevelt's 'fire-side chats'[47] implied a caring and intimate White House) personified what Anna Siomopoulos has described as 'the New Deal's re-thinking of the division between the public and private realms . . . a vast expansion of executive privilege and an extension of federal policy into areas long considered private domains . . .'[48]

These three factors: a demographic surge in the Catholic population; the considerable and unprecedented influence of Irish-American Catholics on the content of Hollywood films; and the high public profile of mass-media Catholic priests who directly addressed the American nation – functioning as acoustic mirrors for wider transformations - facilitated and shaped the figure of the priest in Hollywood cinema. Not only did this figure emerge as a powerful voice of opinion and influence at a moment of trans-American identity formation through the media of radio and Hollywood (contemporaneous to the emergence of a Federal consensus in New Deal policies) but he

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[47] The first intimate and direct communication between the president and the citizens of the United States
[48] Anna M. Siomopoulos, *Hollywood Melodrama and the New Deal: Public Daydreams* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1

was publicly congruent with the Presidential voice of what Dana Nelson has coined as 'national manhood': the imagined fraternity of white men that:

> substitutes itself for nascent radical, local democratic practices, energies and imaginings not replacing local manhood so much as enlisting them for and orientating them towards a unified, homogenous national ideal.[49]

The earliest and most explicit example of this function is found in the 1938 film *Boys Town*; a landmark text that proposes a 'new deal' for 'national manhood' (recuperating masculinities previously considered marginal) within a heterotopian home-space of masculine belonging.

Boys Town: Extending the [Home] Space of National Manhood

Boys Town was produced by MGM – a studio better known for its stars and glamour than social agenda - from a script by Dore Schary; a New York Jewish playwright who had recently moved to Hollywood with ambitions of becoming a screenwriter.[50] Released just before FDR's re-election to a second term and in the midst of the 'second dip' of the Great Depression, the historical events it is based on took place over a decade earlier and span the years 1917-1926 (Overlook Farm was bought and renamed 'Boys Town' in 1921). This temporal 'slippage' allows us to view it through a double lens, writing Catholicism retrospectively into the reform instincts of the Progressive Era while obliquely supporting the Big Government intervention of the New Deal and its associated Federal projects. The film's treatment of masculinity might therefore be read against two Roosevelt Presidencies – those of Theodore and Franklin - a historical duality that functions to put into relief a shift from one paradigm of American manhood to another and the spatial symbolism attached to both: from the 'strenuous'

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[49] Dana D. Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), x

[50] Schary (1905-1980) had a storied career in American film and theatre, working as writer, director, produced in both mediums and possibly the only screenwriter to rise to become head of a Hollywood studio – in this case MGM. He would win the Academy Award for Best Original Story for *Boys Town*.

independence of TR associated with the mythic space of the Frontier to the inclusive and collective model of 'fireside' American citizenship advocated by FDR.

In proposing such a reading, it is useful to remember that both paradigms – and their significant influence on popular culture (particularly cinema) - developed as responses to perceived crises in white American manhood. As such, each offered contrasting understandings of what it meant for a man to be 'at home' in America. In her study *Rough Rider in the White House* Sarah Watts, for instance, argues that Teddy Roosevelt:

> emerged as a central purveyor of the cowboy-soldier hero model because he more than any man of his age harnessed the tantalizing freedom of cowboys to address the social and psychological needs that arose from deep personal sources of frustration, anxiety, and fear . . . Roosevelt crafted the cowboy ethos consciously and lived it zealously, providing men with an image and a fantasy enlisted in service to the race-nation.[51]

Despite its vocabulary of heroic independence, Teddy Roosevelt's vision was essentially a nostalgic one carved out of America's now disappeared Frontier era and proposed in a content of cultural anxiety about the rapid changes wrought by modernity. It was an attempt, among other things, to crystallize the distinctiveness of American identity from European civilization and to place a vigorous white masculinity to the forefront of a culture that was highly conflicted about the influx of a large number of 'foreigners'. It was in short a discourse of reactionary whiteness.

Such views remained a mainstay of American masculinity until the very changed circumstances in which FDR became President in 1932 (only three years after Al Smith's Presidential hopes were dashed by Anti-Catholic residue). 'By the time FDR entered office, ethnic unruliness no longer seemed to matter,' writes Gary Gerstle. 'Cultural

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[51] Sarah Watts, *Rough Rider in the White House: Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Desire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 124

disunity was not a great worry, nor was the collapse of long-standing racial distinctions. There was less of a need to assume the harsh leader.'[52]

Gerstle notes that 'FDR liked to stress the openness of American society, not its rigidities. He cultivated a welcoming, rather than a punishing mien.'[53] This style of leadership and performance of national masculinity (assumed to be 'white'), encapsulated in the intimacy of his 'Fireside Chats' broadcasts stood in dramatic contrast to TR ('the harsh leader') who defined Presidential (hegemonic) masculinity of the Progressive Era. While FDR stressed a masculine resilience and determination and his politics also spoke of self-reliance, he eschewed a reactionary, 'strenuous' individualism that usurped the collective. Departing from earlier models, FDR's leadership was inclusive and embracing. It is reflected in Fr. Flanagan's core principle that 'There's no such thing as a bad boy.' The vision of an immigrant priest and his commitment to an underprivileged and marginalized social group chimed with a public experiencing severe economic crises and a loss of confidence in the American dream by reinvigorating its basic tenet: America as a place of re-birth. *Boys Town* – mediated through Fr Flanagan - proposes a New Deal in American masculinity.

In his autobiography, Dore Schary recounts that when he arrived in Hollywood there existed several earlier drafts of the screenplay, but:

> Fr. Flanagan had rejected early story ideas . . . After reading what had been written and studying the history of Fr Flanagan's unique institution, I told Considine (MGM producer) that the error holding up the project was casting Freddie Bartholomew in an atmosphere where he clearly did not belong and concentrate on the relationship between Tracy as Fr. Flanagan and Mickey Rooney as the rough, unmanageable recruit into Boys Town. Considine agreed and sent me to Omaha to meet Fr. Flanagan.[54]

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[52] Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 137
[53] Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible,* 137
[54] Dore Schary, *Heyday: An Autobiography* (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), 102

Fr. Flanagan's lack of support for earlier treatments changed to full co-operation with the involvement of Schary who was less intent to make a 'sequel' to the box-office hit *Captains Courageous* – as had been MGM's original intention - and whose liberal political instincts replaced an adventure theme with an overtly social one.[55] Scary's script emphasized the vision of the institution under the visionary and benign leadership of Fr. Flanagan who facilitates a shift in masculine style away from rigid categorizations of good/bad, strenuous/weak, native/foreign to a more inclusive, self-determined and democratic community of men.

Boys Town and the recuperation of 'Forgotten Men'

Central to the success and influence of *Boys Town* is the charismatic conviction of Spencer Tracy as Fr. Flanagan (Best Actor Oscar 1938); one of several iconic Irish-American male movie stars of the 1930s who both contributed to and benefited from the increased visibility of this group. In his autobiography, Tracy recalled that his performance derived from his undergraduate experience at a Catholic University:

> The influence is strong, very strong, intoxicating. The priests are all such superior men--heroes. You want to be like them--we all did. Every guy in the school probably thought some--more or less--about trying for the cloth. You lie in the dark and see yourself as Monsignor Tracy, Cardinal Tracy, Bishop Tracy, Archbishop--I'm getting gooseflesh! Every time I *play* a priest ... every time I put on the clothes and the collar I feel right, right away. Like they were mine, like I belonged in them, and that feeling of being--what's the word? --An *intermediary*--is always very appealing. Those were always my most comfortable parts ..."[56]

The function of 'intermediary' – a theological concept adapted to a specific socio-political context - is central to Hollywood's construction of the Catholic priest.

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[55] British child-actor Freddie Bartholomew had come to international attention two years earlier in David O. Selznick's celebrated production of *David Copperfield* followed by a number of similarly prestige productions including *Captain Courageous* (1937). The original *Boys Town* project was clearly conceived as an attempt to build on the themes and success of that MGM film which featured Bartholomew as the spoilt child of an absentee father whose role is assumed by Spencer Tracy as a tough but fair fisherman. The film also starred Mickey Rooney as one of Tracy's sea-hardened crew who sets about knocking the corners off Bartholomew before he is returned to his natural father as a chastened and reformed young man.

[56] Anne Edwards, *Katherine Hepburn* (New York: St Martins Press, 2000), 215

The opening scenes of the film depict Fr. Flanagan encountering vagrant boys on his way back to the shelter he runs for indigent men in the town of Omaha, Nebraska. The shelter is reminiscent of, and clearly inspired by, the Christian 'rescue mission' movement established by Protestant reformers of the late nineteenth century,[57] but Flanagan quickly decides that this is no longer a satisfactory response to social disadvantage and endeavors to 'reach' these men earlier through creating a home for boys. In order to get started he approaches local pawn-shop owner Dave Morris (Henry Hull), for funding and furniture (Morris' construction as discreetly Jewish signals the multi-ethnic, communal American masculinity that follows) and then visits his bishop to seek permission to proceed.

Fr. Flanagan offers a significant departure and striking contrast to earlier perceptions of (immigrant) Irish manhood such as those advanced by Theodore Roosevelt when he described the 'average catholic Irishman of the first generation' as 'a low, venal, corrupt and unintelligent brute.'[58] Educated, hard working and morally committed Flanagan is a man for his times. His quintessentially Rooseveltian (FDR) character as a reformer is immediately visible during the visit to his bishop, simultaneously establishing Flanagan's cultural roots and independence from the hierarchies of Catholic tradition. The bishop suggests he abandons his plan for a home - 'I'm going to assign you to a parish ... it's good work and you're a good man' – but Flanagan rejects the proposition, questioning the usefulness of preaching to his own 'tribe.' The bishop capitulates: 'I can't help you – we have no arrangement for outside things like this, but you have my permission.' Having defied inherited institutional structures, Flanagan nevertheless

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[57] Gary Scott Smith, *The Search for Social Salvation: Social Christianity and America, 1880-1925* (Lexington and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2000)

[58] Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1992), 126, 127. TR, 'Diary of Five Months in the New York Legislature,' in Letters II, 1469-71. Dyer notes that Roosevelt significantly modified his appraisal of the Irish after his first term in the New York Assembly and 'carried on occasional campaigns against anti-Catholicism which suggested he had a clear awareness of the political dividends which could be earned.'

kisses the bishop's ring – a sign of his obedience – and leaves. This complex, paradoxical attitude is developed somewhat in a short scene later where we see him pray unseen and unheard in his room. Fr. Flanagan's 'obedience' is thus constructed as a private, individual affair between himself and his God rather than to Rome. In shunning cult for conscience, Flanagan's sense of missionary vocation derives its authority from a divine rather than human source – reconciling a maverick individualism (associated with the white American pioneering spirit) with outward respect for his ethnic religious community. This association between personal drive and collective well-being – central to much of Hollywood's construction of Irish-American masculinity – will also be germane to his vision for Boys Town.

Flanagan's independent instincts are central to his confrontation with a second and more formidable figure of male authority; local newspaper publisher John Hargraves (Jonathan Hale). Constructed as the film's representative of the white establishment, Hargraves is positioned as a right-wing stalwart of traditional WASP values. He tells Flanagan: 'There's a feeling in official circles that you're setting up a tacit criticism of things as they are . . . [But] There are some impossible young beasts that need to be manhandled.' When the priest asks for an endorsement of Boys Town in his newspaper, Hargraves refuses: 'I don't believe in what you're trying to do – the very foundation is false . . .' The meeting functions to position Flanagan as a threat to white masculine privilege and power by replacing a modus of exclusion (imprisonment, punishment, 'manhandling') with one of inclusion: 'There's no such thing as a bad boy.' In keeping with broader Hollywood's tendencies of the late 1930s, the narrative thus establishes a conflict between elitist 'official' power and marginal underdogs coded in terms of class and (ethnic) background. Nevertheless, while such narratives appear to dismantle existing structures, the Irish-American priest – as the counterpoint to the two-

dimensional Hargraves – functions to establish revised but nonetheless hegemonic norms of white masculinity within a populist frame.

Dore Schary's decision to concentrate on Fr. Flanagan as the key story element of *Boys Town* recognized a powerful parallel between the work of this Irish immigrant in a remote but multi-ethnic corner of America[59] and the contemporary political agenda of nation building within FDR's second New Deal; a project with spatial and ideological dimensions. The film's early scenes visualize traditional spaces of containment for the marginal male – the flop-house, the prison, Juvenile Hall. While visiting a convict on death row the soundtrack registers a black prisoner singing a spiritual: 'Sometimes I feel like a motherless child . . . a long way from home.' The lament, it is implied, belongs to all the incarcerated men of the prison since – in a noteworthy act of visual exclusion - we hear the singer but don't see him. The socially segregated (white) men of Omaha (who we do see) are thus linked to the dispossession of slavery; an association sonically rendered through a melancholic longing for home. When the warden, accompanied by a judge and Fr. Flanagan tries to secure the confession of an inmate on Death Row, he replies: 'you're going to take my life because I owe the state something? Where was the state when a lonely, starving kid cried himself to sleep in a flop house with a bunch of drunks, tramps and hoboes . . . one friend . . . one friend when I was twelve years old and I don't stand here like this.' The scene acts as inspiration and justification for Flanagan's reform agenda. The future 'motherless' young men will be re-housed by a benevolent father figure differentiated from figures of traditional white power like the judge, warden and Hargraves.

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[59] Lawrence H. Larsen, Barbara J. Cottrell, *The Gate City: A history of Omaha* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 158. By the 1920s Omaha had "reached the zenith of its ethnic diversity", when more than 50 percent of the city's population were new immigrants or second-generation immigrants.

Boys Town as New Deal Heterotopia

As an all-male institutional space, Boys Town bears obvious comparison with West Point in *The Long Gray Line* but here Foucault's 'protected place of disciplinary monotony' and 'techniques of the body' are replaced by an open campus where boys are free to stay, and leave, as they wish. In its conception as an idealized space of masculine community rooted in the concrete and achievable present, the physical environment of *Boys Town* corresponds therefore more closely with Foucault's notion of heterotopia: 'localisable' or 'actually realized' utopias.[60] Peter Johnson offers that heterotopias 'set themselves in contrast to the upper case 'Utopia', offering a more modest role, providing an alternative 'reservoir of imagination'[61] before arguing that 'Heterotopias are always open and reversible. They can be used for reflection because they are manifestations of aspects of utopian imagination that are local and real and packed with history.'[62] In contrast to the late nineteenth century setting of West Point, Boys Town (the place) functions as an 'open' space that is both a reflection of general American ideals of freedom and a historic space where such values are tested within the 1930s context of social reform and shifting constructions of patriarchal authority.

In a clear reference to FDR's extensive Works Progress Administration (WPA) programme,[63] Fr. Flanagan's 'new deal' for American manhood commences with putting his young recruits to work. Re-working the frontier myth imagery central to Theodore Roosevelt's ideal of 'new white manhood'[64] a montage of shots follows the boys

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[60] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, (Andover, Hants: Tavistock, 1970), xviii
[61] Michel Foucault, 'Different Spaces', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault Vol. 2*, ed. J. D. Faubion (London: Penguin), 175-185; 185
[62] Peter Johnson, Thoughts on Utopia, Heterotopian Studies, 2012, http://www.heterotopiastudies.com/thoughts-on-utopia/ Accessed July 4th, 2014
[63] Nick Taylor, *American-Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA, When FDR put the Nation to Work* (New York: Bantam Books, 2009), 523-24. The ambitious 1935 Works Progress Administration took an estimated 8.5 million people off welfare and into employment.
[64] Robyn Muncy states that, 'In Roosevelt's scheme, well-known through recent historical analyses, a new white manhood would rest especially on three pillars: violence—played out on football fields, battlefields, and in boxing rings; on honor, about which he railed incessantly in his discussions of foreign policy; and on

constructing the buildings of Boys Town on what was Overlook farm: an allegory of the nation envisioned as home where the individual and the (welfare) state collaborate and coincide.

Once completed and inhabited, the film makes an explicit link between FDR and Boys Town in Fr. Flanagan's parable to a young boy named Tony Ponessa (Gene Reynolds). When Whitey Marsh (Mickey Rooney) attempts to help the physically disabled Ponessa stack chairs at the conclusion of choir the boy reacts angrily and later weeps:

— People are always trying to help me . . . I want to do things for myself.
— And why not? I'm counting on you to be the Mayor of Boys Town
— No, They want a fellow who's good at football and baseball. Somebody they can cheer.
— Tony, there's a true story about a man who was very ill for a long time [but] he got courage, he got well. People began to cheer him for a lot of things and he became President of the United States
— And I only want to become Mayor of Boys Town someday.

Flanagan is here referring of course to FDR's overcoming of polio (who hadn't in fact overcome his disability, but hid it successfully with the collusion of the media.[65] In making the comparison, the ethnic Tony becomes associated with the (future and present) American President with whom he shares a disability and in so doing represents a radical departure from Theodore Roosevelt's ideal of strenuous masculinity in a changed context of urban, multi-ethnic and often marginalized American manhood. Flanagan – tough, uncompromising but compassionate - functions to mediate this shift and the enlargement of national manhood.

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ruling races he considered inferior . . .' "Trustbusting and White Manhood in America, 1898-1914" in *American Studies Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Fall 1997). 21-42. 33

[65] Matthew Pressman, "Ambivalent Accomplices: How the Press Handled FDR's Disability and How FDR Handled the Press" in *Journal of The Historical Society*, Vol. 13, Issue 3 (September 2013), 325–359. '. . . news coverage depicted him as someone who had been stricken by polio but who had triumphed over his affliction—which of course he had, despite the fact that he remained paralyzed. This was the image that FDR and his advisers wished to project, and they largely succeeded.' 326

Whitey Marsh (Mickey Rooney) - to whom Flanagan is directed by his errant, already 'lost', older brother Joe Marsh - functions as the dramatic antagonist to the Catholic priest's vision and faith in reform. Whitey rejects Flanagan's interpellation, testing his belief in universal redemption and transformative masculinity to the limits. The usefulness of Flanagan's Irish heritage as a signifier of one-time disruptive/marginal masculinity is displayed in a no-nonsense first encounter with Whitey in a pool hall where he kicks over a stool and talks tough. The scene not only foregrounds Flanagan's capacity to speak directly to urban juveniles, linking him to a model of urban 1930s Irish-American manhood most often associated with Tracy's contemporary James Cagney, but also counterbalances any anxieties that Flanagan (and the paradigm of masculine inclusiveness he is fostering) may be too maternal; not 'man enough'. The altercation – which results in Whitey accompanying him back to Boys Town - suggests that Flanagan can move between and reconcile such modes yet chooses to support a community of shared values over narrow individual benefit.

Despite this initial - if reluctant – acquiescence, Whitey repeatedly ridicules and undermines the egalitarian ethos of Flanagan's project. Determined to bring a dose of 'reality' into the community he runs for mayor with a campaign slogan of "don't be a sucker" (an expression central to the many of Hollywood's Irish-American fraternal conflict narratives made during the period 1930-1960). When the boys elect Tony Ponessa, Whitey decides to leave, to which Fr. Flanagan regretfully accedes. Nevertheless his conviction that there is always the possibility of change is eventually vindicated. Two subsequent events awaken Whitey's fraternal instincts and begin his path to redemption. While leaving, he is followed by the home's 'little brother' Pee Wee (Bobs Watson) who is accidentally knocked down, causing Whitey guilt and a previously unexperienced sadness and kinship. Secondly, in the film's melodramatic climax he goes to tell his brother Joe that he must inform on him (Joe committed a robbery with his

criminal associates) in order to save Boys Town which Hargraves is campaigning to close. When he is kidnapped by Joe's fellow criminals who threaten to kill him, the fearless young men of Boys Town, led by Fr. Flanagan, march on the gang's hideout and, through intimidation, save him. This climactic confrontation both echoes and reconfigures the melting pot idealism of an earlier prayer scene – where we see boys of different faiths praying individually to their Gods - as a moment of historical transition in America where previously Othered masculinities collectively combine to suppress a socially disruptive mode of masculine performance based on violence and intimidation. They effect, in other words, a new paradigm of hegemonic manhood in which hierarchies are replaced by shared values. (Although it is important to underline these values are crystallized through the 'manly' threat of force). This lived, heterotopian community of recuperated whiteness contrasts vividly with establishment authority seen earlier in the film, and the implication is that it represents a reworking of outmoded forms of American masculinity that result in rigid and undemocratic structures of exclusion.

RW Connell has argued that while there are different configurations of masculinity within each historical era, one hegemonic form dominates. Even if this style of masculinity relates to only a few individuals, subordinate masculinities accrue its status: "Masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy, are complicit in this sense."[66] As a microcosmic space of national manhood, Fr. Edward Flanagan's *Boys Town* offers late 1930s audiences a model of American manhood that bridges historical eras and paradigms embodied by Theodore and Franklin D Roosevelt. In its historic roots as marginal and Other, Hollywood's Irish American priest recuperates and maintains white male hegemony by rendering it as 'natural. It achieves this by deriving its inspiration

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[66] RW Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd Ed.79

from Presidential models and through a narrative paradigm of 'vulnerable', multi-cultural American manhood in search of home.

The racial character of this project of 'inclusiveness' can be located in a small but telling moment early in the film when Whitey first arrives at *Boys Town*. Dismissive of the other boys' earnest enthusiasm for their socially engineered, proto-suburban environment (a space of whiteness I shall return to in later chapters) Whitey mocks the statue of a boy outside the home by imitating Al Jolson's rendition of "mammy, mammy" (the statue resembles Jolson's iconic pose): a Caucasian imitating a Jew imitating a minstrel performance of blackness (an interplay of performances further complicated by Rooney's adoption of an Irish stage name). Michael Rogin and Eric Lott have argued that *The Jazz Singer* foregrounded an understanding of whiteness *as* performance by disavowing blackness *through* performance.[67] Perhaps unconsciously but nevertheless tellingly *Boys Town* echoes this and appropriates the earlier overheard 'motherless' spiritual. Whitey repeats Jolson's gesture of disavowal, and by ultimately accepting Flanagan's paternal invitation to 'come home' to normative manhood enters Boys Town: a heterotopian space of reconstructed but nevertheless hegemonic white male fraternity.

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[67] Michael Rogin, "Black Face, White Noise: The Jewish Jazz Singer Finds His Voice", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Spring, 1992), pp. 417-453; See also Eric Lott, "The Seeming Counterfeit: Racial Politics and Early Blackface Minstrelsy", *American Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (June 1991), 223-254

The Fraternity of American Manhood:

Angels With Dirty Faces **(1938) and** *The Fightin' 69th* **(1940)**

The construction of American manhood as a fraternal space of belonging predicated on a principle of choice (rather than race) and the Irish-American priest protagonist as figure of interpellation within such a structure is also central to two other late 1930s Hollywood narratives; albeit with different emphases. Avoiding the explicit socio-political references of *Boys Town*, the Warner Bros. films *Angels With Dirty Faces* (1938) and *The Fightin' 69th* (1940) are late decade star-pairings of James Cagney and Pat O'Brien that also foreground the Irish-American priest as a figure of mediation and recuperation in spaces of 'vulnerable' American manhood. In place of the reformist zeal of Flanagan, they foreground protagonist-antagonists with shared social backgrounds, contrasted by their styles of masculinity and willingness to conform to norms of American manhood rooted in the communal and meritocratic over the individual and opportunistic. The Cain-Abel narrative structure of fraternal conflict (first seen in *The Public Enemy*) is deployed here and repeatedly by Hollywood during the long 1930s (and indeed beyond) to construct dramas of opposition between Irish-American 'brothers' during periods of transition and crises in masculine norms. In the films under consideration in this section, Pat O'Brien's everyman priests function as steadfast, if understated forces of patriarchy also within fragile communities of ethnic, working-class American manhood who must defend such communities from the intruder figures played by Cagney. But while the O'Brien characters share with Tracy's Fr. Flanagan origins and narrative functions they offer incrementally more conservative agendas. Less reformist, they are also more sanguine about established structures of law and order - specifically the use of state-sanctioned execution in the punishment of the Cagney characters in both films. Thus, by *The Fightin 69th*, while the Irish-American Catholic priest retains his mediating function and commitment to communitarian

structures he has also become aligned with a hegemonic military masculinity linking values of courage, obedience and patriotism.

'Masculinity', writes Messerschmidt, 'is based on social action that reacts to unique circumstance and relationships and it is a social construction that is renegotiated in each particular context ... ':

> When men enter a setting, they undertake social practices that demonstrate they are manly ... For many men, crime may serve as a suitable resource for 'doing gender' - for separating them from all that is feminine ... varieties of youth crime serve as suitable resources for doing masculinity when other resources are unavailable.'[68]

Angels With Dirty Faces is a struggle between social practices of white American manhood, with the priest protagonist again positioned as an interpellatory presence, 'calling' inner city juveniles away from crime as a mechanism for 'doing masculinity' to legitimate American values of hard work and equality. Set in the familiar environment of New York's Lower East Side, the film's opening shot – a combination pan and crane that allows us to survey the neighbourhood before coming to rest on the central relationship of Jerry Connelly (O'Brien) and Rocky Sullivan (Cagney) - recalls Wellman's *The Public Enemy* (1931), the landmark Warner Bros treatment of deviant Irish-American masculinity from the beginning of the decade that made Cagney a star. The 'good' brother who acts as a counterpoint to Cagney's anti-social manhood - the dull and judgmental Mike Powers in the earlier film – here finds expression in O'Brien's charismatic priest. But while Mike personified second-generation immigrant ambitions for assimilation into whiteness, Fr. Jerry here embodies the voice of mainstream moral authority, most emphatically when he publicly 'declares war on vice' midway through the narrative. Thus, although the Irish-American priest is again constructed within the local space of the ethnic immigrant neighbourhood, by the late 1930s his social position

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[68] James W Messerschmidt, *Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualisation of Theory* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), 86-88

– and cinematic function - is unequivocally aligned with the norms of national white manhood.

The film's opening section establishes Rocky's career in law breaking as a youth, beginning with an unsuccessful theft that resulted in his arrest, while Jerry – his partner in crime - escaped. When Jerry visits Rocky before his trial, Sullivan refuses to allow his friend give himself up:

> -I got caught and you got away and that's all there is to it.
> -Yea, but supposing I was the one who got caught I bet you wouldn't keep quiet.
> -Always remember: don't be a sucker.

Rocky thus begins a fifteen-year procession through the state correctional system from the 'Society for Juvenile Delinquents' to 'Reform School', to 'State Reformatory' to 'State Penitentiary.' Parallel to his institutional progress is the escalation in his crimes from petty larceny to assault to a manslaughter charge. When he finally returns to the working class neighbourhood of his youth, his reputation is infamous among the next generation of young men.

In the intervening years Jerry has become a priest in his home parish and while this space remains generally unchanged from their youth, he shares with Fr. Flanagan a commitment is to bringing a 'social practice' of masculinity based in communal equality to bear on the young male community he ministers to. Rooted in the realities of urban life, his goal is less to change existing structures than behaviour.

While Jerry and Rocky greet each other as old friends, the priest discreetly attempts to reintegrate Rocky into the spaces that 'produce' parish life and values, finding him a room to rent near the church, inviting him to mass, asking him to become involved with his youth basketball programme. Rocky obliges, though it is unclear whether he is

'reformed' after his years away or simply playing along out of loyalty to his childhood friend. The latter seems more likely as a sub-plot develops in which Rocky rekindles criminal associations and takes a share in an uptown casino named 'El Toro'. Once they discover his identity (after they attempt to rob him), the 'Dead End Kids' that Fr. Jerry has been attempting trying to distract from the lure of crime are in awe of Rocky and keen to learn all he can teach them.

A focal point for Jerry's efforts is his ambition to construct a 'recreation centre'; an as yet unrealized heterotopian space of male inclusiveness and belonging that compares with Fr. Flanagan's desire to create a New Deal home for marginalised manhood. Recognizing the worthiness of the project, Sullivan attempts to make an anonymous donation of $10,000 to the fund earned through his revived criminal activities. Gerry returns the money - he doesn't want "to build it upon rotten foundations" - and reluctantly asks Rocky to stay away from the boys who, in awe of his gangster glamour and the extravagant sums of money he is now passing to them have begun to imitate Sullivan's performance of criminal manhood at the local pool hall.

While it shares with its predecessor many similarities in theme and characterisation with *The Public Enemy,* – as the contrasting titles suggest - *Angels with Dirty Faces* radically overturns the suppositions and structure of the earlier film. While the narrative concludes that Rocky is beyond redemption, it is more sympathetic than the 1931 treatment of the Cagney gangster by also suggesting that he is the victim of a wider malaise; that his criminality is no longer simply a question of refusing to assimilate into whiteness (as it was in the gangster films) but symptomatic of wider social corruption. Contrasting with earlier portraits of male authority (such as Hargraves) Gerry declares: 'I'm not blaming Rocky for what he is today. But for the grace of God, there walk I.' This phrase – recalling Kyle Kusz' comments from earlier in this chapter – place Jerry and

Rocky on the same footing in terms of their ethnic background and social opportunities. Their key point of difference, it is suggested, is not cultural or class based but chance. While the classic gangster film linked crime with ethnic Otherness and the rejection of mainstream (white) norms, here it is identified as non-specific, with those at the bottom – like Rocky – merely the most visible and violent expression of a corrupting culture that reaches the top of the social ladder. Fr. Jerry implores his childhood friend:

> - What earthly good is it for me to teach that honesty is the best policy when all around they see that *dishonesty* is the better policy? That the hoodlum and the gangster is looked up to with the same respect as the successful businessman or the popular hero. You and the Fraziers and the Keefers and all the rest of those rotten politicians you've got in the palm of your hand. Yes, and you've got my boys too. . . Whatever I teach them, you, you show me up. You show them the easiest way. The quickest way is with a racket or a gun.

Connelly seeks to teach – through building a community of masculinity rooted in honest work - is to not choose 'the quickest way'. For this practice to become hegemonic the film provides an 'or else' in the escalation of punishments imposed on Rocky by the patriarchal state to the extremity of the death penalty. From the outset, Jerry is positioned as powerless to commute or overturn such expressions of 'biopower',[69] which the film accepts as enduring and inviolable.

In its rhetorical style and Catholic social message and focus, Jerry's moral vision builds upon and links the broadcasts of Fultan Sheen and President FDR's extensive efforts to control corruption and political manipulation during the 1930s;[70] it is a call for the recovery and renewal of normative values for American manhood made synonymous with Catholic social principles. While this is a rejection of corruption in a criminal sense

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[69] According to Hardt and Negri, "Biopower is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it—every individual embraces and reactivates this power of his or her own accord. Its primary task is to administer life. Biopower thus refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself." Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire,* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2000). 24

[70] John J. Wallis, Price V. Fishback, Shawn E. Kantor, 'Politics, Relief, and Reform. Roosevelt's Efforts to Control Corruption and Political Manipulation during the New Deal,' in *Corruption and Reform: Lessons from America's Economic History* (National Bureau of Economic Research Conference Report), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). 343-372

it is also, although less obviously than *Boys Town*, a version of Rooseveltian policy to recuperate the 'forgotten' men in American society. 'Masculinity', writes Connell, 'is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting.'[71]

The second act of *Angels* is the most novel, radical and potentially problematic section of its narrative. Replacing the traditional forces of white authority in earlier Cagney films, Fr. Gerry goes 'to war' on corruption in the city, deploying language that both echoes and modifies the purity discourse of the more extreme tendencies of 1920s nativism:

> We must rid ourselves of the criminal parasites that feed on us. We must wipe out those we have ignorantly elected and those who control and manipulate this diseased officialdom behind locked doors...

Unlike nativists, Fr. Jerry speaks to issues of social justice rather than race, but his discourse notably mobilizes what Richard Dyer describes 'the moral and aesthetic resonance of whiteness'[72] in its evocation of disease and impurity; a moral righteousness that demands social purification from the point of view of 'we' the people. The Irish-American Catholic priest represents, once again, a moral position constructed as 'default' and common sense. Yet there is an odd slippage in the film's handling of the consequences of this crusade. Although a grand jury investigation into (faceless and undetailed) city corruption is instigated, only one person is finally punished - the film's irredeemable 'bad boy' Rocky Sullivan.

An accumulation of circumstances leads to Rocky shooting and killing two of his criminal fraternity in a bid to protect Fr. Jerry as well as gain revenge. Trapped by the police, 'Killer Rocky' is arrested, incarcerated and sentenced to death by electrocution.

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[71] Connell and Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic masculinity: rethinking the concept', *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19 No. 6, 2005. 829-859, 836
[72] Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, 70

Connell observes that '. . . although hegemony does not refer to ascendancy based on force, it is not incompatible with ascendancy based on force. Indeed it is common for the two to go together.'[73] The film thus presents us with the paradox of a reforming and protective masculinity aligned with patriarchal forces of coercion. Rocky thereby becomes the film's primary (indeed only) victim of his friend's fight against crime, whose cries for help and forgiveness before execution ('No sooner had he entered the death chamber than he tore himself from the guard's grasp and flung himself on the floor, screaming for mercy,' reports the newspaper) render him both a victim and example to the young boys.[74] Earlier Jerry tells Rocky's childhood sweetheart (Ann Sheridan): 'I'd do anything for him, Laury, anything in the world to help him. I'd give my life if I thought it would do any good, but it wouldn't.' His execution by the state is thus both an inevitable and symbolic act of purification with sacrificial undertones derived from its religious subtext.

Thomas Ferraro notes the minimal appearance of 'official Catholicism' in *Angels With Dirty Faces*:

> Although one of the two main characters is a priest, the institutions, people, and rites of official Catholicism are scarcely present in the film at large . . . we witness no mass, no communion, no confession . . . The fact is that organized religion is reduced, unrealistically, to this single, unguardedly earnest man.[75]

I would argue, that while this is in the main accurate, Jerry does not simply represent the 'earnest' ambitions of 'organised religion'; his ambitions are far more ideologically charged. As Rocky sits on death row – the symbolic and literal space of patriarchal punishment that links all three films – Jerry asks him to renounce his style of deviant masculinity:

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73 RW Connell, *Gender and Power*, 184
74 Of course, this could also just as easily be interpreted as a performance. As Ricrad Maltby has shown in relation to *Casablanca*, post-Code cinema became adept at the 'double meaning.' Richard Maltby: "'A Brief Romantic Interlude': Dick and Jane Go to 3 Seconds of the Classical Hollywood Cinema," in Bordwell, David & Carroll, Noël: *Post Theory*. Madison, Wisconsin: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1996. 434-459
75 Thomas Ferraro, 'Boys to Men: Salvific Masculinity in /Angels with Dirty Faces," Colleen McDannell (ed.), *Catholics in the Movies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59-82, 64

- You've been a hero to these kids, and hundreds of others, all through your life - and now you're gonna be a glorified hero in death, and I want to prevent that, Rocky. They've got to despise your memory. They've got to be ashamed of you.

Molded by changing paradigms of American manhood and the preeminence of a number of distinguished Catholic leaders during the 1930s, the film here positions Connolly as the voice of normative masculinity legitimized by state force. As with *Boys Town* the Irish-American priest functions to support Rooseveltian policies of social inclusiveness on behalf of white-ethnic masculinities but also to defend – albeit within a framework of social justice – the power of white hegemony. Similarly, Amanda Ann Klien has noted that while:

> The original 'Dead End Kids' cycle [of which *Angels with Dirty Faces* is an early installment] was consistently identified in public discourses as realistically addressing the problems of under-privileged urban youth . . . it conspicuously avoided any discussion of the problems of non-white youth living in American cities. The oppression experienced by the cycle's characters was based on social and class difference rather than on racial, ethnic or religious difference. The cycle's omission of African American characters is significant[76]

Its significance is evident in the film's title – 'dirty faces' can be scrubbed clean [white] and 'angels' redeemed. As Fr. Gerry leads the boys to 'say a prayer' following Rocky's execution, the Catholic priest as a nurturing figure of white patriarchy prevails - even if the film sympathizes with the heroic independence of Rocky Sullivan. Significantly his earlier ambition for a recreation centre to protect these marginal young men remains unrealized; suggesting a failure to 'produce' a space of reform but a triumph for Connolly's Rooseveltian values.

Within the more urgent and anxious context of America's entry into WWII, the coercive character of Pat O'Brien's priest persona (a disposition reportedly reinforced by the

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[76] Amanda Ann Klein, *American Film Cycles: Reframing Genres, Screening Social Problems, and Defining Subcultures* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 87

actor's own ideologically conservative leanings)[77] becomes more pronounced in his portrayal of celebrated soldier-priest Fr. Francis Duffy.

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State Power and National Manhood in *The Fightin' 69th* (1940)

Although they share a setting, *The Fighting 69th* contrasts on several levels with Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front (1930)*, the defining cinematic portrait of WWI from the 1930s, made at the beginning of the decade and re-released by Universal just a year earlier in 1939.[78] While Milestone's film is grounded in a realist experience of war from a European perspective, with a focus on the lone Private Paul Bäumer (the then unknown Lew Ayres), *The Fighting 69th* re-stages the fraternal struggle of *Angels With Dirty Faces* with Warner stars Pat O'Brien and James Cagney reprising their roles of priest and urban tough in the context of WWII. While the earlier film emphasized the disillusionment of a single soldier, here the heterotopian space of the all male military unit functions to link tensions surrounding marginal and mainstream American masculinities seen in the films discussed above, with patriotism.

Film historian Thomas Schatz describes *The Fighting 69th* as a 'trendsetter'; the first Hollywood film to deal with American participation in WWII (albeit obliquely), the popular and commercial success of which 'enhanced Hollywood's general shift to war-related features.'[79] In common with *Boys Town*, the film is set in an earlier, 'parallel'

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77 'John Bright, co-author of *Bullets or Ballots* - the source novel for *The Public Enemy*, claimed, "The Irish crowd in Hollywood were all reactionary. Pat O'Brien, Cagney's closest friend was practically a fascist, also very anti-Semitic.' Cited in Patrick McGilligan, Paul Buhle, *Tender Comrades: A Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 145-146.
78 Andrew Kelly, *All Quiet on the Western Front: The Story of a Film* (London: I.B Tauris, 1998), 169-172
79 Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American cinema in the 1940s* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999), 117. In terms of features directly related to World War II however, Hollywood's output was still quite limited [producing] only six World War related films in 1939 [1.2% of total output] and twelve in 1940

historical era originating in the film's focus on the well-known, recently deceased

Catholic priest protagonist Fr. Francis P. Duffy (1871-1932). Duffy - who, coincidentally,

had been a teacher of Edward Flanagan at seminary - was military chaplain to the famed

69th Infantry Regiment, the masculine community of soldiers that forms the focus of the

film's narrative. The patriotic, courageous and inspirational Duffy was widely respected

in the military and beyond, becoming the most decorated cleric in the history of the US

Army and later commemorated by a statue in Times Square, New York alongside fellow

Irish-American George M. Cohan. By returning to pre 1930s settings, the Hollywood

biopics of such individuals revise the narrowly assimilationist plots of the silent era in

favour of constructions of Irish American manhood as idealized models of 'white

ethnicity' located between ties to community and individual ambition. Here, as with

Cohan, this tension finds focus in a heroic patriotism. Developing Schatz' observation, I

argue that *The Fighting 69th* marks not just the beginning of a genre tendency but is a

decisive text in the explicit linking of Irish-American and white national manhood

through 'legitimate power.'[80] Central to this reading is the identification of the Catholic

priest with American military masculinity.

Aaron Belkin has observed that since the late nineteenth century:

> American military masculinity was consolidated as a dominant paradigm for male
> authority; a paradigm that came to model normative citizenship for civilians, not
> just soldiers, that valorized toughness on the one hand and obedience and
> conformity on the other.[81]

Belkin further argues that with increasing US involvement in overseas wars, soldiering

came to be understood as 'The most privileged demonstration of masculinity . . .

paradigmatic of what it meant to be a real man.'[82] But as scholars of whiteness have

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[2.5% of total output].

[80] Though beyond the scope of this study, Irish-Americans would feature prominently in Hollywood WWII narratives.

[81] Aaron Belkin, *Bring Me Men: Military Masculinity and the Benign Facade of American Empire, 1898-2001* (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2012), 6-7

[82] Belkin, *Military Masculinity*, 6

noted, such 'paradigmatic' practice has also included a core racial dimension so that 'the archetypal "American" is not only male but white as well.'[83] Nakayama and Krizek argue that "the history and tradition of the United States is replete with relentless efforts to retain and guard the boundaries of nationality with whiteness" and that "as a discursive strategy, the conflation of whiteness and U.S. citizenship challenges the very notion of a nation of immigrants; yet the persistence of this discourse reflects territorial claims to vital political terrain'[84] *The Fighting 69th* illustrates this paradox: the so-called 'Rainbow Division' of young Americans of various ethnic backgrounds which unites within the paradigm of military masculinity, an 'invisible' affiliation between nation, manhood and whiteness.

The historical figure of Fr. Duffy made such associations seem natural. Before service in the army he had been parish priest in the Bronx, editor of the *New York Review* and a renowned, progressive theologian at the forefront of 'normalizing' American Catholicism. His 1919 autobiography (written just after the events depicted in the film) *Father Duffy's Story* is a forerunner of such tendencies:

> I am a very Irish, very Catholic, very American person if anybody challenges my convictions. But normally, and let alone, I am just plain human.[85]

This subject position conforms closely to Richard Dyer's analysis of the 'invisibility' or unmarked character of whiteness: 'whites are not of a certain race, they are just the human race.' To be white – and in this context, a white male - is to be human. While many writers – notably Peggy McIntosh - have developed this thesis to speak about the

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[83] Laura C. Prividera, John W. Howard III, "Masculinity, Whiteness, and the Warrior Hero: Perpetuating the Strategic Rhetoric of U.S. Nationalism and the Marginalization of Women" in *Women and Language*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 31

[84] T. Nakayama, R. Krizek, "Whiteness: A strategic rhetoric" in *Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. 81*, (1995) 291-309; 301
[85] Francis P Duffy, *Father Duffy's Story* (New York: George H Doran Company, 1919), viii

'invisible, weightless,' knapsack'[86] of white privilege, here it functions to normalize

regimes of power and control with a distinctly racial dimension. In Duffy's recollections

of the formation of the 69th regiment in June 1917, he writes:

> Nobody was taken who fell below the standard in age, height, weight, sight or
> chest measurement - or who had liquor aboard or who had not a clean skin . . . Our
> 2,000 men were a picked lot. They came mainly from Irish county societies and
> from Irish Catholic Athletic clubs. A number of these latter Irish bore distinctly
> German, French, Italian or Polish names. They were Irish by adoption, Irish by
> association or Irish by conviction . . . about 5 percent of the 2,000 were Irish
> neither by race or racial creed.[87]

While he privileges 'Irish' traits of physical strength and cleanliness as the raw material

of his unit (re-writing long-standing stereotypes and making Irish a multi-cultural form

of 'whiteness' in the process), Duffy insists that male leadership is the defining

characteristic of a successful military:

> About the enlisted men I have not a single doubt . . . But fighting and winning are
> not always the same thing, and the winning depends much on the officers-their
> military knowledge, ability as instructors and powers of leadership.[88]

Duffy makes clear a hierarchy of military manhood and a correlation between

submission to a hegemonic (white) officer class, patriotism and 'winning.'

In common with the other films examined in this chapter, the drama of *The Fighting 69th*

arises from a conflict between a brash and disruptive misfit - Jerry Plunkett (James

Cagney) - and a recently established masculine community of multi-ethnic/working

class men – the eponymous fighting regiment. And while, again, the Irish-American

priest Fr. Duffy (played, inaccurately, with a brogue by O'Brien, presumably to soften his

association with American military norms) assumes a role of nurturing patriarchy

within the group, in the context of war he is notably less indulgent than Fr. Jerry

Connolly, or his historical contemporary Fr. Flanagan. The film's most significant

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[86] Peggy McIntosh, "White privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" in *Peace and Freedom* (July/August
1989), 9-10; repr. in *Independent School*, 49 (1990), 31–35
[87] Duffy, *Father Duffy's Story*, 14-15
[88] Duffy, *Father Duffy's Story*, 16

development on previous narratives is that while Flanagan and Connolly remain outside

state regulatory regimes (in both cases identified with the prison) used to contain and

suppress potential threats to existing hegemonies, here the Catholic priest is embedded

in, and aligned with, such structures.

The Fighting 69th opens with Major 'Wild Bill' Donovan (played by debonair Irish actor

George Brent)[89], the legendary Irish-American soldier who represents the ideal of a

superior, inspirational officer class (and who was just such a figure to John Ford when

he served in WWII)[90], swearing in new recruits. The scene establishes the first of the

film's spaces of military masculinity (first Camp Mills, then later the trenches and

frontline of battle in France), which in turn structure an idealised community of male

camaraderie and courage. While in *Boys Town* and *Angels With Dirty Faces* comparable

communities were established on Rooseveltian principles of democratic fairness and

inclusiveness articulated and advocated by the Irish-American priest, here it is the

authoritarian Irish-American Major Donovan who enrolls the young men into this

impromptu community of national manhood through the 'Oath of Enlistment':

> I swear to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all
> enemies, foreign and domestic . . . and that I will obey the orders of the President
> of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to
> regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.[91]

Jerry Plunkett's rejection of the injunction to 'obey' – and with it the concept of a

national manhood – provides the central drama and ideological basis of the film.

Coincident with Duffy's description of his handpicked 'Irish' soldiers, this is first

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[89] Ruth Barton, *Acting Irish in Hollywood: From Fitzgerald to Farrell* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006) contains a detailed discussion of Brent's origins in rural Ireland and sophisticated Hollywood screen persona.
[90] Joseph McBride, *Searching for John Ford* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 328-329; 680. 'Donovan was cool, hard-driving and often ruthless, he inspired the utmost loyalty from those who served him . . . the grandson of Famine emigrants, Donovan also inspired intense admiration and respect from Ford as an Irish Catholic who had made it to the deepest inner reaches of American society without betraying his ethnic or religious allegiances.' . . . McBride also reports that Ford later wanted to do a film about Donovan, 'promising him on his death bed he would do so.'
[91] Centre for Military History, United States Army: 'Oaths of Enlistment and Oaths of Office,' Accessed 2 November 2013. http://www.history.army.mil/html/faq/oaths.html

expressed in Plunkett's denial of his 'Irishness'. In an early scene he is seen speaking

Yiddish, explaining that his name used to be Moscowitz but he changed it to 'get in the

Fightin' 69th'.[92] When Plunkett subsequently meets Fr. Duffy (who he doesn't yet know is

a priest) he again disavows his ethnic background:

> — You Irish – huh? I am too. But I don't work at it. I don't like these loud-mouthed
>   Micks that go around singing Molly Malone all the time.
> — Think maybe you're in the wrong outfit. Regiment has certain traditions.
> — Don't give me that malarkey. We both joined up for the same thing . . . come back
>   dripping in medals, big-shots, the world our oyster.

Plunkett (who like Donovan and Duffy is also based on an historic, unruly Irish soldier

named Tom Shannon)[93] hankers after the 'big shot' fame and glory recognizable from

earlier 1930s Cagney characters. This inter-textual resonance functions to position

Plunkett as a throwback to a disruptive, ethnic manhood whose time has passed: a type

from an earlier era at odds with a paradigm of collectively patriotic American manhood

defending shared values with their lives. Paradoxically, the rejection of his Irish heritage

is less a sign of assimilation into whiteness than the rejection of shared values of

tradition, communality and loyalty. When he yells at a fellow soldier to 'Take your hand

off me, you thick Mick', the racial slur indicates not simply a man who stands apart from

his own 'tribe' but also, by implication, the fraternity of military manhood.

Concluding an ideological construction present in the preceding films, *The Fightin 69th*

film articulates the gap between Plunkett and the community of inclusive American

manhood to which he is invited in terms of individual courage and commitment over

origins and opportunity. Unlike Hargraves in *Boys Town*, the film's representative of

hegemonic American manhood is not WASP establishment but Major Donovan. While

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[92] This in fact, is a humorous reference to the 1926 film *Private Izzy Murphy* where Isodore Goldberg
changes his name because his store is in an Irish neighbourhood and also enlists to fight in WWI.
[93] Stephen L. Harris, *Duffy's War: Fr. Francis Duffy, Wild Bill Donovan, and the Irish Fighting 69th in World
War I* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2006), 152. According to Harris, Plunkett is based on Private Tom
Shannon from Co. Clare, Ireland. Harris recounts how Shannon, who had already gone AWOL three times
since leaving Camp Mills was drunk on home-brew and tried to shoot one of the regiment priests. He was
given an honorable discharge but continued to fight and died a hero's death at the Battle of Ourcq River.

Donovan shares the immigrant origins of the enlisted men (his parents were from Ireland),[94] he is constructed as traditional officer class in his urbanity and purposeful determination. On an extra-textual level, the historical underpinnings of Donovan's unrivalled status and reputation in the US military,[95] George Brent's career and Fr. Duffy's reputation as a national hero function within the film to position Plunkett in a minority among men once identified with marginal masculinity but who have become representatives of an iconic American manhood constructed between individual actions and collective goals.

Following a narrative structure familiar from the films discussed earlier, Fr. Duffy seeks to mediate between the fragile male community and its renegade but, despite his patience with Plunkett, makes little progress. Sensing a weakness beneath the bravado he suggests that a return to his Catholic roots would help Plunkett to integrate:

— Instead of improving, you're getting worse Jerry . . . I don't think you're as tough as you think. You know there's only one thing wrong with you . . . you haven't made any friends.
— I came here to soldier not to pray.
— I'm only asking you to come back to your religion and recognize Almighty God.

Like Whitey Marsh and Rocky Sullivan, Plunkett scoffs at the priest's advice/invitation – which in each case posits Catholic and American values as coeval. As with the earlier films, this refusal puts the fraternal community in danger, but this time with consequences far more serious than social disharmony or a potential life of crime. An act of cowardice and disobedience by Plunkett results in the notorious artillery bombardment of 'Rouge Bouquet,' by German forces (where 19 American soldiers with the 165th Infantry Division were killed); an event commemorated in the famous lyric

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[94] Douglas Waller, *Wild Bill Donovan: The Spymaster Who Created the OSS and Modern American Espionage* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012)
[95] Waller, *Wild Bill Donovan*, : Donovan is the only American to receive four of the nation's highest military distinctions - the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal and the National Security Medal.

poem "The Wood Called Rouge Bouquet"[96] recited in the film by its author Sgt. Joyce Kilmer (Jeffrey Lynn) over his dead comrades. Trapped beneath collapsed trenches Fr. Duffy tries in vain to rescue the buried men as Plunkett skulks away.

When Major Donovan tries to get rid of the cowardly Plunkett, Duffy – sharing a belief in the possibility of change with Fr. Flanagan - asks for one more chance. Once again however this faith is misplaced: Plunkett panics, gives away the position of the company to the enemy and is again culpable in the deaths of other soldiers. This time he is condemned to court martial by shooting.

In a familiar narrative element, Fr. Duffy meets with Plunkett in his prison cell on the eve of his execution; the sanctioned space of confinement for abject masculinities by hegemonic/white power structures. Clearly frightened, the once-tough soldier asks for Duffy's help in escaping. The priest refuses, and in one of the film's most significant lines says, 'Jerry you're forgetting I'm a soldier as well as a priest', reversing the hierarchies of manhood from earlier films where the priest was identified first and foremost with his fragile 'flock.' During their meeting the prison is shelled and damaged by enemy fire, and Duffy tells him, 'You're free Jerry . . . whichever you choose you'll have to go it alone.' Sensing an opportunity to make amends, Plunkett reluctantly but courageously returns to the collective fraternity of the military and his religious faith. In a melodramatic climax, the hospital where he is working is bombed and he rushes to the front, sacrificing his life as his regiment advances; an ending that redeems Plunkett as a self-sacrificing hero without erasing his earlier cowardice. The film concludes with Fr. Duffy solemnly saying a prayer for America's 'lost generation' - 'America, the citadel of peace forever more . . .'; an anachronistic pacifist message for a film that clearly aspires to support American involvement in WWII.

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[96] Joyce Kilmer, "Rouge Bouquet" published in *Stars and Stripes*, 16 August 1918.

Several seemingly irreconcilable positions find acceptance in the film through the idealized figure of Duffy who mediates a number of tensions: between a sentimental pacifism and implicit celebration of military manhood; between the contrasting Irish-American masculinities of Plunkett and Donovan; between immigrant origins and American patriotism, between obedience and the freedom to choose, and crucially, between accepted understandings of marginal and normative manhood at a moment of national crises. As a decorated 'soldier and priest', the charismatic Fr. Duffy functions to reconcile such positions by enlarging and enforcing the boundaries of white American manhood as normative; linking patriotism to an inwardly directed community and outwardly directed lethal force.

Conclusion

The emergence of the dynamic figure of the Catholic priest marked a significant development in constructions of Irish-American manhood in Hollywood cinema during the late 1930s, combining archetypal elements of American masculinity and leadership with contemporary anxieties. Articulating an enlarged construction of normative manhood during a period of social instability and transformation to include the white-ethnic/immigrant working class, the type functioned to mediate between earlier and contemporary contexts of American masculinity through a largely secular framing of the vows taken by Catholic priests on ordination - poverty, chastity and obedience. As a figure devoted to poverty (both in terms of social inclusion and personal wealth) the Irish-American priest embodied a disinterestedness in material possessions that revised the consumer culture of the 1920s and chimed with the climate of economic hardship

and federal polices of increasing shared resources (through tax increases)[97] of the New

Deal era. On the other hand, the voluntary nature of Catholic celibacy in these films can

be read as re-negotiated forms of Theodore Roosevelt's 'strenuous' manhood and the

values of self-discipline and independence highly valued during the Progressive era. His

celibate status also reconfigures the unattached character of the traditional American

cinematic hero in homo-social environments. Finally, in his obedience to male superiors

but greater obedience to conscience, Hollywood's Catholic priest offers a model of

masculinity that is simultaneously submissive and independent, reconciling an earlier

ideal of frontier individualism with Roosevelt's extension of Federal structures.

Contemporary in setting, the three films discussed in this chapter share narrative and

ideological concerns in which Irish-American priests function as mediators between

marginal communities of young, working class and often ethnically diverse males and

prevailing structures of hegemonic white manhood during the long 1930s. I have argued

that these idealized but fragile communities of 'new' American manhood find expression

as 'heterotopian' spaces of home within which expanded formulations of white

American manhood are imagined and recuperated within contemporary socio-historic

shifts and contexts referred to above.

In their foregrounding of an inclusive model of American manhood based on communal

benefit and figures of leadership who are simultaneously authoritative, compassionate

and interventionist, the three films reflect the ideals of the FDR Presidency (1933-1945)

within which they were produced, even as those politics shifted to reflect changing

circumstances within the period of 1938-1940. In their identification of Irish-American

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[97] Jason Scott Smith, *A Concise History of the New Deal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 92.
Reversing the policies of previous Republican administrations, the Revenue Acts of 1935 (the 'Wealth Tax')
1936, 1938 greatly increased income tax revenues. Smith argues that wider taxation initiatives recouped
more but helped less in economic recovery: 'The great bulk of the New Deal's revenue stemmed directly
from regressive consumption takes that fell on "the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid,"
a fact that severely hindered other New Deal efforts aimed at increasing the purchasing power of
consumers.'

priests with American ideals but where such characters are at one remove from state mechanisms of 'bio power' (i.e. prison or execution) these films offer figures of white male authority who both challenge existing constructions of normative masculinity and its maintenance while reasserting its hegemony as 'natural' and inclusive. In this respect they conform to the views of scholars such as Wendy Kozol when she writes that while 'Whiteness is neither a unified not stable category but one whose meanings change historically [Such constructions change as] 'Whiteness mutates in order to reproduce itself in an ongoing effort to uphold and maintain power.'[98] In this regard, the Irish-American priest can be seen as a forerunner of more recent representational tendencies of Irish manhood within American popular culture where, in Hamilton Carroll's words, 'the particularization of Irish ethnic whiteness [functions] as a tool for the concomitant recuperation of patriarchal white masculinity.'[99]

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[98] Wendy Kozol, " 'Good Americans': Nationalism and Domesticity in *Life* Magazine, 1945-1960", ed. John E. Bodnar, *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define Their Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 248
[99] Carroll, *Affirmative Reaction*, 132

Chapter 3

Gentlemen and Gyms: Irish-American Bodies and the habitus of Whiteness

Ruth Frankenberg describes whiteness as a dynamic process of identity formation - 'a process not a "thing" . . . ensembles of local phenomena complexly embedded in socioeconomic, sociocultural and psychic interrelations.'[1] Bruce Simon contends that, 'Being white is a learned phenomenon'.[2] Similarly John Stanfield also offers an understanding of whiteness as a dynamic practice that links abstract values and the body in a bid to access and maintain privilege within the social context of the nation. He terms such practices as 'race-making':

> Race-making is a mode of stratification and more broadly nation-state building. It is premised on the ascription of moral, social, symbolic, and intellectual characteristics to real or manufactured phenotypical features which justify and give normality to the institutional and societal dominance of one population over other populations materialized in resource mobilization, control over power, authority and prestige privileges, and ownership of the means of production.[3]

Scholarship within critical whiteness studies has broadly argued that such links have been historically constructed within the United States with the implicit assumption of whiteness as normative. In contrast to such 'marking', Richard Dyer has argued that whites have historically avoided biological self-analysis which might have rendered them 'like non-whites, no more than their bodies' – and, instead, positioned themselves as - 'a norm not in need of investigation.'[4] Even when, in the early twentieth century,

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[1] Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 10

[2] Bruce N. Simon, 'White-Blindness' in *The Social Construction of Race and Ethnicity in the United States*, eds. Joan Ferrante, Prince Brown, Jr., (NY: Prentice Hall, 1998), 496-502, 498. For an extrapolation of this idea rooted in personal experience, see Dalton Conley, 'Universal Freckle, or How I learned to be White,' ed. Birgit Brander Rasmussen, *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* (Durham: Duke University press, 2001).

[3] John H Stanfield, "Theoretical and Ideological Barriers to the Study of Race-Making" in *Research in Race and Ethnic Relations*, 4(1985), 161

[4] Dyer, *White*, 23

white masculinity began to engage in the corporeal focused activity of bodybuilding, Dyer argues that this merely served to accentuate an attitude that 'the body that white men are born with [is] made possible by their natural mental superiority.'[5]

Several scholars have argued that this paradox – between white 'invisibility' and embodiment – has been central to the history of race in America. Richard Williams, for instance, sees skin colour as the product – rather than the basis - of race:

> The United States became a multiracial society when skin pigment legally became the mechanism used to separate the population into the free and the unfree.[6]

In his classic text, *Race and Racism* Pierre van den Berghe has offered an allied observation that: 'it is not the presence of objective physical differences between groups that creates race, but the social recognition of such differences as socially significant or relevant.'[7]

This chapter offers an intervention within such debates with a focus on how Hollywood representations of three late nineteenth century Irish-American males associated with sport and 'physical culture' function to construct whiteness as an acquired or learned embodied entity. My argument here will be that such representations work to simultaneously deny the monolithic and racial character of the white body (following Dyer) while nevertheless positioning its cultural status as normative through association with a variety of supplements: self transcendence; social mobility; Presidential recognition. I shall argue that three biopics - *The Great John L* (1945); *Gentleman Jim* (1942); and *The Long Gray Line* (1954) - revisit the Irish-American

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[5] Dyer, *White*, 23
[6] Richard Williams, *Hierarchical Structures and Social Value: The Creation of Black and Irish Identities in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25
[7] Pierre van den Berghe, *Race and Racism* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), 11

immigrant experience to recuperate the bodies of their historical protagonists as

fulcrums of negotiation between spaces and dispositions (habitus) constructed as ethnic

or 'non-white' on the one hand and those aligned with a socially validated, embodied,

white masculinity, on the other. In their foregrounding of the triumph of 'technologies of

the self' over 'given' or natural masculinities, such texts perpetuate a Western

association of the 'civilized body' with whiteness, [8] framed within contexts of

assimilation and the American myth of self-actualization.

In their embodied responses to respective social environments, such characters

conform to George Yancy's discussion of the historical 'plasticity of the body' within

American historical contexts:

> The body's meaning—whether phenotypically white or black—its ontology, its
> modalities of aesthetic performance, its comportment, its "raciated"
> reproduction, is in constant contestation. The hermeneutics of the body, how it
> is understood, how it is "seen," its "truth," is partly the result of a profound
> historical, ideological construction . . . The body is codified as *this* or *that* in
> terms of meanings that are sanctioned, scripted, and constituted through
> processes of negotiation that are embedded within and serve various ideological
> interests that are grounded within further power-laden social processes. The
> historical plasticity of the body, the fact that it is a site of contested meanings,
> speaks to the historicity of its "being" as *lived* and *meant* within the interstices of
> social semiotics.[9]

Developing Yancy, I propose a 'hermeneutics' of the historical Irish-American body in

these films, arguing that the protagonists of these films are recuperated by white history

through a foregrounding of their embodied subjectivities. On one level, this can be

understood as the retrospective representation of Diane Negra's observation that:

> . . . the physical whiteness of the [historical] Irish was an incontrovertible fact,

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[8] Uli Linke, *German Bodies: Race and Representation after Hitler*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 109-110
This association has deep European roots in the nineteenth century. The framework within which the Irish-
American characters discussed in this chapter are imagined for instance, displays affinities with Linke's
discussion of Freud's (pre-Nazi era) writings: 'In his early works, Freud repeatedly aligned whiteness and
white skin with civilization . . . in accord with his culture's racialist assumptions. In Freud's writings the
symbolism of the 'civilized,' that is the rational, white male, adult citizen, stands in opposition to 'the
primitive,' a term that designates an imaginary union of mythological creatures, animals and dark skinned
natives . . . The renunciation of instinctual satisfaction was crucial in this establishment of relations of
mastery . . . primitive freedoms had to be excised and suppressed by a civilized person.'
[9] George Yancy, "Whiteness and the Return of the Black Body" in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, New
Series, Vol 19, No 4, (2005), 215-241, 216

and it may well have been the case that nineteenth-century American culture sought to find a way to reconcile Irish whiteness with Irish disconnection from social and economic privilege, while deeply invested in an equation between whiteness and normativity.[10]

But it also represents another phase in Hollywood's deployment of Irish-American manhood at moments of pressure and consolidation within white masculinity; where the hegemony of whiteness is both reasserted and tempered by the invocation of immigrant spaces and cultures of home. Drawing on conceptual frameworks developed by Bourdieu (habitus) and Foucault (technologies of the body), I argue that Hollywood constructs the three historical protagonists of my chosen films as embodying tensions between spaces of whiteness (identified with disciplining the male body) and spaces of home (identified with inclusion) functions to de-essentialise whiteness as a biological characteristic while reinforcing the 'essential' white masculine values that define American history.

The Irish Male Body in American Cinema

In his landmark work of visual history *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, L. Perry Curtis has demonstrated[11] that a recurring feature of nineteenth century depictions of the Irish in the United States was a conception of a 'non-white' masculinity rooted in a racially primitive and immutable body; an association which linked the Irish to other 'colonial' bodies.[12] Within such a visual framework Irish immigrant males were most often depicted as loutish, undisciplined, and uncivilized;

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[10] Diane Negra, 'The Stakes of Whiteness', *Minnesota Review*, Number 47, Fall 1996, pp. 109-114

[11] L. Perry Curtis, Jr. *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971)

[12] Charles D. Martin, *The White African American Body: A Cultural and Literary Exploration* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 160. Additionally, Nadja Durbach has noted that the Irish remained for a long time the key reference point for colonized subjects with 'Paddy Murphy' Indians quickly absorbed by 'African Irishmen.' *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009

their bodies sites of chaos directed both outwards – in their proclivity for anti-social

fighting – and inwards – through frequent inebriation. The influence of this

representational tradition is visible across a range of early Irish-American themed comic

films such as *Drill Ye Tarriers Drill* (1900) (from an 1888 comic song about an Irish-

American worker being blown up while working on the railroad[13]) and *Our Deaf Friend*

Fogarty (Biograph, 1904) (with its foregrounding of drinking and motiveless fighting

among the Irish) among many others.[14] For Peter Flynn, the humour of these early films

'rests on the implied incompatibility between the film's subject and modern society'

where 'the drunken Irish body deploys a robust and uncontained physicality against the

forces of order and restraint . . .'[15] The repeated trope of drinking within such films,

writes Flynn:

> either in the context of large social gatherings – such as wakes, christenings, and
> other Irish celebrations or in the all-male environment of the saloon, was
> associated with Old World values and was, by extension, seen as anathema to the
> pursuit of modern civilization.[16]

In a striking contrast to such portraits, the contemporary 'Muscular Christianity'

movement was dominated by images of the body as a site of socio-political conflict.[17] As

a body-centric response by white America to anxieties about race 'suicide' in the face of

large-scale immigration and the feminizing effects of modernity, the trans-Atlantic

movement was a response to contemporary anxieties about the virility of white

manhood:

> In the forty years before 1920, an extraordinary amount of talk within
> Protestant churches focused on the need to rescue American manhood from
> sloth and effeminacy.[18]

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[13] William H. A. Williams, *Twas Only an Irishman's Dream* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 137
[14] Peter Flynn, "Staging the Screen Irishman: Irish Masculinity in Early American Cinema 1895-1907" in *The Moving Image*, Vol 12, No 2, (Fall 2012),122-147. Fuller discussion of portraits of Irish masculinity in early American film
[15] Flynn, *Staging the Screen Irishman*, 130
[16] Flynn, *Staging the Screen Irishman*,124
[17] Donald E. Hall, ed., *Muscular Christianity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
[18] Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2001), 6

While 'Muscular Christianity' represented the most prominent response to such anxieties, related historical studies by Gail Bederman, Kevin P. Murphy and others[19] have shown that public discourse surrounding American manhood during this period (roughly corresponding to the Progressive Era) was overwhelmingly centered on the male body; forging an ideological link between whiteness, health and the American nation. Contrasting with representations of Irish male bodies of the late Victorian era and early cinema, the healthy and productive body becomes an ideal of white American masculinity that is both given and cultivated. The ideological associations within this thinking are most explicitly seen in the political career of Theodore Roosevelt and his 'cowboy' presidency; linking white American manhood with 'Manifest Destiny' and the spaces of the American West through a conception of 'strenuous manhood.'[20] The films under consideration here thus retrospectively revisit and recuperate turn of the century representations of historical Irish-Americans in narratives that reflect both the growing status of this group within American society as well as contemporary concerns and constructions of white manhood in the aftermath of WWII.

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Anna Froula has observed that the 'policing' of the male body that had defined military masculinities as normative and linked to the security of the nation during wartime spilled over into civilian life in the wake of WWII. Froula observes that this period:

> coincided with the predominance of "privileged" representations of strong, youthful, white male bodies that symbolized the re-strengthening of America in the wake of the emasculating Great Depression . . . Youth similarly experienced such militarization and "musculinization," to borrow Yvonne Tasker's term via

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[19] Kevin P. Murphy. *Political Manhood: Red Bloods, Mollycoddles, and the Politics of Progressive Era Reform* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010)

[20] "The Strenuous Life" was first articulated in a speech by Roosevelt in Chicago 10th, April 1899. Dan Moos, *Race, Ethnicity, and the Role of the American West in National Belonging.* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, UPNE, 2005)

ritualized exercise programs at schools and in team sports that aimed to prepare boys and young men for combat.[21]

The Great John L (1945); *Gentleman Jim* (1942); and *The Long Gray Line* (1954), can be understood as part of this wider cultural tendency, constructing historical masculinities around what Foucault describes as 'technologies of self.'[22] Through such technologies these 'typical' (first and second generation) Irish-Americans achieve cultural significance (and Hollywood validation) by means of their submission to respective habitus of discipline and restraint linked with normative/hegemonic masculinities. But this is not at the expense or rejection of existing ties of kinship to immigrant origins and ethnic environments. Indeed, within these narratives the Irish-American home functions not only as an enduring topos of identity but a space of emotional complementarity to the disciplining spaces of white manhood. In contrast to the representations of an earlier era (alluded to above), these ethnic bodies are figured not as irremediably Othered but capable of regulation and mastery within specific socio-spatial contexts. In this respect the construction of Irish American manhood in these films follows Pierre Bourdieu's recognition that:

> . . . there is an interrelationship between the development of the body and people's social location . . . The management of the body is central to the acquisition of status and distinction.[23]

For Bourdieu this occurs through habitual practice; for Foucault the body is moulded by regimes of power (through space) that 'reach into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives.'[24] These Hollywood narratives express therefore Bourdieu's correlation between 'the development of the body' and 'social location' through a process of submission to Foucault's 'technologies of the self': 'practices by

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[21] Anna Froula, "The Male Body at War: American Masculinity during World War II" in *American Studies*, Vol 48, No 2, (Summer 2007), 72-73 (review)

[22] Marcel Mauss, "Les Techniques du corps" in *Journal de Psychologie 32* (1934), 3-4

[23] Chris Shilling, *The Body and Social Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 111

[24] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 39

which subjects constitute themselves within and through systems of power, and which often seem to be either 'natural' or imposed from above.'[25] Hollywood's representation of such dynamics is constructed as mutually enhancing: ethnic bodies made productive by 'social locations' of discipline and which, in turn revitalise often aged, repressed, or otherwise excessively disciplined white masculinities.

This chapter's analysis of these three Hollywood biopics is divided into two parts. In the first, I consider two films centered on iconic nineteenth century Irish American sporting heroes: 'Big' John L Sullivan and 'Gentleman' Jim Corbett and argue that these historical narratives construct the immigrant male sporting body as a site of mediation between old and new world socio-spatial environments, with contrasting consequences. In the second section, I discuss John Ford's *The Long Gray Line* – a cinematic treatment of ordinary Irish immigrant Marty Maher's life at West Point Military Academy. Ford's overlooked text (made just two years after the more widely seen and discussed *The Quiet Man*)[26] also develops associations between American masculinities and the spaces within which they are constructed through the dynamic convergence of characteristically Fordian environments of the Irish family homestead and the US military. Across both sections, I draw on and develop Bourdieu's concept of habitus to analyse how Hollywood creates a dynamic relationship between fictional spaces, culture and the male body within an overarching ideological framework of normative whiteness.

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[25] Jason Mittell, *Foucault and "Technologies of the Self"*, Accessed 04 July 2013; http://www.theory.org.uk/ctr-fou6.htm

[26] The film shares a number of elements with *The Quiet Man* - a comic tone, Technicolor visuals and Maureen O'Hara as a feisty Irish colleen - and can, in certain respects be seen as a companion text within his Irish themed films.

Habitus, the Body and Masculine Identity

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu coined the term habitus as means of explaining how and why people behave as they do within given social environments: 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures . . . principles which generate and organize practices . . .'[27] Elsewhere, Bourdieu explains that: 'The word disposition, being more familiar, less exotic, than habitus is important to give a more concrete intuition of what habitus is . . .'[28] For Bourdieu, habitus is neither a result of free will, nor fully imposed by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: 'dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these.'[29] In this sense habitus is created 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence... without any conscious concentration.'[30] While habitus is a set of social dispositions, Bourdieu emphasises that such 'acquired characteristics' are 'written' on the body. It is, as he puts it, 'embodied history, internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history':[31]

> I think there is a link between the body and what in French we call *esprit de corps*. In most organizations – the Church, the army, political parties, industrial concerns etc. – . . . Bodily discipline is the instrument par excellence of every kind of domestication.[32]

Developing this connection between social disposition and the body, Lois McNay has argued that:

> As the point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological, the body is a dynamic, mutable frontier. The body is the threshold through which the subject's lived experience of the world is incorporated and realized

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27 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1990) 53
28 Pierre Bourdieu "Habitus" in *Habitus: A Sense of Place*, ed. Jean Hillier & Emma Rooksby, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) 27-34, 28
29 Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, (London, Routledge, 1984), 170
30 Bourdieu, (1984), 170
31 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 56
32 Bourdieu, *Logic,* 167

and as such is neither pure object nor pure subject . . . the body is a 'transitional entity.'[33]

Such perspectives are useful in understanding the interplay between the social and the physical body in *The Great John L*, *Gentleman Jim* and *The Long Gray Line*. These films, I would argue, conceptualise whiteness as habitus and reflect an understanding of the body as a 'transitional entity' into dispositions constructed as normative. As 'biopics', these films recount narratives shaped by the life stories of the men they portray, but they function more generally to produce a discourse around the historical process of 'becoming' white as an embodied practice. In locating the Irish-American male body in-between opposing 'home' spaces they reimagine an earlier 'melting pot' paradigm as one of embodied engagement rather than passive surrender. Within such a framework, the habitus of whiteness is both structured and structuring.

Technologies of the Body

While Bourdieu does not explicitly identify a spatial dimension to the habitus, I would argue that it is implicit within his acknowledgement of the central role of the body.[34] To more fully express this relationship in relation to the films under discussion here, I turn to his contemporary Michel Foucault[35] who offers an extended investigation into historical relationships between space, power and the body within modernity. Early in his work Foucault takes a related but more deterministic view to Bourdieu's view of the social forces shaping subjectivity when he argues that we are controlled through 'technologies' of power. For Foucault the body is 'docile'; it 'be subjected, used, transformed and improved . . . and that this docile body can only be achieved through a

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[33] Lois McNay, "Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity" in *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (February 1999), 95-117, 98

[34] Nil Santianez, *Topographies of Fascism: Habitus, Space, and Writing in Twentieth-Century Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 123. Several scholars have traced links between Lefebvre's ideas on space and Bourdieu's habitus. Santianez states that 'Although the capacity of the habitus to produce space should not be overemphasized, its role within the production of space is significant nonetheless.'

[35] Foucault and Bourdieu were contemporaries; both as *agregés* in philosophy at the École normale supérieure (ENS Paris) in the mid-1950s and scholarly peers.

strict regiment of disciplinary acts.'[36] In contemporary society, argues Foucault, discipline is 'a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets . . . a technology.'[37] In *Birth of the Prison* (1975), he argues that space is an essential aspect of this procedure: an enclosure that is 'the protected place of disciplinary monotony' (an insight that will inform my discussion of *The Long Gray Line*). Bringing his thinking closer to Bourdieu's, Foucault subsequently modified and extended an understanding of the body that denied all agency: 'Perhaps I've insisted too much on the technology of domination and power,'[38] placing it instead within a schema of four techniques or 'technologies', 'that human beings use to understand themselves:' technologies of production; of sign systems; of power; and of the self.[39] These four 'technologies' of knowledge, argued Foucault, should not be understood as functioning separately since:

> Each implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes.[40]

This acquisition of 'certain attitudes' is particularly apt in approaching the Irish-American themed biopics under consideration here. Taken together, Bourdieu and Foucault's understanding of the interaction between structures of power and technologies of the body help conceptualise the 'habitus of whiteness' within which these historical characters are constructed. For as Hancock and Garner have noted:

> While Bourdieu and Foucault appear to be very different thinkers, they share underlying themes . . . [and] can be read in complimentary fashion, as two sides

[36] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* (London: Penguin, 1991), 136
[37] Foucault, *Birth of the Prison*, 215
[38] Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, Patrick H. Hutton eds., *Technologies of the Self: a seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 19
[39] Martin et al. eds. *Technologies of the Self*, 16-49. 'technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4)
[40] Martin et al. eds. *Technologies of the Self*, 16-49

of the same coin . . . [Both] were concerned with practices, the body, and the multiple mechanisms of socialization . . . Like Foucault, Bourdieu explored the notion of practices and their relation to the body.[41]

Manliness and Modernity: *The Great John L* and *Gentleman Jim*

The Great John L and *Gentleman Jim* (*The Long Gray Line* to a lesser extent) form part of

the extended and intertwined cultural histories of boxing and its representation in

American cinema within which Irish Americans have been central. Ralph Wilcox has

noted that 'sport represents a significant yet complex chapter in the story of Irish-

America,' where participation was first motivated by a desire to be accepted in the

melting pot of the urban cities to which they migrated and where, 'beyond the search for

acceptance, experience showed Irish-Americans that these sports could become a ladder

for socioeconomic advancement'[42] As boxers, promoters and managers, Irish-Americans

occupied a central role in the development of boxing as a form of popular entertainment

in the United States[43] and have been widely identified in cinematic treatments of the

sport from the emergence of the medium until the 1940s.[44] Chris Vial has noted that *The*

Big John L and *Gentleman Jim* were made during a relatively fallow period for the boxing

sub-genre,[45] but they self consciously draw on this deep representational history as a

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[41] Black Hawk Hancock, Roberta Garner, *Changing Theories: New Directions in Sociology* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2009), 187

[42] Ralph Wilcox, "Irish Americans in Sports: The Nineteenth Century", in *Making the Irish-American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* , ed, Joseph Lee, Marion R. Casey (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 444

[43] The most prominent fighters of the formative period in the legitimizing and popularization of boxing were all of Irish decent: Paddy Ryan (1851-1900); John L Sullivan (1858 – 1918); Jack 'nonpareil' Dempsey (1862-1895); James ('Gentleman Jim') J Corbett (1866 – 1933); Bob Fitzsimmons (1863 – 1917); and Jack ('The Manassa Mauler') Dempsey (1895 – 1983).

[44] Many of these men's careers coincided, and frequently intersected, with the development of American cinema. The genre-establishing *The Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight* for instance (a 90 minute 'live' recording of 'the fight of the century' between 'Gentleman Jim' Corbett and Bob Fitzsimmons on St. Patrick's Day 1897 for an enormous purse and which attracted unprecedented media attention) - leads Luke McKiernan to claim that, 'it was boxing that invented the cinema.' So widely distributed were Jack Dempsey's Prohibition-era films that he became more widely seen on screen than in person, facilitating an acting career in Hollywood after retirement from the ring. Similarly, 'Gentleman Jim' Corbett was 'not merely a professional boxer, but also a stage idol, picture personality, lecturer, fight promoter and raconteur.' After John L. Sullivan (subject of *The Great John L*) was defeated by Corbett for the heavyweight title in 1893, Sullivan went on a highly profitable nationwide exhibition tour and later established the 'John L Sullivan Motion Picture Company.'

[45] Chris Vials, *Realism for the Masses: Aesthetics, Popular Front Pluralism, and U.S. Culture, 1935-1947* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 18

means not only of revisiting the popular sub-genre for contemporary audiences but – I

argue - in order to consolidate a contemporary national masculine identity rooted in the

masculine body.

In his study of *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History*, George F. Custon

suggests a difference in emphasis between biographical films made before and after

WWII by arguing that while films produced during the 1930s tended to be dominated by

'great' figures associated with royalty, government and politics, they subsequently

frequently focused on individuals associated with the world of entertainment.

Developing this observation, Steve Neale argues that:

> One might argue on this basis that pre-war biopics tend to address its spectators
> as citizens whereas the post-war biopic tends to address its spectators as
> consumers of popular culture . . . Within this schema, the numerous biopics of
> sporting figures made during the 1940s . . . would constitute a transitional cycle,
> linking sport as an instance of popular culture to wartime populism and to
> martial values . . . [46]

The Great John L and *Gentleman Jim* clearly belong to this 'transitional cycle' of the

historical biopic, emphasizing popular culture and recognizably American values of self-

determination within a context of bodily discipline. In both narratives, the ethnic

masculine body is the vehicle by which their subjects adapt to the habitus of white

American manhood by means of what Foucault would describe as 'Techniques of the

Self', which:

> permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a
> certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct,
> and way of being, so as to transform themselves . . . [47]

In a comment that helps understand the structure of the habitus, Foucault nevertheless

identifies the limits of subject agency:

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[46] Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 1999), 54
[47] Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, Amherst: University of
Massachusetts Press, 1988, 18

> . . . practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group.[48]

Similarly, an embodied tension between self-determination and social environment is central to the narratives of *The Great John L* and *Gentleman Jim* and their imagining of whiteness as habitus.

From *Strongman* to *Gentleman*: Sullivan and Corbett as Transitional Masculinities

The staged and 'raw' masculinity of boxing and its long–standing association with the Irish in the United States has frequently lent itself to the interpretation of specific fights in symbolic terms.[49] In 1849 for instance the first American championship prizefight took place between 'Yankee' Sullivan[50] and Tom Hyer.[51] Eliot Gorn explains that the fight was framed by the media as a contest between the Irish-born Sullivan (associated with a rough-hewn immigrant culture) and the 'Young America' Hyer ('the embodiment of assertive white working-class manliness').[52] A half century later in 1892, a similar sense of cultural transition and shift in styles of masculinity accompanied the iconic heavyweight championship bout between John L Sullivan ('The Boston Strongman') and 'Gentleman Jim' Corbett. The *New York Times* offered an analysis of the occasion that was both emblematic and influential:

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[48] Raúl Fornet-Batancourt, Helmut Becker, Alfredo Gomez- Müller and J.D. Gauthier, "The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom: an interview with Michel Foucault," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 12: 112-131, 122

[49] Matthew Andrews, 'Boxing,' Bret Carroll (Ed.), American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia; John Grasso, *Historical Dictionary of Boxing*, (New York: Scarecrow Press, 2014)

[50] Yankee Sullivan, was in fact, born James Ambrose in Ireland in 1911.

[51] Eliot Gorn, "The First American Championship Prizefight" in *OAH Magazine of History* 7 (Summer 1992). A "winner take all" battle, with each side putting up five thousand dollars, in an era when a laborer earned around three hundred dollars a year: 'The sport was completely illegal and courts hounded boxers, and when fights did occur, they were roundly condemned in the press. Only a dozen fights occurred before 1842 and then no matches at all were staged after a bout in Hastings New York in which one of the fighters died. All that changed forever in 1849.'

[52] Richard Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 123

It was the old generation against the new. It was the gladiator against the boxer. Sullivan represented the first stage in the evolution of the American pugilist and swept away old methods and traditions . . . [but] nature intended him for a gladiator and although he abused nature to a considerable extent, not even the best trained rivals could beat him.[53]

This reading was underscored by the fact that the circumstances of the fight -10,000 spectators at the Olympic Club of New Orleans, fought with gloves and according to new Marquis of Queensbury rules - contrasted dramatically with Sullivan's title bout three years earlier (July 1889), where, in a seventy-five round bare-knuckle contest that lasted over two hours, he defeated Jake Kilrain (Irish born John Joseph Killion).[54] At the end of that brutal battle,

The Great John L stood triumphant, the undisputed champion in America and hero to the common folk. The fight fixed the sport in the national consciousness and promoted it to glory, for it represented the survival of the fittest reduced to its most understandable terms.[55]

Corbett's defeat of Sullivan was understood therefore as more than simply a sporting event; its 'social semiotics' suggested something fundamental had changed in the nature of American masculinity itself and that this change, although ethnic and immigrant in origins, was national in importance. Irish-American studies scholar John Kelleher captures something of this sense of transition in constructions of masculinity when he writes:

Sullivan was lucky that he went when he did, while he was still the meaningful symbol of what the Irish here had perforce to be proud of: native strength, the physical endurance that made possible the 'Irish contribution to America' that writers and orators have since sentimentalized so much . . .[56]

Sullivan's popularity and meaning grew directly from an appreciation of his 'native strength'; a prodigious physicality linked in the public mind to his 'wild' Irish ancestry that he played up in private and public.

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[53] 'Corbett Now is Champion,' *New York Times* (September 8th 1892), 3
[54] Kilrain had been promoted to the title of world champion by the Irish-American publisher and promoter Richard K. Fox
[55] Jeffrey T Sammons, *Beyond the Ring* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 11
[56] John V. Kelleher, "Irishness in America", in *Selected writings of John V. Kelleher on Ireland and Irish America*, ed. Charles Fanning (Chicago: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 150

For Kelleher, Sullivan '. . . was only eight years older than Corbett, but they stood on either side of a bridge that neither experience nor imagination could bridge.'[57] While Sullivan was characterized as 'natural' and primal, Corbett was linked to youth and the regulating instincts of modernity. This was not simply a question of age. Both their fathers had emigrated from the west of Ireland: Mike Sullivan sailed from Tralee Co Kerry to Boston 'sometime around 1850'[58] while Patrick Corbett came to San Francisco from Ballycusheen, Co Mayo just six years later[59] and both married Irish-born women. Despite the similarity of backgrounds these men differed in their mutual deployment of their physical capital – the uneducated immigrant male's first and primary currency – a contrast in attitudes to the body that they passed to their sporting sons. Sullivan's father, a lifelong drinker became a laborer 'and a laborer he remained' until his premature and publically unremarked death.[60] Patrick Corbett, having foregone the ethnic ghetto of Boston in favour of the west coast, got a job as a hotel porter but soon established himself as self-employed hack driver (and soon owned several hackneys) providing him with the means and social ambition to educate his seven children.[61] Although, ironically, Hollywood's treatment of their respective fathers reverses these paternal traits, the underlying attitudes to their respective physical capital in the United States underpins the contrasting construction of these ethnic masculinities: Sullivan 'the Boston Strongboy' is aligned with the spaces and culture of immigrant east which retains the unregulated traits of the wild Irish, while Corbett 'the smiling Californian', embodies a resourceful, 'all American' self-confidence in the future. While both were boxing champions 'of the world', each manifested fundamentally different relationships to the hegemonic habitus of American whiteness. In his public flouting of Victorian

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[57] Kelleher, 'Irishness in America', 151
[58] Michael T. Isenberg, *John L. Sullivan and His America*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press,1987), 18
[59] Armond Fields, *James J. Corbett: A Biography of the Heavyweight Boxing Champion and Popular Theater Headliner* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2001), 7
[60] Isenberg, *John :L Sullivan*, 18
[61] Fields, *James J Corbett*, 11-12

attitudes to the male body linking whiteness, health and morality Sullivan remained an essentially ethnic hero. Corbett, on the other hand was a nationally celebrated figure, his celebrity closely tied to his alignment with norms of bodily regulation including abstinence, decorum and sportsmanship. Hollywood's construction of their respective biographies notably foreground their Irish-American immigrant backgrounds as a means of relating their life stories as rooted in a tension between competing habitus located in the individual body. While their respective narratives are derived from 'true' stories with differing settings and outcomes, both films underline the social, moral and health benefits associated with adopting whiteness as an embodied disposition. Once again Irish-American protagonists function to articulate such as disposition as simultaneously a matter of choice and normative.

Figure 7 Irish Americans All: Bing Crosby and John L Sullivan

The Great John L: Appetites and Destruction

The Great John L is a melodramatic treatment of the rise, fall and qualified redemption of its iconic Irish-American subject in a narrative that is less concerned with the sporting achievements of its subject than a conflict between 'natural' excess and learned discipline inscribed on the ethnic male body. Significantly, it was the first feature film produced by Bing Crosby's independent production company at a time when Crosby was 'America's No 1 Star' and his persona exemplified middlebrow moderation and conservative American white values of the 1940s.[62] As a trans-media entrepreneur and celebrity whose ancestors were also famine-era Irish (and who identified as Irish-American),[63] Crosby's involvement in the film – explicit in its publicity[64] - inflected its narrative as the recuperation of the once derided Sullivan and linked it to his own contemporary cultural status and power.[65]

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[62] Lincoln Barnett, "Bing Inc.' 'America's No 1 star, Bing Crosby has won more fans, made more more than any other entertainer in history. Today he is a kind of national institution". *LIFE* (18 Jun 1945), 87

[63] Bing Crosby's maternal great-grandfather, Dennis Harrigan, emigrated to Canada from Schull, County Cork in 1851.

[64] The main poster for the film included, ' Bing Crosby Productions presents . . .' and – somewhat improbably – a small image of Crosby himself: 'you'll get a bing out of the story of the Boston Strong Boy.' (Fig 1). Crosby called in favors from his showbiz friends for another version: 'When Crosby, Hope and Sinatra agree . . . it's marvelous entertainment.' (Fig 2).

[65] "Bing Crosby" in *America in the 20th Century* (New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2003), 2nd Ed., 689. This reading takes on considerable irony and complexity in light of recent claims (particularly those made by his son Gary) that Crosby had an abusive relationship with alcohol: 'Crosby's next door image masked a troubled family life. He worked constantly and was rarely at home with his wife and four sons. Behind his charming façade he projected to the public he was a chronic alcoholic with a violent temper . . . Hiding his and his first wife's drinking from the public . . . Crosby appeared to embody the ideal family man. He did not stop drinking until late in his life.' See also Gary Crosby, Ross Firestone, *Going My Own Way* (New York: Doubleday, 1993)

Figure 8 When Bing, Bob and Frankie agree . . .

While *The Great John L* recovers Sullivan's life-story for 1940s audiences it does not dwell on his sporting struggles and largely ignores his historical significance for Irish-America in favour of a narrative centred on a personal struggle with unrestrained appetites; chiefly alcohol. Its climax is thus not the 'championship' victory traditional to sporting films but success in mastering Foucaultian 'techniques of the self' in a biographical portrait that blends an Evangelical temperance narrative[66] within a framework of Irish-American history. This melding of WASP and immigrant cultures 'universalises' Sullivan as the embodiment of a consolidated American masculinity whose life-story has widespread cultural appeal. The stereotypical Irish-American spaces and characters within the narrative thus function to humanize the central character while also acting as markers of unregulated or 'natural' dispositions which he

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[66] This theme of a personal struggle over alcohol was especially topical given the establishment of Alcoholics Anonymous in the United States 1936.

must transcend in order to achieve full cultural/historical significance within a culture of normative whiteness. The body in space and time is central to the resolution of the conflict between these respective habitus.

Michael T. Isenberg describes the ethnic, working class and highly gendered public environment which formed the habitus ('a way of being, a habitual state, especially of the body')[67] of the young Sullivan:

> The 'cult of masculinity' into which Sullivan naturally and automatically entered as a young man was tied together by friendships, rough and ready camaraderie, tall tales and masculine fantasies, but above all it was welded together by alcohol.[68]

Within the film, this habitus finds expression in the space of the public bar.[69] However, the film does not present this disposition as inevitable or inextricably bound up with class/ethnicity. Rather, it is constructed as a matter of individual choice and temperament.

The expositional opening scenes of *The Great John L* are set twelve years prior to the historic bout with Corbett and establish its protagonist within the home of a stereotypical Irish immigrant family: his labourer father returns from Mass while his doting mother cooks his steak breakfast. His father disapproves of boxing, as does the

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[67] Bourdieu, 214
[68] Michael T. Isenberg, *John L. Sullivan and His America*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 48
[69] Yoshiko Imaizum, *Sacred Space in the Modern City: The Fractured Pasts of Meiji Shrine, 1912-1958* (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2013), 128. The bar might also be referred to as a space of 'dwelling', to borrow Heidegger's term. 'Habitus is an invisible "assumed reality"; it is the dwelling that gives habitus the appearance of reality and "its form but not a content."/ Mucahit Bilici, *Finding Mecca in America: How Islam Is Becoming an American Religion*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 227. Elsewhere Bilici puts the relationship between these contexts thus: Bourdieu's notion of habitus is the simple inversion of Heidegger's notion of dwelling. Dwelling is us in the world and habitus is the world in us.'

parish priest Fr. O'Malley, who cannot condone 'fighting for money'. This good-natured but patriarchal condemnation establishes an association between prize fighting and moral turpitude and suggests that his eventual 'fall' might have been avoided by remaining close to the 'traditional' values of honest work and faith demonstrated by his father and the priest. But while there is an ambivalence expressed concerning his material ambitions, his eventual redemption will nevertheless set him apart from this first generation immigrant habitus of these figures and his film biography will be framed as an Oedipal journey from immature ethnic manhood to respected American public figure.

A serious critique of character is proffered in a subsequent scene at a parish picnic where John L proposes to his childhood sweetheart, Kathy Harkness (Barbara Britton). Unexpectedly, she refuses his offer of marriage telling him that she's 'not quite sure yet', and while she does not elaborate, there is a suggestion that John L does not meet her expectations of a husband. Harkness is an amalgamated, semi-fictional character[70] positioned as the film's arbitrator of normative masculinity; a 'mainstream' position underlined by her middle class demeanor and lack of explicit ethnic identity.[71] Disappointed but unchanged, Sullivan leaves Boston and wins a series of boxing matches culminating in 'bareknuckle champion of the world.' Triumphant in masculine prowess, he returns home and proposes to Kathy a second time. Her response is even more dismissive and rejects any link between his masculine physicality and development as a 'man':

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[70] She's based on Katherine Harkins, also a second generation Irish-American whose father (from Co Derry) had succeeded in real estate. Isenberg states that Sullivan 'may have known Harkins as a young man, but she was eighteen in 1883 and certainly much too sheltered to adapt to Sullivan's life-style.' 129
[71] Sullivan's actual wife Annie Sullivan divorced him in 1885 for 'cruel and abuse treatment and gross habits of intoxication'. Annie details in court how 'I left him in December 1884. For a year previous to that he was drunk nearly all the time and abused me frequently.'
'John L Sullivan's Brutality: His Wife tells a Court How he beat and Abused her,' *New York Times* (May 28th 1895)

- What are you trying to prove?
- That I'm champion, gonna win the crown.
- And what will that prove . . . that you're hard and quick, that you're a bigger brute than any other man? I'm afraid you have a weakness.
- A weakness?! I'm as strong as a bull.
- Oh weakness is not a matter of muscular deficiency . . . you are a little boy . . . a little boy who thinks he has to black the eyes of all the other little boys just to prove that he's somebody . . . isn't that it?!

Kathy thus articulates the central drama of the film as a conflicted masculinity caught between a display of physical strength and bravura on the one hand and a more vaguely defined concept of character - that implicitly advocates the subjugation of Sullivan's natural 'brutish' body – on the other. On a train following his historic 1882 victory over Paddy Ryan (a fight that the film-makers choose not to show, despite the fact that it made Sullivan world heavyweight champion[72]), Fr. O'Malley echoes such sentiments in quoting the Catholic Saint, Francis of Assisi to Sullivan's father: 'Each man has a personal demon that he must rescue and defeat before he is whole and complete.'[73] In the denial to the spectator of scenes of boxing victory in favour of doubts voiced by those around its protagonist, *The Great John L* reconfigures the ethnic journey of assimilation/mobility narratives of the 1910s/20s as one of personal conversion to a habitus of whiteness ('whole and complete') located on the body. While the film draws on Irish stereotypes of fighting and alcohol, in contrast to a melodrama such as *Regeneration* (Raoul Walsh, 1915) - in which an Irish hoodlum is converted away from a life of crime by the love of a redeeming white female[74] - the criticism and impetus for change is here articulated and provided from sections within Sullivan's immediate

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[72] Don Rittner, *Troy: A Collar City History* (Charlston SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 125-126. Paddy Ryan (1851 –1900) was born in Thurles, Tipperary and emigrated to Troy, New York where he opened a bar. He won his title on May 30, 1880 in Coillier's Station, West Virginia in a 87 rounds and ninety minutes bout with Champion Joe Goss. He failed to defend the title against Sullivan two years later in front of an estimated crowd of 5000.
[73] E. Gordon Whatley et al. eds "The Life of Saint Francis: Introduction" in *Saints' Lives in Middle English Collections* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004) The invocation of the popular cult of St Francis is a reference to the twelfth century monk's turning away from inherited wealth and plenty to a life of strict poverty and simplicity as a path to spiritual enlightenment: Accessed 16 June 2013: http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/whfraintro.htm
[74] Tony Tracy, "The Pauper and the Prince: Transformative Masculinity in Raoul Walsh's Regeneration" in *Film History: An International Journal,* Vol 23, No 4, (2011) 414-427

community. While in 1880 such values were most commonly identified with evangelical churches and frequently directed against Catholic immigrants, changed demographics and Bing Crosby's role as producer ensure that by 1945, Catholic ideals and mainstream white American values are understood as coeval.

As I have noted, for a film dealing with the emergence of the heavyweight boxing era,[75] *The Great John L* contains surprisingly little on-screen boxing. Nevertheless it shares with the sporting sub-genre similar linkages between masculinity and the body. Judith Halberstam, for instance contends that 'the boxing film shows masochism is built into male masculinity'[76] and Pam Cook has argued that the classic Hollywood boxing film has a:

> . . . rise-and-fall structure, an analogy for male sexuality itself . . . the hero of boxing films, who is often too sensitive to succeed, travels a painful Oedipal journey, challenging the power of the father and is punished for his attempt. His body becomes the focus for this struggle: the desire to win followed by punishment and loss.[77]

While *The Great John L* conforms to the structures of the boxing film in following a rise and fall structure and gives central prominence to a masochistic/abused male body, it sets this struggle not within the space of the ring but the raucous, male-dominated, working-class bar which functions as the spatial expression of his true, embodied disposition. In the immediate aftermath of Kathy's second rejection of his marriage proposal, the film cuts to a close up of Sullivan mixing his favoured cocktail of champagne and ale. A montage sequence shows men clapping him on the back, champagne corks popping, cigars and throwing coins to children. The earlier Sullivan

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[75] John L Sullivan is an interesting transitional figure in boxing history having fought successfully within both London and Queensbury rules.
[76] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988) 275
[77] Pam Cook, *Screening the Past, Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004) 176

seen in the family home and on the parish picnic is gone and in his place is a confident

public figure - physical, strong, widely popular and intimately linked with alcohol. With

his winnings he buys a bar[78] where he is frequently seen drunk, indifferent to his wife

and happiest surrounded by the sham camaraderie of hangers on. Rejected by Kathy,

Sullivan marries Anne Livingstone (Linda Darnell), a glamorous singer from the New

York stage. Echoing Kathy, his friend Martin observes:

> - He's drinking too much but he doesn't get any satisfaction out of it . . . it's like
> because he wants to stay numb . . . yessir I feel sorry for him.

In the midst of this physical self-punishment and emotional turmoil Sullivan begins

preparations for the Corbett fight. Again largely ignoring the cinematic potential of this

historic fight the film concentrates on its aftermath when the former icon of Irish-

American masculinity falls on hard times, unable to stop a rapid descent into alcoholism

and loneliness and expressed as homelessness.[79] Unlike later boxing films from the 40s

and 50s, *The Great John L* does not blame a corrupt or exploitative sport for this demise

but rather the consequence of Sullivan's inability to control his physical appetites. In

direct contrast to the habitus of *Gentleman Jim*, his boxing success is aligned with an

untrammeled physical disposition that recalls the visual discourse of the (racist)

cartoons and early film portraits of the Irish referred to earlier. However, unlike those

portraits this is not represented as a general condition within his Irish-American

community; Sullivan is an exception rather than the rule.

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[78] Isenberg, *John L. Sullivan,* 140-141. Isenberg details the 1883 purchase and extravagant fit-out of
Sullivan's bar on 714 Washington Street, Boston into which he 'poured thousands of dollars . . . This, after
all, was to be the Champions Saloon and he wanted to done right.' He sold the bar in 1899 when he moved to
New York City.
[79] In an inconsistent and unconvincing twist, Kathy returns and begs John L to marry her, but is bluntly
refused. She explains: 'I loved Johnny because he stood up to life, his faults were what made him what I
loved . . . I couldn't resist that woman's instinct to change a man . . . I was a fool. She thus recants on her
earlier position, celebrating the qualities that made Sullivan a popular hero. There is the sense that his fallen
condition is somehow a failure on her part, for not allowing him free reign to his 'natural' instincts. This not
only absolves Sullivan of personal responsibility but is in complete opposition to the unity of judgment
made by her and Fr Burke about some 'inner weakness' early on. The introduction of this narrative
inconsistency can only be explained as a means of underlining the strength of will involved in Sullivan's
moment of enlightenment soon afterwards.

Now seen mostly on the streets, having exhausted his fortune and body through alcohol, Sullivan hears a song that reminds him of the words of Fr Burke – 'each man has to watch his weakness'. The epiphany brings a change of heart and he (symbolically) walks out of the bar, tears in his eyes. After a narrative ellipsis during which he quits drinking, the final scene shows Sullivan united with Kathy Harkness and speaking at a Temperance Movement meeting. Linking self-imposed abstinence with romantic union to the respectable and virtuous Kathy within such a space suggests a decisive shift in habitus which is expressed through Sullivan's words:

> - the point is don't overdo drinking no more than you'd overdo anything . . . call it self discipline . . . call it common sense.

'The Boston Strongman' has thus reformed and rejoined a normative construction of American masculinity through 'self-discipline'. Michel Foucault describes a 'technology of the self' as 'the capacity for individuals to govern themselves and, in effect, to occupy the dual position of both governed and governor, both subject to and subjects of power.'[80] In becoming both 'governed and governor' – through a combination of agency and cultural imposition - Sullivan is thus able to finally 'come home' to Kathy Harkness, the film's enduring symbol of white domesticity.

Gentleman Jim and the Transformation of Capital

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[80] Shirley Yeung, "Working the Program: Technologies of Self and Citizenship in Alcoholics Anonymous", *Nexus*, Vol 20, No 1 (2007), 48

While *The Great John L* celebrates the triumph of self-discipline over excess within a particular habitus of Irish-American manhood, *Gentleman Jim* offers both a companion text and contrasting portrait of Sullivan's celebrated opponent. Unlike Sullivan, Corbett is not defined or ruled by 'natural' habits of the body but rather a paragon of the Progressive Era 'go-getter' archetype[81] who realises early on that he must nevertheless transition from the cultural dispositions within which he has been formed to those of middle class male whiteness if he is to achieve an ambition of social mobility. Technologies of discipline and the body are again central to a narrative that similarly frames its subject in a tension between private and public spaces and cultural dispositions. While Corbett's ambition for social mobility and acceptance by middle class white America sets him apart from his brothers, it does not alienate him from his working class/ethnic family and community. Instead, Corbett is seen as a figure of mediating masculinity between such cultural spaces differentiated by a productive - rather than destructive - individualism.

Errol Flynn's Corbett is the embodiment of a virile and confident masculine physicality, whose sartorial sophistication (comically undermined by his rough-hewn brothers) suggests an affinity with the *fin-de-siecle* dandy as a destabilising force of dominant structures of gendered hierarchy. An early scene at a bare-knuckle boxing match on the outskirts of town establishes a 'dwelling' space expressive of the habitus of a working class/ethnic manhood reliant – as in the instance of Sullivan – on the crude, unregulated deployment of a primal physicality. Amongst the crowd Corbett encounters a well-dressed older man - Judge Geary (Wallis Clark) – searching (he says) for potential young fighters for his Olympic club. In bearing and dress, the older man unambigiously embodies a habitus of white male authority and privilege that is out of place in the

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[81] Peter Kyne, *The Go-Getter* (London: Hodder & Staughton, 1921)

(spatially and socially) marginal 'slum' surroundings. A rough, boisterous audience have gathered to cheer an illegal fight between two aged, oafish, men, fighting to exhaustion. As the police descend on the illicit gathering, the quick-witted Corbett assists Geary in evading arrest. The following day Geary visits the bank where Corbett works to thank him for his help and praises him to his superior. The ambitious clerk gets a raise and a social opening. While in reality, the young Jim Corbett was repeatedly expelled from formal education because of indiscipline, *Gentleman Jim* establishes its protagonist as alert and fastidious eager to progress and quick to seize opportunity.

As with *The Great John L*, the narrative of *Gentleman Jim* uses American boxing history and the centrality of Irish American figures within it to explore wider issues around the construction and privileges of whiteness in the United States through a foregrounding of the 'docile' or mutable body. The life story of Corbett relates in the first instance to what Bourdieu has described as 'forms of capital' and their conversion within social contexts:

> Physical capital can be converted into economic capital (goods and services), cultural capital (e.g. education), and social capital (social networks which enable reciprocal calls to be made on the goods and services of its members)[82]

Whereas for John L Sullivan physical capital – as for his hod-carrying father before him – was a means towards an economic end that (though its association with alcohol) ultimately kept him within the habitus of his ethnic and class peers, Corbett is explicitly concerned with the acquisition of social capital; eager to accrue not simply wealth (to which he seems largely indifferent) but the respect and membership of the (literal and metaphoric) 'club' of middle-class male whiteness. The film lauds this goal and again foregrounds the ethnic male body as the means of its achievement. Within the narrative

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[82] Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 1

however, this progression involves not simply the exchange of one form of capital for another but a fundamental altering of habitus for its full achievement: the Irish-American protagonist must again become 'governed and governor'. More explicitly than in the case of *The Great John L*, *Gentleman Jim* expresses shifts in habitus in relation to spaces; a relationship fully developed in *The Long Gray Line*.

Conspiring to offer assistance to the upper-class socialite Virginia Ware, Corbett gains entry to the Olympic Club - the film's symbolic and literal space of whiteness as habitus and privilege, where he is – unsurprisingly - ignored by the older members. Undaunted, he lingers for lunch (with a dollar borrowed from his hackney-driving father) and insists on seeing the club's gymnasium where he meets Judge Geary undergoing boxing training from English pugilist, Harry Watson (Rhys Williams). Invited to trade some gentle punches with Watson, Corbett gamely demonstrates that he has significant talent. Geary proposes that Virginia sponsor Corbett as a part of its scholarship programme. She reluctant agrees and ruefully observes that having arrived just two hours earlier, the brash and ambitious Corbett has quickly transformed himself from errant boy to member. Although near contemporaries, the construction of Corbett clearly differs from Sullivan in both films, yet there are notable similarities. Both are second-generation Irish sporting heroes whose narratives are framed by 'acceptance' into hetero-normative manhood personified by socially superior, de-ethnicised women whose emotional commitment links a striping away of masculine bravado to reveal the true (pure) individual. Like Kathy Harkness, Virginia Ware is suspicious that Corbett's showmanship is at odds with the 'real' man. The implication in such relations is that a purification of character is linked to an embodied habitus of whiteness.

The historical context for the encounter between Corbett and the membership of the Olympic – which the casting of Flynn fully exploits - is a shift in late nineteenth century modes and models of American manhood. Gail Bederman identifies a contemporary cultural desire for a masculinity centred on the body that lead to an upsurge in middle-class men seeking physical training and the rise of the so called 'physical culture' movement:

> In the 1860s, the middle class had seen the ideal male body as lean and wiry. By the 1890s strenuous exercise and team sports had come to be seen as crucial to the development of powerful manhood.[83]

John Highham considers this rise in what he describes as 'strenousity' as a reaction against the impositions of modernity and notes the significant cultural influence on 'techniques of the body' by another young Irish-American whose biography contains echoes of the narratives examined here:

> .. until about 1890, Americans on the whole submitted docilely enough to the gathering restrictions of a highly industrialized society . . . [but] a profound spiritual reaction was developing . . . an urge to be young, masculine and adventurous. Central to this urge was exercise, seized upon and exploited by the flamboyant Bernarr Mcfadden ('the father of physical culture') whose devotion to the body as primary site of individual and national well being grew from two childhood influences: a long experience of undernourishment and illness and an alcoholic Irish-American father. In 1899 Mcfadden began publishing his *Physical Culture* magazine whose first issue came emblazed with his credo: 'weakness is a crime.'[84]

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[83] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilisation: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) 15

[84] John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 80

The Olympic Club expresses this wider cultural context: Its name and the sculpture that dominates its foyer ('The Tired Boxer'[85]) reflecting the period's enthusiasm for neo-classical manhood (culminating in the revival of the modern Olympics in Athens in 1896). From the perspective of the 1940s - the ageing male membership is also illustrative of a deeply classed and outmoded construction of white hegemonic masculinity. While its members promote and aspire to a democratic ideal of male youth and vitality, its social structure militates against this. In their offer of membership to the young bank-teller based upon his performance of 'all American' vitality, the members seek to extend and revitalise white masculine privilege – apparently - to one of their own. But this is not the simple act of inclusion they believe it to be. Corbett's becoming white – expressed through social mobility - requires not just a dandified performance but submission to a habitus of self–regulation through techniques of the body.

The Olympic club is a space of class hierarchies that links hegemonic white masculinity and the body. As Doreen Massey observes:

> What gives a place its specificity is not some long internalised history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus.[86]

In this respect, the Olympic club becomes both a focus for the discrepancy between social background and aspirations and the locus for their reconciliation in terms of the body. Within the dining room of the club, for instance, a class-based set of hierarchies are clearly in place where Corbett is served by men of a similar socio-economic background to his own but whose formal demeanor is governed by the social rules of

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[85] The sculpture - a well known work by the renowned Douglas Tilden - was actually completed sometime after the action of the film in 1893. Nevertheless the decision to position it in the Olympic club lobby by the film's designers demonstrates a keen awareness of its significance within wider gender politics of the era.
[86] Doreen Massey, *Space Place and Gender* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Co, 1994), 154

the class they serve. The sense of space as a disciplining environment (a concept that will be central to the next section of this chapter) is more acute in the gymnasium - the dwelling space of the club's habitus. Several scholars[87] have noted the modern gymnasium as a Foucaultian locus of 'bio-power' - a space where the 'docile body' can be moulded and shaped by practice, observation and self-discipline.[88] While the gym does not feature frequently in the film, its early presence functions as Corbett's means of achieving social recognition, and indicates a connection between habitus and discipline that is implicit in his subsequent success within a 'scientific' method of 'gentleman's' boxing.

This linking of space and habitus is underscored in the film's next scene set in the Corbett household; another of the many Irish-American home spaces in Hollywood cinema that serve to balance narratives of self-actualization. Here we encounter Corbett's father (James Flavin); a genial and occasionally inebriated carriage driver (a stereotypical indication of an othered disposition written on the body); his brothers, sister and mother - all of whom – in contrast to Flynn - speak with an Irish brogue. That the adult Corbett children still live in the family home marks the space as ethnic, boisterous and Catholic – reinforced by the physical presence of the priest Fr. Burke (Arthur Shields). At the dinner table, Jim's sophisticated appearance and demeanor contrasts with his brothers who embody a rough-and-ready working-class and ethnic masculinity. Also conforming to stereotype, Harry and George Corbett (Pat Flaherty, James Flavin) make a living working as longshoremen on the San Franciscan harbour front and while they share with Jim an inherited physicality they exhibit no desire to

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87 For example: William James Hover, Working Out My Salvation: The Contemporary Gym and the Promise of "self" transformation; Heidi J. Nast, Steve Pile *Places Through the Body*
88 Jen Pylypa, "Power and Bodily Practice: Applying the Work of Foucault to an Anthropology of the Body" in *Arizona Anthropologist* No. 13: (1998) 21-36; Accessed 30 June 2013: http://hdl.handle.net/10150/110194

convert this form of capital to social mobility and remain happily confined within their working-class male milieu.

The activity of fighting functions within the film to point up the contrasting attitudes and ambitions of the brothers and the respective deployments of their bodies. 'The Corbett's are at it again' (announcing a spontaneous outbreak of fraternal fisticuffs) is heard three times on the film's soundtrack at moments corresponding to historic milestones in Jim's career: during the dinner table scene described above when he reveals he has been accepted as a member of the Olympic Club (1887); on the return of the family from the successful fight against Joe Choynski (1889); and during the implied union of Jim and Victoria Ware at the conclusion of the narrative following the heavyweight title with Sullivan (1892). Each such outburst serves a double, paradoxical function: celebrating the enduring fraternal loyalties within a spontaneous (i.e. unregulated) ethnic masculinity while also endorsing Jim's progressive independence from this social habitus; simultaneity inscribed on his body. While he unequivocally remains a 'Corbett' his success in (regulated) boxing modifies his disposition towards the habitus of middle-class American masculinity and away from that of his father and brothers. This conversion culminates in a re-location of domestic space through marriage to the genteel Virginia, daughter of gold-miner and establishment figure Buck Ware (Minor Watson)[89] and the film's embodiment of Jim's social ambitions.

As I have been arguing, central to Corbett's acceptance into whiteness (identified with Virginia) is his subjugation to regulatory regimes pertaining to the body. This is

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[89] Because it does not suit the film's narrative trajectory the film omits that Corbett in fact divorced his first wife the year before the film begins.

explored in two interrelated ways, both of which modify earlier stereotypes of Irish-American masculinity: his rejection of alcohol and embrace of modern codes of boxing.

Irritated by his preening ego within the dusty surrounds of their gentlemen's club, the older members of the Olympic decide to teach their new member a lesson by conspiring to have him fight former British heavyweight champion Jack Burke. But the strategy proves counterproductive when Corbett's youth and technique defeat the more experienced boxer. At a celebratory ball, Corbett's friend Walter Lowrie (Jack Carson) - hopelessly out of his social depth - becomes drunk on champagne and is asked to leave (on the pretense that he isn't suitably dressed). Disgusted by what he recognizes as elitist discrimination, the also tipsy Jim (who earlier claimed 'I come from a long line of drinkers . . . I can probably drink more champagne than anyone in the world') leaves in solidarity and the two go on a bender. They wake up the next morning in a hotel room with no idea where they are (Salt Lake City) whereupon Corbett decides to renounce alcohol and turn professional. It is a decisive decision that immediately sets him apart from the 'long line of drinkers'. To underline the cultural significance of this decision the film stages a scene where Corbett confronts John L Sullivan (Victor Maclaglan) backstage after one of his theatre appearances to challenge him to a championship fight. The gregarious champion has a large steak and five bottles of beer brought in and offers one to the young pretender who declines: 'No thanks, I'm on the wagon.' Although he is not vociferously puritanical, Corbett's attitude to alcohol is clearly contrasted with traditional Irish masculinities and it is implicit that such self-imposed discipline will be central to his success. The film's attitude to alcohol is illustrative of Harry G. Levine's observation that post-prohibition America experienced a revival of temperance ideals (thereby linking the period of the film's production and setting) but with one significant difference:

Post-Prohibition thought (about the destructive character of alcoholism, the experience of the alcoholic, and the necessity for abstinence) is of a piece with a major strand of 19th-century thought – the ideology of the temperance movement. The most important difference between temperance thought and the "new disease conception" is the location of the source of addiction. The temperance movement found the source of addiction in the drug itself . . . Post-Prohibition thought locates the source of addiction in the individual body.[90]

Corbett's offhand – almost casual - but nonetheless unequivocal rejection of alcohol is in keeping with this shift in emphasis.

A second modification of attitudes by Corbett to the Irish-American male body that facilitates his entry into whiteness lies – as I have argued – in his association with profound changes in the regulations and cultural status of boxing. This shift is made most apparent in the film's climactic fight between Corbett and John L Sullivan. In the film, Corbett fights exclusively with gloves and displays a technique of fast and agile footwork representative of a modern, technical approach to the sport. This is in direct contrast to John L Sullivan (America's last bare-knuckle champion) who represents the end of a more primal, physical and less regulated era linked to sub-altern - lower class and often immigrant – masculinities. The Marquis of Queensbury rules announced as the terms of engagement for the fight is, in fact, the first time they had applied to a professional heavyweight championship but they assume less historic than symbolic significance in the film.[91] In their introduction of set time limits for rounds, and the bounded enclosure of the ring (a micro space of discipline that contrasts with the unbounded space of the film's opening fight), the introduction of these rules express cultural shifts towards the commodification of sport during a period of cultural consolidation that might be linked to the (post WWII) era of the film's production. The

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[90] Levine, Harry G, "The Discovery of Addiction: Changing Conceptions of Habitual Drunkenness in America" in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*. No 15 (1978), 493
[91] Robert G. Rodriguez, *Regulation of Boxing: A History and Comparative Analysis of Policies Among American States* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 30. While the rules had been used in championships as early as 1884, the Corbett / Sullivan fight was their first time used in a championship fight.

transitional nature of the championship fight is also suggested in the contrasting

appearance of the two boxers. Corbett enters the ring first in a fashionable white

cardigan and shorts. John L is bare-chested, his heavier, older body is dark and

'seasoned' by comparison to Corbett's clearly coded whiteness, and his 'long-john'

boxing pants, hairstyle and mustache reference an earlier 'old-fashioned' masculinity. As

staged by Raoul Walsh, the fight is constructed as a clear contrast in styles of

sportsmanship: Sullivan lunges and attempts to gain advantage through brute strength

while Corbett moves around the ring with agility, lighter on his feet, dodging and nimbly

ducking. With the montage shots of reporters and shots of telegraph wires, the fight -

and its climax - is established as a national event, signaling a new phase of American

sport and manhood that moves beyond the local communities of an earlier immigrant

era to an increasingly national culture coded as white.

This sense of transition and Corbett's cultural function within it can be discerned in the

film's final scene when Sullivan enters the euphoric after-fight party and presents his

championship belt to the younger man. While this is clearly staged as the passing of a

generation, the scene also expresses Corbett's coming into whiteness constructed as

habitus which nevertheless retains a fundamental racial component. The party is being

served by a smiling but silent African-American waiter who Sullivan hands his hat to. In

Donald Bogle's typology of black characters in American film,[92] the waiter typifies the

'Good Negro type . . . who never turn against their white massas and remain hearty,

submissible, stoic, generous and oh so very kind.'[93] The unnamed character's

appearance in this key scene serves to both disguise and reinforce Roediger's contention

that 'the concept of whiteness is built upon both exclusion and racial subjugation . . . an

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[92] Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretative History of Blacks in Films*
(New York: Viking Press, 1973). Bogle identifies an additional, sixth type – the sidekick - in the second
addition.
[93] Bogle, History of Blacks in Films, 7

exclusive club whose membership was closely and grudgingly guarded.'[94] Thus while the scene suggests and celebrates that the Irish-American Corbett is fully accepted into the club of whiteness (visually communicated by eye-line intercutting of his face with Virginia Wade's) it simultaneously communicates that his rejection of one habitus for another is bounded by race. Thus while the film's final 'the Corbett's are at it again' suggests a good-humoured pluralism of 'home' values – ethnic/immigrant and white within an ideological promise of social mobility - Jim and Virginia's romantic exchange in the hotel garden advances an Edenic re-inscription of white hetero-normativity.

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[94] David R. Roediger, *Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White* (New York: Schocken, 1998), 112

II Disciplining the Unruly Body: Assimilation and the Male Body in *The Long Gray Line (1954)*

John Ford's generally overlooked *The Long Gray Line* was made almost a decade after *The Great John L* and *Gentleman Jim* but shares with those films a biographical narrative focused on an historical Irish-American (a first generation immigrant) who also learns the embodied habitus of normative white masculinity as an Army cadet and achieves acceptance into the fraternity of national military manhood; a normative masculinity again coded as white. The film's foregrounding and celebration of this stoic, patriotic and uniform ideal of American manhood – reflecting the conservative ethos of Eisenhower's post-war America - offered contemporary audiences a similarly revisionist representation of a turn-of-the-century Irish-American protagonist whose cinematic portrait foregrounds a disciplining of the body within a thematic framework of sport. *The Long Gray Line* develops associations between home, habitus and ethnic 'conversion' from the earlier films, but in more explicitly spatial terms through the central setting of America's oldest military academy at West Point and the location of Maher's domestic dwelling within its grounds. More forcefully and sympathetically than the earlier films however, it foregrounds the Irish-American home not as a stereotypical space of ethnic quaintness to be abandoned on a journey to whiteness, but an idealized site of warmth and welcome for military manhood to return to: a home away from home (comparable to the Edwards' homestead in Ford's later *The Searchers*). Bringing together deeply personal Fordian themes of Irish ancestry and the male camaraderie of the military - this configuration nevertheless places the former in the service of the latter; offering a complimentary domestic space of respite and emotional warmth that nevertheless reaffirms and reinforces the cultural norms and hegemony of white

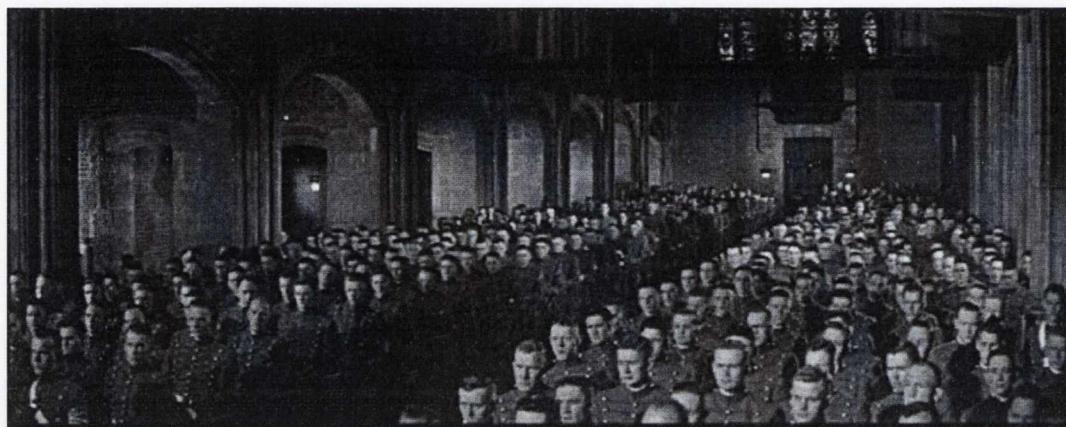military manhood. [95] Once again the means of bridging these habitus is the Irish-American male body.

Figure 9 Framing stresses a link between race and military masculinity in *The Long Gray Line* (1953)

The Long Gray Line narrates the adult life story of Marty Maher (Tyrone Power), an Irish immigrant from rural Co. Tipperary who emigrated to the United States in 1896 and spent the entirety of his working life at the West Point military academy in upstate New York. Maher's story entered the public domain with publication of his 1951 autobiography *Bringing Up the Brass; My 55 Years at West Point* [96] followed by substantial features in *The New York Times* magazine[97] and elsewhere. By the time these testimonies appeared Maher was already aged 75 and retired since the end of WWII (1945). Relating his long years at West Point, these biographies repeatedly linked the immigrant Maher with preeminent military figures of American public life – particularly General (then President) Eisenhower, who wrote the preface for the autobiography – emphasizing a distinctly post-war American narrative of personal achievement and

[95] Despite appearances to the contrary in the film, Westpoint was not a whites-only academy. Henry Ossian Flipper (21 March 1856 – 3 May 1940), a former slave, was the first African American to graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1877. 'Flipper's four years as a cadet were characterized by above average grades, earned in an environment of almost total social isolation from his classmates.' http://www.nps.gov/resources/story.htm?id=225

[96] Marty Maher, *Bringing Up the Brass; My 55 Years at West Point* (New York: McKay, 1951)

[97] *New York Times Magazine*, (Feb 23, 1950)

service and linking it in historical terms and symbolic terms to the White House – from where the film's story is framed. Despite such associations, Ford's portrait of Marty Maher emphasizes a dignified humility over heroic masculinity. In bringing Maher's life-story to the screen, Ford (and screenwriter Edward Hope[98]) revisits and revises nineteenth century stereotypes of the Irish immigrant male alluded to earlier and offers a unique portrait of assimilation based in historical experience, thereby marking a substantial representational intervention. A central element of this portrait is Marty's happy marriage to fellow immigrant Mary O'Donnell (Maureen O'Hara) and their domestic contentment within the walls of West Point (tragically cut short by Mary's premature death); a narrative strand and space which are central to Ford's vision. This affectionate, home-centred, portrait of Irish-American identity and its contribution to American history is nevertheless preceded by, and dependent upon, an extended prelude that focuses on a process of masculine transformation that again links a habitus of whiteness, the male ethnic body, and technologies of discipline.

Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* is a useful point of reference in considering Maher's encounter with the disciplining space of West Point and its imposition of regulatory norms on the young immigrant. 'There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender,' writes Butler: 'Identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results."[99] For Butler, gender is something one does rather than what one is, more akin to habitus than biology. Her by now famous formulation states: 'Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework that congeal over time to produce

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[98] Irish-American Edward Hope Coffey (1896-1958) collaborated with Ford on a number of occasions and was particularly adept at adapting existing books. He shared with Ford a mischievous distrust of authority evident in his satirical 1920s sketches for the *New York Herald Tribune* of WASP hegemony in 'Alice in the Delighted States'. A further Fordian intertext is his frequent screenwriter Nunully Johnson's first film as director - *How to Be Very, Very Popular* (1955) – adapted from the novel by Hope.
[99] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London, New York: Routledge 2011), 33

the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.'[100] I have already argued that a productive tension between a 'natural sort of being' and a 'rigid regulatory framework' is central to the retrospective construction of Irish-American masculinity in Hollywood constructions of John L Sullivan and Jim Corbett. Here, Butler's notion of a 'repeated stylization of the body' adds a further dimension in gendering the Foucaultian technologies of power and the self that are foregrounded in the early section of *The Long Gray Line*, where Marty Maher is constructed as both a culturally Othered immigrant and a 'docile body' within a habitus of normative whiteness.

The Long Gray Line and National Manhood

Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* outlines a shift in emphases in the formation of the modern soldier as central to a changed understanding of discipline in European culture. In particular, Foucault finds this shift linked to the disciplining of the human body:

> The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. The great book of Man-the-Machine was written simultaneously on two registers: the anatomico-metaphysical register, of which Descartes wrote the first pages and which the physicians and philosophers continued, and the technico-political register, which was constituted by a whole set of regulations and by empirical and calculated methods relating to the army, the school and the hospital, for controlling or correcting the operations of the body. [101]

What differentiates this 'discovery' from earlier attempts to subject the body was the introduction of 'disciplines' or 'formulas for domination'. 'Discipline' writes Foucault, 'increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience) . . . Discipline produces subjected and

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[100] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 43-44
[101] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York, Vintage Books, 1991) 136

practiced bodies, docile bodies.'[102] This is achieved in the first instance by 'the distribution of individuals in space', the most severe expression of which is *enclosure*:

> ... the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony.[103]

No space in the United States is more redolent of the description of enclosure in relation to gender than West Point. Founded in 1802 by Thomas Jefferson, it is the first military academy established in the United States and thus the historic and symbolic site of origins for American military masculinity. John Ford's film therefore links a specific story of the Irish-American experience to foundational ideals of white American manhood. Having served in WWII there is a particularly personal dimension to the film's celebration of such a figure.

While Edward Hope's screenplay for *The Long Gray Line* is closely based on Maher's autobiography, it notably excludes scenes from *Bringing Up the Brass* set in Ireland that both predate and punctuate the narrative.[104] In place of the iconic Statue of Liberty standing in the open waters of New York Harbour and the 'Golden Door' of Ellis Island, it is a 'protected place of disciplinary monotony' that Marty Maher confronts on his arrival in America. Marty's migration from the Old World to the New is symbolically rendered by its imposing entrance arch:

> Maher - What is this place? Is it a prison or maybe a loony house?
> Guard - This is the US military academy
> Maher - What a fine ruin it would make

In an ironic reversal of the myth of New World freedom, he 'escapes' from Ireland to an 'enclosure' (anticipating Foucault's analysis of the prison/asylum); a disciplining space

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[102] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 138
[103] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 141
[104] The opening chapter of *Bringing Up the Brass* details the conditions and experience of 'the old country' characterized by hard physical work in the fields and colorful characters. After the 'American wake' and customary stops at Ellis Island and an Irish bar where he is flabbergasted by the cheap price of whiskey ('then I knew I was in the greatest country in the world') he asks a 'cop' 'how to get to West Pint, New York' where he hopes to rejoin his brother Dennis – the only person he knows in the US.

he does not recognize. Developing themes found in the cinematic biographies of Corbett and Sullivan above, Marty Maher must also submit to new regulatory regimes/technologies in order to find a home in white America.

Having gained entry to West Point, Maher's narrative of assimilation begins as a kitchen porter/waiter in the service of the socially superior white military cadets. In adapting the story for screen, the verbal unruliness of Maher's autobiography is expressed through physical anarchy. While Maher writes that he didn't know the names of the vegetables he was serving, Ford emphasizes his lack of social sophistication through slapstick - slipping and sliding around the highly regulated spaces of the dining hall and kitchen and breaking plates by the dozen. Underlining the foreignness of discipline to his character, he marvels at the rigidity and ritual of the collective eating experience, where officer cadets sit poker-straight and speak formally to superiors. With this emphasis, Ford locates the performance of American military masculinity on the body while maintaining Maher's brogue, easy blarney and Irish demeanor to comic effect. This separation of the corporeal from the verbal allows Maher's cultural identity to remain intact and important even when Maher becomes first an object, then an agent, of techniques of the body. This tension between inherited and embodied identities allows Ford (as he does in the mother-son relationship in *Rio Grande* and elsewhere) to position Irishness as an idealized marker of domesticity in an American context[105] – a tension expressed in the film's spatial regime.

Maher progressively deepens his relationship with West Point (and its habitus) by enlisting as a Private (sworn in by no less than Cp. John Pershing [Milburn Stone])[106],

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[105] A point made by a number of commentators most notably Luke Gibbons: Ford's films "... are often vitalized by an infusion of Irish themes--collective violence, family ties, rituals of solidarity, a longing for community."

[106] This is not simply for effect. 'Black Jack' Pershing was a West Point graduate and later instructor – from 1897 - legendary for his strict discipline. In the aftermath of WWI, Pershing became a military legend when

although his subscription to the norms of military masculinity remains partial and incomplete. Like Sullivan and Corbett this will necessitate a 'consent' located in the body. Early in the narrative we see him on guard-duty during a cadet ball, where an Irish cultural legacy of rule-bending leads him to allow cadet Jim O'Carbery (Martin Milner) to step outside the academy boundaries to embrace his girlfriend (who has arrived too late to gain entry). A dialogue ensues with Col. Rudy Heinz (Peter Graves):

- Maher, that cadet is off-limits
- I don't see no cadet sir and I don't think you do either.

When he later learns that O'Carbery has been punished for the violation, he responds by promptly confronting the officer he suspects in a traditionally Irish idiom – "Col Heinz. Permission to speak. I'm here to tell you to your face that you're a dirty informer" - and punches him in the face.

For this infraction Maher is incarcerated to the confines of the guardhouse which functions as a spatial metaphor for the disciplinary regimes of the academy. Ford encourages us to see him as a traditional Irish defender of the underdog; Col Heinz (Peter Graves) is not remotely sympathetic and Maher transgressed the law out of human empathy. To his disbelief he learns that in fact O'Carbery turned himself in, bound by an honor code to tell the truth. The idea is bewildering – 'You mean, you do something wrong and get away with it and nobody's the wiser and then you have to tell someone you broke the rules?' By way of further rehabilitation (and because he saw Maher throw a useful punch) Marty is sent to see the 'Master of the Sword' Captain Herman J. Koehler (Ward Bond) who puts him to work in the academy gymnasium. Koehler enters Maher's life as the symbolic figure of white patriarchy who contains and

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a new rank was created especially for him and which only he held at the time: 'General of the Armies of the United States'.

directs the unruly *id* of his anarchic Irish body through techniques of the body to make it productive in the service of army and nation.

Each stage of this faltering entry into American life and the military (constructed as exclusively white) is expressed in the film in terms of the masculine body in space: the breaking of plates, O'Carbery's transgression 'out-of-bounds', his punching the suspected informer Heinz, Maher's brief incarceration and, finally, working in the gym with Koehler. Maher's progress from the kitchen to the gym (*the* symbolic site of the habitus of white masculinity in *Gentleman Jim*) represents a series of technologies of the body that are at first imposed, but then embraced within the larger 'technology' of West Point itself. The gym is significant as a site of individual discipline: Exercise, writes Foucault 'is that technique by which one imposes on the body tasks that are both repetitive and different but always graduated.'[107] Maher first assists Capt. Koehler as a boxing coach; a primary stage of containment and regulation of his own (Irish/'natural') combative instincts that echoes the narrative trajectories of Sullivan and Corbett. By the time he becomes the academy's primary swimming instructor Maher has been transformed from an unregulated figure outside the gates of West Point to a key exponent of its 'technologies' and habitus in 'the art of constructing, with located bodies, coded activities and trained aptitudes . . . no doubt the highest form of disciplinary practice.'[108] Group exercise classes, such as those Marty supervises, are 'deeply embedded in disciplinary techniques of power . . . [and] can be seen as potential sites for disciplining individuals into docile bodies: the space, the gym, is constructed to allow disciplinary control over fit bodies.'[109] Similarly, the swimming pool 'becomes a space

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[107] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 161
[108] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 167
[109] Pirkko Markula, Richard Pringle, *Foucault, Sport and Exercise: Power, Knowledge And Transforming the Self* (London, New York: Routledge, 2007), 78

where discipline is instilled in the young bodies of the swimmers through repetitive training of the 'ideal' technique.'[110]

Alongside the theme of military masculinity, *The Long Gray Line* develops a domestic sub-plot initiated by Marty's attraction and marriage to Mary O'Donnell (Maureen O'Hara) – also a recent Irish emigrant (they both arrive with name tags attached to their coats) who has come to work at West Point. While she is a coy, then combative 'colleen' (reprising her *Quiet Man* persona) they form a powerful matrimonial bond, and make their home in a picturesque cottage inside the grey walls of the military academy. This busy narrative strand is characterized by private incidents set within the orbit of their bustling domestic space. Among its key moments are: the arrival of his Marty's father 'Old Martin' (Donald Crisp) to live with them; visits from his brother Dinny (Sean McClory) who has also come to live in America where he has prospered; Mary's pregnancy and the tragic death of their son in childbirth; the constant presence in their house of young cadets, especially James 'Red' Sundstrom (James Nilsson) who Marty invites home for extra tuition and who later marries his tutor Kitty Carter; their child Red Jr. who become a kind of surrogate son to Mary and Marty and later becomes a cadet himself; and Mary's death and Marty growing old alone. Within the narrative, the domestic setting and themes form a binary relationship with the military in several respects: its verdant, fertile, cyclical (birth-death) and feminine nature is in contrast to the military which is masculine, linear (military parades) and permanent and rendered in a *mise-en-scene* dominated by cold hues of gray and blue. In the later sections of the film, Marty - impeccable and upright in his army uniform but still speaking with a heavy brogue - stands between these cultural spaces, simultaneously at home and away; private and public; insider and outsider. Tag Gallagher views this characterisation somewhat negatively:

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[110] Pirkko Markula-Denison, Richard Pringle (2007), 78

Marty shares many of the characteristics of the Fordian hero: celibate, even impotent, able to "balance," able to keep atop the maelstrom; but he lacks the authority and critical consciousness of the true Fordian soldier-priest. Having made the initial move, by casually walking into West Point, he spends the rest of his life watching others walk in. He is oft separate in the movie, often spatially, because he is an observer, a feeler, but not quite an outsider. He is an Irishman among Yankees.[111]

While this is astute, I would argue that it overlooks the deeper significance of Maher which celebrates his status as an 'ordinary' Irish immigrant who, once rooted in a habitus of whiteness, contributes to the formation of generations of American 'heroes' through an authority derived from his Old World dispositions; specifically an emotional grounding in values of family and community. His status as 'an Irishman among Yankees' is one of humble and humane commitment rather than separateness, which is mutually enriching. The domestic strand of the narrative suggests that the impulse behind the early incident to help Cadet O'Carbery endures through Marty's life but within the structures of the dominant habitus, made explicit through Maher's uniform, disciplining function and loyalty to Army ideals. Ford thus modifies the narrative conclusions of *The Great John L.* and *Gentleman Jim* where the protagonists are viewed as public figures who overcome their 'natural' dispositions as part of their success stories. While Maher undergoes a comparable conversion centred on the body early on in *The Long Gray Line*, he remains an essentially private figure located within the cultural traditions of the Irish domestic space, positioned to play a supporting role to 'front line' American manhood. At the same time, for all its celebration of Marty's unique and idiosyncratic status within West Point and the retention of lively ethnic ties and tradition, *The Long Gray Line*'s omission of any non-white military cadets and officers serves to again position an exceptional Irish-American as an exemplary convert and defender of the embodied norms of white American manhood which are rendered as 'common-sense'.

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[111] Tag Gallagher, *John Ford: The Man and His Films*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 1988), 318

This in-between status – endorsing a habitus of white manhood as normative while retaining ties to idealized ethnic values - is apparent in the final scenes of *The Long Gray Line* which return the narrative to the White House where, in an echo of *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, an Irish-American male is being lauded by the President of the United States, for 'wearing his patriotism on his sleeve' (as Roosevelt put it in the earlier film). President Eisenhower embodies a post-war ideal of national manhood coded as superior, white and linked inextricably with military masculinity (a symbolism reinforced by George White's criticism of Eisenhower's foreign policies which 'could not imagine a world in which Blacks competently governed their own affairs').[112] Marty admits "It took me thirty or forty years just to get the hang of it [army life], you know . . . Everything that I treasure in my heart, *living* or *dead,* is at West Point. I wouldn't know where else to go." America is thus symbolically identified with West Point and West Point – once so alien ('what kind of place have I come to') - is home. In the setting of an Irish homestead within the walls of the military academy Ford offers a powerful spatial allegory in which the habitus of both combine to mutual benefit.

Conclusion

Loïc Wacquant describes habitus as 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them.'[113] In this chapter I have drawn on this concept as a means of theorizing how three Hollywood biopics construct the Irish-American male body as a pivotal site between an ethnic/immigrant and American masculinity. I have argued that these life stories of historical individuals

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[112] George White Jr. *Holding the Line: Race, Racism, and American Foreign Policy toward Africa, 1953-1961* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005). White convincingly argues that in the Cold War period, whiteness shifts from a paradigm of open oppression of non-Whites to a form of hidden social control.
[113] L. Wacquant, *Habitus. International Encyclopedia of Economic Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2005), 316; London cited in Navarro 2006, 16

foreground a habitus of whiteness centred on the male body as a primary means of acculturation in a variety of contexts while positioning such a habitus as natural and (in the words of John L) 'common sense.' Across these films we therefore find a recurring focus on 'technologies of the body' as the means by which Irish-American protagonists come to embody whiteness as a dominant disposition that overcomes the limitations of their embodied natural, backgrounds. In each case these bodily conversions disavow ideological implications of power or privilege by retaining a close identification between these protagonists and their immigrant families/communities. Such characters are therefore linking figures between contrasting and contradictory values of individual and community, the typical and the exceptional, immigrant identities and white hegemony.

Chapter 4

Flight and the City: Ethnicity, Post-War Urban Space and the Irish-American Cop

> *All the cops turned Irish, the Jewish cops, like Goldberg, but also the Italian cops, the Latin cops and the black cops.*
>
> Tom Wolfe, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*

This chapter develops the themes and chronology of earlier chapters in its focus on a fourth mode of Irish-American masculinity in studio-era Hollywood: the urban cop. A stock figure in American cinema from its earliest days, the Irish cop progresses from comic type to protagonist during the 1940s reflecting both historical ascension through the ranks and the cultural value of this type as an ethnic figure of authority within the new configured spaces of post war America. In the discussion that follows I analyze the evolving representation of this figure - with an emphasis on films produced in the aftermath of WWII – arguing that its narrative and social function emerges from a tension between the 'traditional' physical and cultural spaces of working-class immigrant experience and the newly emergent urban/suburban spaces and middle-class whiteness. This tension expresses not only inter-generational conflicts within ethnic-American culture (exacerbated by 'Americanized' ethnic GIs) but also wider anxieties linking space, masculinity and race within post war American society expressed by *film noir* on the one hand and the ideological and racial homogeneity of 1950s popular culture on the other.

As with other modes of Irish-American manhood discussed in this dissertation, I argue that such tensions are explored within a socio-spatial motif of home which functions

both as a setting for male characters' conflicting and conflicted values and as a symbolic ideal of (national) whiteness which accomodates ethnic/working class identities. Constructed as a culturally and spatially mobile figure uniquely capable of moving between 'dark' streets and 'white' houses, the Irish-American cop emerges in Hollywood cinema of the 40s and 50s as a central figure in both exploring and enforcing the limits of white masculinity.[1]

The first section of this chapter offers a brief overview of earlier cinematic constructions of the Irish cop in Hollywood cinema, emphasizing the spatial constitution of its ethnic Otherness within the immigrant neighbourhood. This representational phase culminates I suggest with Joseph Von Sternberg's widely derided *Sergeant Madden* (1938).[2] This transitional and hybridic text – combining *noir* themes and stylistic elements with a sentimental ethnic drama - is of significance to the discussion that follows in linking the Irish American cop to transformations in post-war urban and suburban space which are expressed in relation to the ethnic/immigrant family and neighbourhood.

The second - more substantial - section of the chapter interrogates four post-WWII narratives (1948-1954) which are linked not only through their focus on Irish-American detective characters but also by their articulation of contiguities (anticipated in *Sergeant Madden*) associated with *film noir*. In *Naked City* (1948) and *Union Station* (1950) two crime films starring Irish actor Barry Fitzgerald (more generally remembered as the most 'stage' of Irish screen actors in Hollywood),[3] the central characters immigrant

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[1] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), 118

[2] Tom Sutpen, "Auteur in Distress: On Wallace Beery, von Sternberg, and Sergeant Madden" in *Bright Lights Film Journal* (Feb 2006), Is. 51. Accessed 7 April 2013.
http://brightlightsfilm.com/51/madden.php#.UvyU7PaJAXw

[3] Ruth Barton, *Acting Irish in Hollywood: From Fitzgerald to Farrell* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), 21-45. Barton describes Fitzgerald as 'the consummate stage Irishman' but argues that his screen career exhausted the type 'as if he had run out of patience with his own comic creation.'

origins function to augment its legitimacy and effectiveness as a senior law officer (combining a street wise toughness with the cool logic of modern police surveillance). Conversely, in *Shield for Murder* (1954) and *Rogue Cop* (1954) – two films adapted from novels by William P. McGivern - the corruption of 'rogue' (second generation) Irish-American detectives is linked to their loss or rejection of 'home values' and their pursuit of illegitmate success and enrichment. The Irish-American presence within such narratives serves to link post-war whiteness with immigrant ties to home, consolidating public and private space and identities and legitimising the patriarchal function and force of the police as the guardian of both.

The Irish American protagonists in these films bring to the fore post-war anxieties around the American city as an 'unhomely' space at a juncture of socio-spatial trasnformation; an aspect of what Eric Beckman has described as the 'Racialization of Space [. . .] and the Reinvention of Whiteness.'[4] In making this argument I draw on Edward Dimendberg's ideas that locate *film noir* not so much along traditional lines of genre or style but rather as 'a space of representation', that 'simultaneously registers and inflects the psychic and cultural manifestations of late modernity.'[5] Of especial relevance to my discussion is Dimendberg's understanding of *noir*'s urban spaces as expressions of 'a tension between a residual American culture and urbanism of the 1920s and 1930s and its liquidation by the technological and social innovations accompanying WWII.'[6] I argue that the Irish-American cop functions as an intertextual trope of post-war Hollywood to articulate and mediate the demographic dimensions of this tension in a variety of ways.

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[4] Eric Beckman, *Racialization of Space: Post-World War II Residential Segregation and the Reinvention of Whiteness*, Unpublished MLS Thesis, (University of Minnesota, 2005)
[5] Edward Dimendberg, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 12
[6] Dimendberg, *Film Noir,* 3

I Spaces of Home:

The Irish-American Cop, the Ethnic Neighbourhood and American Cinema

William H. Williams' study of images of the Irish in nineteenth century American popular song identifies Irish 'coppers' as an early subject of fun and lampoon. 'He's on the Police Force Now' (Martin Hennessey, 1890) for instance, concludes that while Pat might have achieved sobriety, he's clearly lost his ability to make clear judgments:

> I hear he has stopped drinking, but I know he has stopped thinking / He's on the police force now[7]

The humour resides in a juxtaposition of type and stereotype: the disciplining function of the cop and the indiscipline of the 'typical' Irish immigrant. The earliest representations of the Irish cop in American cinema continue this tradition in films such as *Mysterious Disappearance of a Policeman* (1899); *Spirits in the Kitchen* (1899) or the Biograph titles *Nora's Fourth of July* (1901), aka *How Nora Entertained Officer Duffy* and *Off His Beat* (1903): one-reel comic 'attractions' in which slapstick, work-shy policemen canoodle with stereotyped 'Bridget' (Irish domestic servant) characters. Descended from vaudeville, the cop is an ethnically-othered type in such texts who comically fails in his assigned civic task to safeguard social and economic – i.e. white - privilege; yet does not represent a threat to it. Such comedies are generally set in and around the kitchens of the wealthy - private spaces of social segregation taken over and subverted by the unruly appetites of the not-quite-white, and subsequently within the ethnic neighbourhoods of the immigrant and working classes.

A typical example of this early narrative phase can be seen in the 1905 Lubin comedy *A Policeman's Love Affair*. This one-reeler deals with Michael McGinnis, a 'typical' New York police officer whose patrol area is 'Rich Avenue' where the 'swells' of society live. This is the Lubin catalogue synopsis:

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[7] William Williams, *Twas Only an Irishman's Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800-1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 139

Bridget, the cook, is his best girl, whom he comes to visit every once in a while, especially when she is preparing the dinner. At the opening of the picture you see Michael McGinnis in the kitchen while the lady of the house is reading a book in the next room. After having indulged in a fine dinner, Michael McGinnis makes love to his fair lady. There begins a kissing match which can be heard in the next room, and which calls the attention of the lady of the house to the visitor in the kitchen. The lady of the house enters the kitchen inquiring after the visitor, but he is nowhere to be seen. Michael McGinnis suddenly rushes from under the table and tries to jump out of the window. The lady of the house, however, is quicker than Michael McGinnis. She takes a pail full of milk and pours the same over the fleeing policeman.[8]

It is tempting to see in this slapstick comic denouement a symbolic process of 'whitening' – the assimilationist imperative that would become central to feature films of the later silent era and beyond.[9] In any case the action clearly illustrates the existence of dominant cultural norms based on ethnicity and the threat of punishment for failure to follow them. The plot of *A Policeman's Love Affair* was repeated in many Lubin films, indicating, as Charles Musser notes, that 'working class audiences obviously found amusement in seeing the [white] economic elite at odds with law enforcers who were designated to serve their interests.'[10] While Musser points out that Lubin films 'often portray the police as hypocritical and undermine their moral authority,' they were not unique in this. Peter Flynn estimates that between 1910 and 1917 some twenty-nine American films featured an Irish policeman, progressively displacing the previously dominant 'Bridget' (domestic servant) figure[11] and gradually becoming the most widely circulated representation of Irish-American manhood in American cinema. Although the type would rarely feature as a central character with the move to longer, feature-length films, the Irish-American cop would persist as emblem of the immigrant foundations of the United States throughout the studio period and beyond.

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[8] Lubin catalogue synopsis (1906A: 13-14; 1907:33) excerpted from the *Irish Film and TV Index*, Accessed 4 January 2013. ; http://www.tcd.ie/irishfilm/showfilm.php?fid=57750
[9] Robert Brent Toplin, ed., *Hollywood as Mirror: Changing Views of Outsiders and Enemies in American Movies* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993)
[10] Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1994), 396
[11] Peter Flynn, "How Bridget Was Framed: The Irish Domestic in Early American Cinema, 1895–1917" in *Cinema Journal* Vol. 50, No. 2, (Winter 2011), 1-20. 10. Survey sample of 183 films dealing with Irish subjects from the period.

Central to the development of the screen cop from comic to character type – as American films increased in length – was a spatial repositioning from the comedic clash between libinous ethnicity and spaces of white Victorian culture to a more sympathetic figure rooted within the socio-dynamics of the neighbourhood he patrolled. While, in the feature film era, the figure becomes more explicitly representative of municipal authority, ties of class and immigrant origins complicate any binary structure of police and policed within spaces characterized by a blurring of boundaries and relationships. We find this blurring in Michel de Certeau's description of the neighbourhood in *The Practice of Everyday Life*; a development of Lefebvre's conception of 'lived space':

> As a result of its everyday use, the neighbourhood can be considered as the progressive privatization of public space. It is a practical device whose function is to ensure a continuity between what is the most intimate (the private space of one's lodging) and what is most unknown (the totality of the city or even the rest of the world).[12]

The second-phase in representations of the Irish-American cop in American cinema can be read as part of this everyday 'privatization': his surveillance authority both complicated and bound up with physical and cultural proximity to the neighbourhood. Developing Lefebvre, such characters link the conceived and *lived* spaces of the city mediating between hegemonic and marginal discourses of race and class,[13] walking – literally and symbolically – between them. Such figures complicate Richard Collier's description of a 'convergence between the construction both of [white] masculinity and law [which] involves a *distancing* of the personal, the emotional and the sexual in the constitution of a univocal authoritative voice.'[14] The fascination of the Irish-American cop in American cinema during the 1920s and 1930s lies in the ambiguities of this socio-spatial threshold dynamic – his ethnic/class/personal ties to those he polices while striving to uphold such an 'univocal' authority.

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[12] Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2: Living and Cooking* trans. Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 11
[13] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (New York: SAGE, 2005)
[14] Richard Collier, *Masculinity, Law and Family* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 41

Origins of the American Police: Localized Law and the Visible

Modeled closely on the London Metropolitan model developed by Robert Peel in 1829, Wilbur Miller tells us that the earliest American experiences of law enforcement had a number of distinguishing characteristics:

> A hierarchical, military-influenced, command structure within the police generating a highly centralized organization . . . A uniformed force [that] was a visible expression of civic cohesion and acted as a principle of deterrence[15]

Miller's assertion that it was the visibility of the police to the populace that first constituted its primary character as safeguard and deterrent is echoed by historian Eric Monkkonen who says the early development of the New York Police Department (NYPD) was based upon the expectation that the continuous visual presence of officers on the beat (in contrast to the freelance basis that prevailed earlier) would detect and prevent crime:

> Conceptualized as bringing regular and more effective crime prevention to the city . . . City officials hoped that regular patrols would prevent crime by scaring would-be offenders . . .[16]

Founded in 1845, the NYPD began wearing uniforms in 1853 and while it imitated its London counterpart in many ways, it diverged crucially in being governed by local, rather than central/national government. Highly decentralized and police officers were recruited and selected by political leaders in a particular ward or precinct. Instead of drawing on institutional legitimacy (i.e. parliamentary laws), each police officer had to establish his own authority among the citizens he patrolled.[17]

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[15] Wilbur Miller, *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York and London, 1830-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 11

[16] Eric H. Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America, 1860-1920* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 551

[17] Miller, *Cops and Bobbies*, 11

For Miller, this meant that: 'The personal, informal police officer could win the respect of the citizenry by knowing local standards and expectations.'[18] This informality was further encouraged by the fact that he received no professional formation:

> New officers were often sent out on patrol with no training and with few instructions beyond their rulebooks. Proper arrest procedures, rules of law and so on were unknown to the officers. Left to themselves, they developed their own strategies for coping with life on the streets.[19]

In terms of the composition of these early police forces, Dulaney has noted that:

> Although the elites in American cities created and commanded the police, immigrant and the lower classes usually staffed the lower ranks . . . The Irish emerged as the most important immigrant group to occupy rank and file positions. Other nationalities, such as the Germans, competed with the Irish for police jobs, but the Irish prevailed . . . through numbers and political influence, Irish immigrants were able to dominate the police forces in most American cities . . .[20]

The combination of political patronage (an officer had to pay up to a fifth of his salary back to the politician who got him the job),[21] and demographic proximity created a very particular kind of policeman and contributed strongly to images of the Irish American cop in popular culture and cinema as a figure with roots in the community rather than simply a cold apparatus of the state. While such patronage gradually diminished with police reform, the Irish cop continued – in both fact and fiction – to occupy a complex status as a part of and apart from the communities he policed.

The arrival of the police in American cities 'produced' (in Lefevbrian terms) spaces of surveillance and control over previously 'unseen' urban and immigrant communities to which 'the gaze' of a hegemonic order was implicit. The gaze of American cinema throughout the silent period however, remained generally unaltered in its view of the cop as an ethnic comic other defined primarily by his 'natural' tastes and inclinations. Even as late as 1928 as proud an Irish-American as John Ford did little to advance

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[18] Miller, *Cops and Bobbies*, 11
[19] Craig D Uschida, 'History of American Policing,' Jack R. Greene (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Police Science, Volume 1*, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2007), 616-620. 618
[20] W. Marvin Dulaney, *Black Police in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 3
[21] Williams writes, 'In New York City at mid-century a policeman might have earned $500 a year, out of which he had to pay $40 to his precinct captain and from $150 to $200

earlier types in *Riley the Cop* (1928), a film that shamelessly perpetuates the stereotype of the drunken Irishman and finds ironic humour in a law enforcement officer who is incapable of self-regulation being sent to impose order on others.

From the Neighbourhood to the Nation:
Riley the Cop and *Sergeant Madden*

Ford's film is set in New York during prohibition, where James Aloysius Riley (J. Farrell McDonald) has been a cop on the Lower East Side for twenty years. Early scenes emphasize his easy-going demeanour (or rather, un-policeman-like casualness) and his deep familiarity with the ethnic locals, particularly a young couple Dave Collins (David Rollins), and his sweetheart Mary Coronelli (Nancy Drexel). Dave follows his sweetheart Mary to Germany (she has been taken there by her snobbish aunt to avoid Collins), but he is arrested on the mistaken belief that he has stolen money from the bakery where he works back in New York. Riley, 'due for a soft job' is sent to bring him back, and while he initially rejects the assignment he quickly comes to enjoy the beer halls of Berlin and the attentions of local *fraulein* Lena (Louise Fazenda) – who turns out to be Krausmeyer's sister. After a series of drunken misadventures, it is Collins who has to make sure that the inebriated Riley makes it back to America in one piece where he marries Lena.

Lee Lourdoux argues that:

> Ford's presentation of Riley is decidedly mixed, as if he had not decided on a clear dramatic purpose for his Irish-American protagonist. On the one hand Riley is a good cop with a strong Irish sense of community. He holds a young black girl in his arms; he turns on a fire hydrant for street kids; he councils a young couple in love. On the other he acts like a bully when provoked . . . His type will always remain part of the working class because he enjoys his liquor too much to climb the WASP ladder of success . . .[22]

This critique is of value because it reveals that while Ford (and his lead actor Farrell McDonald) enjoy the stereotype of the kind and wise drunk (which would recur many

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[22] Lee Lourdeaux, *Italian and Irish Filmmakers in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 102-103

times in his work, including Barry Fitzgerald's role in *The Quiet Man*), the director here seeks – but is uncertain how - to give it greater significance. While the film contains elements of Ford's positive treatment of the Irish and community, the director must have been aware that it was out of step with the changed and changing cultural function of Irish characters in American cinema more generally. For, as Diane Negra has shown in her study of Colleen Moore, Irishness in 1920s Hollywood acquired a valency that went beyond earlier types (in her case, 'the attempt to check the emerging power of the 'New Woman' . . .' through her 'recuperability' as white). The Irish-American cop remains stubbornly unreconstructed during the same period; we have to wait until the end of the 1930s for the evolution of the figure from comic type to an enforcer of hegemonic values to witness a comparable 'recuperability', articulated within the values and spaces of ethnic community.

No other film articulates this evolution more clearly within a single text than Joseph Von Sternberg's *Sergeant Madden* (1939), released on the eve of WWII. Its themes and script are often cliched and trite, the acting uneven and *mise en scène* generally modest (particularly in its opening sections) but it offers an intriguing transitional text, a film palpably on the cusp of two eras and spaces – caught between the neighbourhood dramas of the 1920s and 1930s and the *noir* anxieties of the post-war American city that would inform subsequent portraits.

The opening sections of the film establish the eponymous Sergeant Madden as a throwback to constructions of Irish-American masculinity as ethnically and culturally Other: Wallace Beery's blustery acting style and thick brogue accentuate the comic and neighbourhood characterizations of an earlier era. As the film begins, Madden and his wife adopt Albert Boylan Jr. (Drew Roddy), the son of a fellow officer killed in the line of duty. Developing this paternalistic motif, Madden subsequently discovers an abandoned infant girl and brings it home to his wife Mary whom he cajoles into adopting the baby

girl. But just as they are contemplating 'having the happiest home in Astoria', the infant's mother shows up at their door, also sporting a thick brogue, and explains that she now regrets abandoning 'Eileen' but didn't have the money to care for them both. Madden puts the young woman to bed and then, bringing her supper, gives her $90 he and Mary had been saving for a 'rainy day' guaranteeing that that the single mother and her baby might return to the domestic safety of Ireland. The narrative now comes to focus on Madden's only biological child, Dennis (Dickie Jones). An early tussle between the boy and a neighbour's child suggest that young Madden is a bit 'wild' and prone to fighting. Echoing structures of *The Long Gray Line*, his father promises 'He'll learn his discipline in the police academy' and offers his son advice:

> That cops is a fine game, it's something you'll be proud to be playing all of your life . . . [but] I'd better give you some rules of the game and the first one is patience . . . there are all kinds of cops, mostly good cops . . . but making friends on your beat is very important.

While the adult Dennis (Alan Curtis) begins his police training, the grown-up Eileen (Laraine Day) returns from Ireland – now an attractive young woman – and moves in with the Maddens (tellingly contrasted with their stereotypical black cook Dove (Etta McDaniel) for whom social mobility is clearly not an option). With Mary now dead, Eileen assumes the role of woman of the house.

Figure 10 At home in the ethnic neighbourhood: the Irish-American cop in *Sergeant Madden* (1938)

A montage sequence shows Dennis in police training, excelling at target practice, then

graduating. Soon he is patrolling the same neighbourhood streets as his father, but is

seen violently pushing a cheeky kid into the gutter. When local gangster Piggy Ceders

(Marc Lawrence) advises him to calm down, Dennis threatens him. Returning home, he

sees Ceders telling Madden Snr., 'that kid of yours has got the whole beat against him.'

This gives rise to a sharp exchange between father and son revolving around masculine

conceptions of heroism and ambition:

> - How's a cop going to get anywhere making love to the whole city of New York . . .
>   I want a Captain's pay before I'm too old to enjoy it . . . break someone like 'Piggy'
>   Ceders and I'll be a hero right now [and] not just another blue suit walking by in
>   the rain.

When his father suggests that he ought to bide his time, Dennis ups the insults:

> - The trouble is you work for the Police Department. Well, the Police Department
>   is going to work for me, see . . . duty, loyalty, faithful unto death and for what?

Unlike his predecessors *Riley* or *Madden*, Dennis Madden is not content to serve his

working class neighbourhood. In contrast to his father's paternal attitude to policing, he

envisages an aggressive male heroism located in force as the path to social mobility and

individual success. This tension between styles of masculinity structured by urban space

– between the communal sensibility of the (ethnic) neighbourhood cop and the (white)

metropolitan individualism of the dispersed and unknown city – becomes central to

Hollywood constructions of the Irish-American cop from *Sergeant Madden* on.

He takes his opportunity soon afterwards and shoots a petty thief as he makes his

getaway. When he returns to the Madden home he finds his wife and younger brother

singing a nostalgic Irish American tune at the piano '*Ireland must be Heaven* . . .'[23] linking

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[23] Composed by Joe McCarthy and Fred Fischer, 1916. Accessed 30 January 2013.
https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/21574?show=full

their values - and by extension those of his father - with an outmoded ethnic nostalgia and an imagined, pre-modern space of social harmony. Dennis rejects such an imaginary, defining himself by a future-oriented ambition unshackled to allegiences to social or ethnic origins:

- Where have your old fashioned, old woman ideas ever got you? You're a Sergeant after 30 years service, a dumb harness cop with nothing in his head but his pension.

With the escalation of the father-son conflict, the film exhibits a notable shift away from naturalism towards a more expressive style and tone. Dennis' moral and cultural distance from his family (who represent the film's normative conception of community) is expressed in spatial terms as he abandons the Madden home and neighbourhood for a shadowy, proto *noir* world that Von Sternberg would later develop in more sophisticated narrative and visual terms.[24] He is arrested and sentenced but escapes and goes into hiding, taking his bride Eileen with him. Unaccustomed and unsettled with their fugitive status she returns to the more familiar space of the Madden home and reveals his hide-out in the city. When Madden Snr. arrives to try to reason with his son, Dennis suspects a double-cross, jumps out the window and shoots a cop as he escapes. With this action, the link between father and son is now irrevocably broken and, in shame, Sgt. Madden hands in his gun and badge to the police commissioner.

Anticipating the novels of William P McGivern, Dennis Madden has now become a rogue cop on the run from a police force that is almost exclusively represented as Irish in origins but solidly American in character. In a montage sequence he turns bank-robber, then vigilante, finally murdering Piggy Ceders in cold blood. The same night, his pregnant wife Eileen goes into labour and is taken to the hospital where she is visited by Dennis' father – again in paternal mode. Enraged by the newspaper headlines reporting his son's crime spree, Madden concocts a plan to entrap him. Aware that Dennis is

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[24] For instance: *The Shanghai Gesture* (1941); Macao (1952)

listening into police radio communications, he enlists the help of an old colleague Casey to announce the birth of Dennis' son, knowing this will drive him to the hospital. Casey is appalled by the plan:

- It's barbaric . . . your own son
- But he's killed a police officer . . . It's war he's declared and all men that declare war should be wiped from the face of the earth

It is a small but telling exchange. Casey defends ties of kinship above all else – a traditional ethnic disposition - whereas Madden claims a higher principle of law and order. Throughout the film's first half, Beery's characterization is clearly identified with a 19th century representative tradition of the Irish cop as ethnic outsider confined to the 'local' spaces of urban America. Now however, he overturns this and becomes the film's unequivocal voice of hegemonic white manhood, extending his principles from the working class/ethnic ghetto into the city and nation. The spaces of the neighbourhood and the nation thus become coeval as Madden's earlier policing style - be 'friendly with the people on your beat' - gives way to modern methods associated with a panopticon of surveillance and force as the film assumes a tone of professional urgency. With the declaration - 'It's war he's declared and all men that declare war should be wiped from the face of the earth' – the old policeman's authority is transformed from the 'old fashioned, old woman system' of neighbourhood ties to one of moral purpose and clarity given an unlikely parallel with contemporary events in Europe.[25] Thus a film that began with a familiar and clichéd portrait of the good natured Irish-American cop as 'guardian' of little more than his family and neighbourhood becomes a figure of national – wartime - manhood.

The final scenes of the film anticipate classic *film noir* in their chiaroscuro style and a fatal sensibility. Dennis comes clandestinely to the hospital to see his newborn son and while his father waits downstairs to arrest him, Al – now also a police officer - tips him

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[25] The film was shot between Jan-March 1939. Accessed 30 January 2013.
http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/1165/Sergeant-Madden/

off. A scene with his wife in the hospital room revolves around the crises of masculinity that shapes Dennis's character and puts him at odds with the film's normative performances of American manhood – his father and brother. As he holds the newborn, he says to Eileen:

- He's mine isn't he?
- He was ... I'll say the baby's father was brave but he died before he was born

Albert enters the room in his police uniform.

- Hello Albert, that's a nice dress you've got on ... So long Eileen, remember me on Father's Day.

As he tries to escape the hospital, the police are called and he is cornered. In a back-alley of shadows, father and son come face to face for the final time:

- Hello Pop.
- It's not your Pop talkin', it's the law ... drop that gun or I'll blow you apart.

The dialogue, setting and shooting style function to structure the scene on an expressive rather than realist level, moving it far beyond the naturalist setting of the early sections to something more mythic. Symbolically, Dennis tries to flee via a fire escape but finally, realizing he has no options, allows himself to be gunned down. While he achieves a kind of sacrificial anti-heroism in his submission to death, he nevertheless provides the film with narrative closure that reinstates the ideological status quo. Unusually (and unimaginable in films from earlier in the decade), this is led by an Irish-American cop who simultaneously reinforces an earlier cinematic stereotype while repositioning it – beyond the neighbourhood to the city - as a legitimate expression of white male hegemony combining paternalism and patriarchy.

In the film's final scene the radical nature of this transition from spaces of local to national loyalty is both elided and reinforced. At Albert's police academy graduation the

film's central Irish-American 'family' cheer their son: his adoptive father Sgt. Madden (his own father having died in action), his adopted 'sister' Eileen (who it is clear he will now marry) and her newborn son (fathered by the dead Dennis). The sentimental family conclusion foregrounds a national ideal: America is a family of immigrants and outsiders thrown together but unified – and policed - by a communal bond of democratic norms, supported by state force. On the eve of WWII, this ideal is represented within a transitional narrative that reconciles ethnicity and whiteness through the warm hearted but ideologically tough Irish American cop. The eponymous Madden emerges as a figure in between marginal and mainstream masculine identities, willing to sacrifice his errant son for a higher objective of defending white American social structures and values. The disturbing if disavowed conservatism of the film's conclusion presages *film noir* in several respects - setting, expressive style, the theme of moral corruption and a violent conclusion - elements evident in the four post-war films analyzed in the next section which foreground the Irish American detective.

II Policing Whiteness: *Film Noir* and the Remaking of the Irish-American Cop

There are few concepts in film studies that have proven as productive and widely contested as *film noir*. As has been widely documented, the term was coined by post-war French critics describing a proliferation of American crime/detective films, culminating in Borde and Chaumeton's 1955 monograph study *Panorama du Film Noir Americain* that discussed some twenty two film titles.[26] Ever since, critics have contested its parameters and meaning, with a by now familiar split between questions of genre and style.[27] Elizabeth Cowie has suggested that the term's origins and continued endurance as a critical concept are primarily down to film scholars:

> Whether it is a genre, a cycle of films, a tendency or a movement, *film noir* has been extraordinarily successful as a term … A tenacity of critical use, a devotion among aficionados suggests a desire for the category.[28]

While Fay and Neiland go so far as to argue that, 'In an important sense *film noir* – as a staple collection of cinematic objects with identifiable properties – does not exist,' certain distinguishing features have attracted recurring commentary in film scholarship. Most scholars, for instance, agree broadly on a periodisation of 'classic *noir*' roughly from 1940-1960 at its limits and featuring a combination of several key features: a generally urban setting or location fraught with danger or corruption; a highly stylized visual style; a sense of social malaise, pessimism and suspicion.[29] Sylvia Harvey articulates the widely accepted analysis that the world of *noir* 'reflects a series of profound changes which, though they are not yet grasped or understood, are shaking the foundations of the established and therefore normal perceptions of the social order.'[30] Central to most explorations of such 'profound changes' has been a

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26 The other key works are Nino Frank, 'Un Nouveau Genre Policier: adventures criminelle' (1946) and Jean Pierre Chartrier, 'Les Americains aussi font les 'noirs'', 1946.
27 Jennifer Fay, Justus Nieland, *Film noir: hard-boiled modernity and the cultures of globalization* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 124
28 Elizabeth Cowie, "Film Noir and Women" in Joan Copjec, *Shades of Noir: A Reader* (London: Verso Books, 1993), 121
29 Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), 150
30 Sylvia Harvey, "Women's place: the absent family of film noir" in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 1998), 22

preoccupation with gender, and masculinity in particular. Richard Dyer for instance argues that *film noir* is:

> characterised by a certain anxiety over the existence and definition of masculinity and normality. This anxiety is seldom directly expressed and yet may be taken to constitute the film's problemic, that set of issues and problems that the film seeks to come to terms with without ever articulating[31]

Several writers have located this anxiety in the historical experience of WWII and the Cold War, 'so that the question of masculine identity was also bound up with the question of masculine identity.'[32] I shall develop this view below in arguing that these identities are further linked by a normative conception of whiteness.

Frank Krutnick's important study, *In A Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity*, argues that *noir* films are 'perhaps evidence of some kind of crisis of confidence within the contemporary regimentation of male-dominated culture'[33] and identifies two principle phases in its portraits of American manhood. The first, he terms 'hard boiled' Hollywood, relates to crime thrillers which are 'driven by challenges to the mutually reinforcing regimes of masculine cultural authority and masculine psychic stability [and display] an obsession with male figures who are both internally divided and alienated from culturally permissible parameters of masculine identity . . . '.[34] Krutnik sees the films of this phase, made during the 1940s, as 'a generically regulated response to the upheavals of the wartime and post-war eras.' He then identifies a second phase, beginning around the end of the 1940s, where new trends such as social problem dramas and semi-documentaries emerge, and argues that such films 'signalled a shift away from the tough thrillers obsession with psychological breakdown and sexual malaise or at least they recast these elements within a perspective which stressed the

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[31] Richard Dyer, "Resistance Through Charisma: Rita Hayward and Gilda" in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: BFI, 1998), 91
[32] Hayward, *Cinema Studies*, 149
[33] Frank Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street, Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 1991), 91
[34] Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, xiii

normative processes of law and order . . .'[35] The films under consideration here, with their foregrounding of Irish-American police detectives and processes of the law belong to this second phase.

Combining contextual and psychological approaches in constructions of white masculinity in *film noir*, Vivian Sobchack contends that:

> films circumscribed as *noir* are seen as playing out negative dramas of post-war masculine trauma and gender anxiety . . . The social context for *film noir* is marked as 'transitional,' and its overarching themes are the recovery of a lost patriarchal order and the need for the country to literally and metaphorically 'settle down'.[36]

The notion of a *noir* as a genre of *transition* and the theme of loss (of home, of patriarchy) are especially useful in considering the function of Irish-American masculinities within the films under consideration here. Their status as detectives is indicative of the historical social progress of Irish-American masculinity since the war and separates them from the uniformed, street-bound patrol officers of earlier eras. Fully assimilated into social structures of whiteness, they enjoy higher incomes, greater mobility (moving throughout the metropolis, rather than being confined to the ethnic neighbourhood), professional superiority over the uniformed and younger men on the beat, and a higher level of independence and authority. But they are also expressive, on intra- and inter-textual levels, of a pre-war ethnic/immigrant heritage and the social relationships of the working-class urban neighbourhood. This positioning between pre- and post-war masculinities and spaces accords with Edward Dimendberg's observation that the spaces of *film noir* reveal an amalgam of diverse historical and cultural

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[35] Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street,* xiv
[36] Vivian Sobchack, "Lounge Time: Postwar Crises and the Chronotype of Film Noir" in *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory,* ed. Nick Browne (Oakland: University of California Press, 1998), 131

elements: 'Invoking the past while anxiously imagining the future, *film noir* reveals multiple spatialities, no less than multiple temporalities.'[37]

The 'spatial turn' in Dimendberg's analysis of *film noir* argues that the genre be understood as a consequence of changes in post-war America whereby cities as they had been known in the 1920s and 1930s no longer exist. A latent element of *noir,* he determines, is a 'nostalgia and longing for older urban forms combined with a fear of new alienating urban realities:'[38]

> The loss of public space, the homogenisation of everyday life, the intensification of surveillance, and the eradication of older neighbourhoods by urban renewal and redevelopment projects are seldom absent from these films . . . Unlike the contemporaneous conquests of the big sky and the open frontier by characters in the film genre of the western, the protagonists in *film noir* appear cursed by an inability to dwell comfortably anywhere.[39]

Dimendberg locates this sense of unhomeliness in a shift from the dominant character of urban space from 'centripetal' to 'centrifugal' during the 1940s-1950s; 'the replacement of metropolitan density and verticality by suburban sprawl':

> If centripetal space is characterized by a fascination with urban density and the visible – the skyline, monuments, recognizable public spaces and inner-city neighborhoods – its centrifugal variant can be located in a shift toward immateriality, invisibility and speed. Separation replaces concentration, distance supplants proximity, and the highway and the automobile supersede the street and the pedestrian.[40]

Elsewhere, Dimendberg has identified modernity's shift in socio-spatial relations in the structures of Fritz Lang's 1931 crime thriller *M*, in comments that are of relevance to the crime detection narratives under discussion here. *M*, he writes:

> . . . intimates that a paradoxical consequence of increased spatial mastery and surveillance - the very ability to locate and address spatial users - might well be the concomitant loss of a city's experiential identity by those who inhabit it. The anonymous metropolis, unfettered from the historical associations of particular

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[37] Dimendberg, *Film Noir,* 3
[38] Dimendberg, *Film Noir,* 7
[39] Dimendberg, *Film Noir,* 7
[40] Dimendberg, *Film Noir,* 178

sites of memory and public spatial practices, a realm that Henri Lefebvre calls 'abstract space', informs Lang's film.[41]

Although his analysis elides it, parallel to Dimendberg's exploration of *film noir*'s post-war spatial anxieties is a racial dimension that is of core significance to the construction and function of the Irish-American detective within such films. 'White flight' (a theme I shall develop in the next chapter) describes the demographic pattern of relocation from cities to the suburban – 'centrifugal' – spaces beyond bringing with it a new dynamic of race relations and a racialisation of space. While Philip Rubio asserts that "[the white race] was reinvented with the post-World War II suburb"[42] (115), Erik Bekman offers a more nuanced analysis when he argues that:

> While suburbanization and resistance to urban integration did not create whiteness in the postwar US they did consolidate it, by reinforcing the inclusion of peoples previously socially positioned as inbetween and by enhancing the material and social advantages of whiteness. Through residential segregation the children and grandchildren of not-yet-white European immigrants became fully white in their racial identity.[43]

Many scholars have noted that the white majority who left the city for the suburbs in the late 1940s and early 1950s were not motivated by racial fear, but by the attractiveness of suburban housing and affordable mortgages that often made buying cheaper than renting through a number of federal programmes.[44] Nevertheless this quickly led to a 'racialization of space'[45] that was as much a product of perception as reality. David Roediger, for instance cites Robert Orsi's research into suburban relocation that was often remembered as being 'driven out' of neighbourhoods by blacks or Latino even

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[41] Edward Dimendberg, "From Berlin to Bunker Hill: Urban Space, Late Modernity, and Film Noir in Fritz Lang's and Joseph Losey's *M*," in *Wide Angle* Vol. 19, No. 4 (1997), 62-93; 74

[42] Philip F. Rubio, *A History of Affirmative Action, 1619-2000* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 115

[43] Erik Beckman, *Racialized Space:Post-World War II Residential Segregation and the Reinvention of Whiteness* (Unpublished Thesis, 2005), 65. Accessed 5 February 2013. https://www.academia.edu/4561282/Racialization_of_Space_Post-World_War_II_Residential_Segregation_and_the_Reinvention_of_Whiteness

[44] David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) and David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrant's Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2005)

[45] George Lipsitz, "The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race" in *Landscape Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2007), 10-23

though the demography and the chronology of moving often poorly fit such a scenario.'[46]

Or David Freund's case study of post-war metropolitan Detroit which argues that 'countless Detroit area whites fashioned their growing enthusiasm for homeownership and for suburban life . . . by painting the 'city' as a place undermined by crowded and deteriorating living conditions . . . by renters, and - most conspicously - by Black people.'[47] Elsewhere, Roediger speaks of 'the white suburb's need to imagine a black, antineighbourly and uninhabitable city structure structured perceptions . . . and hastened the forgetting of who-and-what- was left behind.'[48]

Cumulatively, such analysis develops Dimendberg's reading of *film noir* as an expression of a crisis in the structure and perception of urban America linking profound changes in socio-spatial relations and the cultural construction of whiteness. In the discussion that follows I argue that four film narratives centering on Irish-American male detectives can be understood as expressions of the post-war American metropolis as 'a site of social and technological alienation . . . ringed by expanding centreless suburbs,'[49] in which their ethnic/immigrant backgrounds respond to this 'de-centering' in contrasting but related ways. In the first two films, Barry Fitzgerald's casting as a first generation Irish detective who has worked his way up from the street functions to unite Levebvre's concepts of *lived* and *abstract* space in ways that make the 'centrifugal city' safe through a combination of 'spatial mastery' and 'experiential identity.' In both narratives, the Fitzgerald characters are constructed as unifying figures whose toughness and strategies are endorsed and justified in protecting the most vulnerable in American society; constructed in both the cases as young white women (a kidnapped daughter in *Union Station*; a murdered girl in *Naked City*). The second grouping – more traditionally *noir* in their focus on corrupt detectives – deploy the Irish American backgrounds of

46 Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*, 233
47 Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*, 233
48 Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness*, 234
49 Dimendberg, *Berlin to Bunker Hill*, 69

their detective protagonists in terms of a nostalgia for lost spaces, specifically the space of home. In contrast to the Fitzgerald characters, these second generation Irish-Americans have achieved social mobility but 'forgotten' their urban immigrant roots, so that while the former provide idealized constructions of 'everyman' white-ethnic identity that make the city 'homely,' the McGivern adaptations present us with a corruption of masculine authority and a loss of identity resulting in 'an inability to dwell comfortably anywhere.'

Reinventing the Irish-American Cop: the cases of Barry Fitzgerald

Although he appeared largely in a relatively narrow range of mostly character parts and only came to widespread attention in the United States after the great glut of Irish-themed dramas of the 1930s, Barry Fitzgerald occupies a dominant position in Hollywood characterizations of first generation Irish men. He came to America in 1936 as part of the Abbey Theatre company and while other members of the company returned to Ireland at the end of the tour, he stayed put. In his study of the Abbey actors in Hollywood,[50] Adrian Frazier points out that the character of Fluther Good from O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* (the 1926 play and John Ford's 1936 film) that brought the Irish actor his first professional success in America, exerted an enduring influence on the characters Fitzgerald was offered and his style of playing them. Frazier describes Fluther's penchant for alcohol and a bar-room fight with The Covey in Ford's adaptation as 'a fairly complete picture of the stereotype of an Irish male':

> . . . a stereotype that Barry Fitzgerald would get lots of opportunities to perfect in twenty years of movie-making, whether in Irish, British, Western, or modern-American settings . . . In 1941 he even did a turn in the African jungle as that staggering, lovable Irishman, with Maureen O'Sullivan and Johnny Weissmuller defending *Tarzan's Secret Treasure*. And in 1952, Fitzgerald brought it all back home in *The Quiet Man*[51]

[50] Adrian Frazier, *Hollywood Irish. John Ford, Abbey Actors and the Irish Revival in Hollywood* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2011). Frazier's book offers an unparalleled examination of Fitzgerald's career before and after Hollywood – along with those of Sara Allgood and his brother Arthur Shields.
[51] Adrian Frazier, 'Barry Fitzgerald: From Abbey Tours to Hollywood Films,' in *Irish Theatre on Tour*, eds. Nicholas Grene & Chris Morash (Dublin: Carysforth Press, 2005). 89-101, 97

In a more detailed and nuanced overview of Fitzgerald's film career, Ruth Barton observes that, contrary to such impressions 'Hollywood offered the actor the opportunity to stretch his range, establishing a type for him and then, in his more interesting roles, requiring him to play against it.'[52] She identifies the early 1940s as the period when the actor Raoul Walsh described as 'an old Irish ham', 'reworked his screen image in a series of performances that enabled him to move from the sidelines to the centre, from comic actor to star.'[53] Two films from Fitzgerald's immediate post-war career are the focus of this section, offering him central roles that entirely overturned his 'stage Irish' persona, while nevertheless foregrounding aspects of his Irishness in ways which developed in important respects Hollywood's construction of Irish-American manhood.

In the aftermath of WWII, when explicitly Irish-American characters were far less conspicuous in Hollywood cinema – reflecting their assimilation - *Naked City* (1948) and *Union Station* (1950) provide re-conceptualizations of the cop type as a sophisticated, streetwise and unsentimental defender of normative whiteness in the American metropolis. Produced between the neighbourhood-centered dramas of the 1930s and the return to Ireland narratives of the 1950s (which form the focus of the next chapter), they produce spaces of Irish-American manhood that cast Fitzgerald against type while drawing on elements of the screen persona established by his Oscar-winning performance as Fr. Fitzgibbon, the urban Irish immigrant priest in *Going My Way* (1945). That Fitzgerald's casting (as a senior detective) was credible to producers and audiences reflects the central and powerful status of Irish masculinity within American policing by this time while developing the familiar earlier figure of the neighbourhood cop. The historical roots of such an 'everyman' characters serve post-war policing strategies grounded in surveillence and technology while linking such strategies to the

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52 Barton, *Acting Irish in Hollywood*, 25
53 Barton, *Acting Irish in Hollywood*, 34

defense of 'traditional' values of home, community, and freedom (from fear particularly)

– values identified in the films with post-war white America. Fitzgerald's white-ethnic

police detectives thus function as connecting figures between pre-war city spaces and

post-war white suburbs; figures of reassurance amid anxieties of spatial and cultural

displacement.

Protecting the City: *The Naked City* and *Union Station*

Developing Lefebvre's concept of lived space in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel De

Certeau proposes a distinction between two 'strategies of action' present in the

everyday life of the city: *strategies* and *tactics*:

> I call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that
> becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army,
> a city, a scientific institution,) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be
> delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations composed of
> targets or threats . . . can be managed.[54]

While *strategies* are institutional acts and purposes which seek to exert power and

control over the subject, *tactics* 'must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular

conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches them. It

creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected.'[55] My analysis of the crime

films that follows argues that they foreground strategies as the necessary mode of

defending whiteness in a post-war urban environment. The goal of policing in such films

is an attempt to suppress tactics which are criminalised as 'made-up, improvised,

heterogeneous and resistant to the overbearing panopticism of modern society.'[56] The

Irish-American police detective functions to ground *strategies* in lived experience and

heternormative masculinity thereby rendering them as 'common sense' and aligned

[54] Barton, *Acting Irish in Hollywood*, 35-36
[55] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 37
[56] Vanentina Napolitano, David Pratten, "Michel de Certeau: Ethnography and the challenge of plurality" in *Social Anthropology*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1-12; 9

with an immigrant cultural heritage that traverses generations and contemporary anxieties.

Topical in its technique and themes, *The Naked City* captures with documentary realism a tension between subterfuge and surveillance; between competing modes of *tactics* and *strategies* in the contemporary American metropolis. Taking its inspiration and title from a 1945 collection of contemporary street photography by photojournalist Wegee (Arthur Fellig), the film was initiated by journalist turned producer Mark Hellinger who commissioned a story outline from Malvin Wald. Inspired by the seedy grittiness of Fellig's photographs of New York's underbelly, Wald proposed a crime story to be told in a semi-documentary style (shot on location) similar to recent independent American films produced by Louis de Rochemont.[57]

The point of departure for the story was the infamous unsolved 1928 murder of Dorothea King (the so called 'Broadway Butterfly', born Anna Marie Keenan) – a beautiful second generation Irish-American model/dancer whom Hellinger had known and whose murder scene he had covered as a young journalist in New York.[58] While Karla Oeler describes the final screenplay as a 'genre cocktail' combining the city symphony with the murder mystery,[59] many commentators have commented that the screenplay's structure was instrumental in establishing the 'police procedural' sub-genre that not only gave rise to the TV series of the same name (1958-1963) but many similar shows since. George Dove's study of the procedural form identifies three central

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[57] Malvin Wald, "Afterword: The Anatomy of a Hit" in *The Naked City: A Screenplay*, ed. Matthew J Bruccoli, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1948), 137, 144. *House on 92nd Street* (1945), *13 Rue Madeline*, (1947) and *Boomerang* (1947).

[58] Mara Bovson, "Broadway butterfly, Dorothy King, dead in bed with her jewels gone" in *New York Daily News*, (Sunday, April 17, 2011). Keenan was born into first generation Irish immigrant poverty in Harlem. The so-called 'Broadway Butterfly murder' gave rise to three filmic treatments: *The Canary Murder Case* (1929), *The King Murder* (1932) and *Naked City*.

[59] Karla Oeler, *A grammar of murder: violent scenes and film form* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 142

features: the presence of a mystery to be solved; a team of detectives assigned to the mystery; the use of police procedures and forensic science to solve the mystery. Dove opines that:

> Where the classic detective story solves mysteries through the use of his powers of observation and logical analysis, and the private investigator through his energy and his tough tenacity, the detective in the procedural story does those things ordinarily expected of policemen, like using informants, tailing suspects and availing himself of the resources of the police laboratory[60]

At the heart of the form therefore is a policing style located in a modern and strategic mode of controlling the city through surveillance and technology (conceived space) but which draws on tactical gestures of informants and 'tailing' (lived space) in defense of the hegemonic social order. In its hybrid nature and *noir* elements, the police procedural can therefore be seen to correspond to Dimendberg's analysis of a post-war transition of spatial consciousness in very particular ways. In *The Naked City* and *Union Station* Muldoon's roots in street-wise Irish immigrant masculinity (and the intertexual associations of Fitzgerald's casting) function not only to imbue his character with a tactical edge that enriches his strategic activities but also position him as a bridging figure between spaces of home: between a (centripetal) space of immigrant/ethnic community on the one hand and the (centrifugal) suburban post-war white family on the other. In both films, it is the protection of the latter space that ultimately guides and justifies the activity and actions of the police.

The Naked City opens with an aerial image of Manhattan's south end as an unidentified and disembodied but authorative voice (Mark Hellinger) addresses the audience:

> Ladies and Gentlemen . . . we're flying over an island, a city, a particular city. And this is a story of a number of people. And a story, also, of the city itself . . . this is the city as it is – hot summer pavements, children at play, the buildings in their naked stone, and the people without make-up . . .

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[60] George N. Dove, *The Police Procedural* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 2

A montage of images of the city accompanies this prologue, including a shot of the film's protagonist, Lt Muldoon (Fitzgerald), preparing breakfast in his small, downtown kitchen. The voice-over and documentary images combine to produce a detached mastery over the dense complexities of modern life below. Its omniscient tone and association with policing corresponds with Foucault's historical study of modernity and power - *Discipline and Publish: The Birth of the Prison* - which proceeds from a description and analysis of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon model prison:

> Bentham laid down the principle that power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so... It is an important mechanism, for it automatizes and disindividualizes power.[61]

For Foucault, the panopticon is less important as an invention than as a metaphor (a 'genealogical marker') for the way modern society is structured and controlled around the threat of surveillance (the 'unverifiable gaze'). Thus, although Hellinger's voice and the montage of images function to preface the police procedural that follows (neither quite inside nor outside of the story), they also establish and collude with the 'panoptic' strategies of surveillance that structure the film's underlying ideology.

Within the world of the film, such 'panopticism' is embodied by the (ironically) diminutive but 'all seeing' Lt. Muldoon, to whom we are introduced in the film's opening shots in his undershirt; making breakfast and singing a nineteenth century Irish immigrant ditty 'Goodbye Johnny Dear':

> Goodbye, Johnny dear, when you're far away/Don't forget your dear old mother far across the sea/Write a letter now and then and send her all you can/And don't forget where e'er you roam that you're an Irishman.[62]

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[61] Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 195-228
[62] Written by Co Clare native Johnny Patterson (1840 - 1889). Accessed 7 March 2013.
http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/people/johnny_patterson.htm

Given the song's provenance as an Irish folk tune, it seems unlikely that it featured in Hellinger's screenplay and was an invention of Fitzgerald, but it is an apt contribution to the film's subtext. It counterpoints and humanizes the white male univocality of the sound/image in the opening shots through a reminder of the immigrant heritage of America: the edict not to forget 'where e'er you roam that you're an Irishman' suggests a set of 'home' values that link the feminine and the past.[63] The humble domesticity of the scene locates Muldoon within a private space evocative of 1920s-1930s Hollywood representations of the ethnic/neighbourhood home and offers an eye-line point of view that counterpoints the centrifugal aerial voice/images of public space. Muldoon is thus constructed as mediating and reconciling these spaces – through a combination of street savvy and technology - within a structure of white-ethnic policing.

The plot of *The Naked City* develops from the murder of model and socialite Jean Dexter who is found dead in her uptown bathtub. Leading the investigation is Detective Lt Dan Muldoon who over the course of two days directs his subordinate officers (particularly the young Irish-American officer Jimmy Halloran (Don Taylor)) in their investigations while he interviews a number of suspects at various locations. As the second day of investigation draws to an end the killer has been identified as Willy Garza (Ted de Corsia), tracked by Halloran after exhaustive investigations to an apartment on the lower-east side of Manhattan. After a chase Garza is fatally wounded by police fire while trying to escape over a bridge towards Brooklyn. The voice-over intones that this is just one of eight million stories in the naked city.

The film's narrative is structured according to the logic of a police investigation, beginning with a montage of shots which illustrate the chain of modern communications following the discovery of the body: a series of phone calls to the hospital, the medical

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[63] A similar set of associations are central to *The Quiet Man*.

examiner, forensics and finally homicide division. At the end of this chain are Muldoon and his superior Captain Donohue (Frank Conroy) (all three central police characters in the film are Irish-American) and Donohue wonders aloud about the evil that men do to which Muldoon replies: 'my wife – rest her soul – always said she'd rather look into a man's heart than his head. .'. Although it is mentioned that he had children, there is no evidence of any family life to complicate his professional focus (Adrian Frazier describes Muldoon as another one of Fitzgerald's priest roles).[64] His single status underlines the sense of independence and objectivity of the character, established from the outset as an unbiased, dogged, enforcer of justice.

Muldoon's modus is 'strategic': efficient and unsentimental. He enters the crime scene and berates the housekeeper for having moved the body. He knowledgably interprets the various expert analyses and clues. This forensic intelligence is counterpointed and balanced by an intuitive and a clear-eyed insight into human nature that sets him apart from his fellow police officers and justifies his rank and authority. Early on he suspects there is more than one killer involved and claims he needs to find his 'old friend J P McGillicuddy' – a name for 'unknown parties'. This hunch instinct with deliberate Irish overtones is validated in his interview with Frank Niles (Howard Duff), an acquaintance of the deceased and – as a successful businessman and WWII veteran, apparently above suspicion. As Niles leaves Muldoon's office Muldoon exposes a lie in his testimony (Niles said he claims he doesn't know Ruth Morrison but they were in fact engaged), the first of a long list of deceptions. Bemused ('you're the most willing liar I've ever met') he orders officers to tail Niles at all times – a melding of human experience and police surveillance.

Muldoon represents a significant development in representations of the Irish-American cop. His Irish origins and good humour belie a shrewd intelligence that is both intuitive

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[64] Adrian Frazier, *Hollywood Irish: John Ford, Abbey Actors and the Irish Revival in Hollywood* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2010). Frazier has written the most developed study of Fitzgerald's career on screen, drawing important links between his training and background as an Abbey actor and his experience in Hollywood.

and informed. In contrast to earlier manifestations of the neighbourhood cop, he is both spatially and socially mobile: the city is intimately understood by him on all levels of Lefebvre's triadic spatial paradigm. At the opening of the investigation he moves confidently through the upper west side crime scene. As clues accumulate, he unhesitatingly storms the wood-panelled offices of the up-market physician Dr. Stoneman ordering his secretary to send all patients home immediately. When he has extracted a confession from Stoneman about the complex criminal scam that led to Dexter's death, he discovers that Jimmy Halloran has gone it alone to confront the killer in downtown Manhattan and immediately orders a mobilization of units to go and assist. In the figure of Lt. Muldoon, the spatial markers of ethnicity and class that defined the cinematic construction of the Irish-America cop in early cinema have melted away; the neighbourhood has become the city and he is equally at home in both.

The dramatic climax of *The Naked City*'s procedural investigation centres not only on the apprehension of Jean Dexter's murderer but on 'rescuing' Jimmy Halloran from imminent danger at the hands of her killer Garza. The young and eager Halloran is established earlier in the films as Muldoon's protégé ('he makes the same mistakes I made at his age') and the older detective takes a paternalistic interest in the younger man's professional development. Central to Muldoon's mentoring of the young cop is that his assignment to 'leg-work', asking questions 'on the ground' in the bustling, multi-ethnic streets of the downtown neighbourhoods; spaces from which Halloran's Irish forebears would once have inhabited but which have a labyrinthine and alien quality for the well intentioned but inexperienced rookie. Unlike Muldoon, Halloran lives in the suburbs and he is seen earlier in the film travelling to and from his young family alongside other post-war commuters. In these brief scenes, he and his wife are represented as young and optimistic examples of the demographic shifts identified in Dimendberg and Roediger whereby newly-wed white couples began to abandon the inner cities to which their parents and grandparents had immigrated at the turn of the

century in favour of 'vanilla suburbs' where they could access better housing and standards of living. Halloran is part of this demographic, for whom the city is an increasingly alien urban space.

Following Muldoon's orders but lacking his experience, Halloran eventually tracks Garza to his small apartment in a noisy building where he finds the former professional wrestler doing sit-ups, stripped to the waist, perspiring freely: a threatening and foreign male body. 'Nobody knows where I live' growls Garza, increasing the sense of a 'dark' space in the city - a reversal of the neighbourhood ethos of earlier times. Halloran's whiteness in this environment links categories of race and space; his 'leg-work' conjoining its *conceived* and *lived* dimensions within the strategic purview of the police. Although he is temporarily outwitted – Garza knocks him out and makes his escape through the busy streets – Halloran pursues the killer with the armed back-up of Muldoon until Garza finds himself trapped and unable to escape from the labyrinth of steel ladders and platforms on the Williamsburg bridge where he is shot.

The film's opening aerial images find a counterbalance in its final shots in which we see Muldoon on his apartment balcony, looking out over the ('centripetal') city at night, contentedly smoking his pipe - solitary but not alone. This image compliments the opening panoptic shots of the city; the two points of view – the disembodied camera and Muldoon's - converge and are humanized. Linking pre and post war American urban spaces the beat of the Irish-American cop now extends from the ethnic neighbourhood to the 'naked city', enlarging the boundaries and cultural hegemony of white manhood in the process.

The experienced, first generation Irish American cop as a link between the spaces of urban America and post-war white suburbs and policing as an act of strategic surveillance combined with streetwise toughness are also central to *Union Station*; a

second *film noir* with a strong documentary tone featuring Barry Fitzgerald. Although

Fitzgerald's character Inspector Donnelly is secondary to William Holden's Bill Calhoun,

his Irish origins again function to create an astute and worldly cop working to protect

the 'innocent' from corrupting forces of the modern city. The Rudolph Maté-directed

script again places Fitzgerald as an Irish-accented figure of authority and experience to a

younger police officer. While the casting of William Holden along with the moving of the

source novel's action from New York to Chicago/Los Angeles[65] make it emblematic of all

American cities; it gives the story a less ethnic/immigrant context than before and

generalizes the anxieties identified by Dinemdberg into what George Lipsitz has called

the "white spatial imaginary.'[66]

In contrast to the opening of *The Naked City*, *Union Station* begins in a centrifugal space,

as Joyce Willecombe (Nancy Olson) boards a city-bound train at a calm bright suburb

identified as 'Long Island.' Once aboard, she becomes suspicious of two male passengers

and reports their presence to the conductor who, in turn, phones ahead to Bill Calhoun

(William Holden) - head of police at Union Station - who meets the train. The purposeful,

no-nonsense Calhoun has the men followed but it is only after they manage to escape

that Calhoun realizes they are involved with a serious crime: the kidnapping of a blind

girl Lorna, daughter of Joyce's wealthy employer Mr. Murchison. As Calhoun's

jurisdiction is limited to the train station, he involves Inspector Donnelly (Fitzgerald)

from the city police. When the tycoon Murchison Snr. (Herbert Heyes) suggests paying

the ransom as quickly as possible, Donnelly warns:

> – These people are liars, don't co-operate with them . . . Let us handle these people,
> we've worked together before, we've spent our lives at it.

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[65] The film is adapted from *Nightmare in Manhattan* - Thomas Walsh's first novel. He would follow it with *The Night Watch* (1951) a story that deals with an Irish-American rogue cop Paddy Ahern, offering comparisons with the novels of William P McGivern discussed in the next section. It was adapted for the screen in 1954 as *Pushover*, the same year that saw releases of the McGivern adaptations *Shield for Murder* and *Rogue Cop*.

[66] George Lipsitz, "The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race:Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape" in *Landscape Journal*, (January 1, 2007) Vol. 26 No. 1, 10-23

The film thus establishes two police masculinities, separated by a generation and origins but united and sanctioned by a shared commitment to the protection of white social norms. The setting of Union Station serves as a social microcosm of post-war America and an intersection of Dimendberg's centripetal and centrifugal spaces while Calhoun and Donnelly embody the temporal masculinities associated with such modes. As the younger man associated with modernity, Calhoun is devoted to the strategic regulation of the station space: he recognizes staff, commuters and even a petty thief and deals with everyone with a consistent attitude of gruff authority and professional poise. Donnelley has a different timbre, also tough and professional but with added experience ('we've spent our lives at it') and professional reach beyond the limits of the train station and into the anonymous and dangerous spaces of the city.[67]

From its earliest scenes, the film is characterized by a pace of professional urgency as the police attempt to find and rescue the kidnapped girl. Panoptic strategies are to the fore in this effort and established by the location of the station's centre of operations, a second floor office overlooking the main lobby that is easily surveyed through a grill. Plain-clothes police also closely monitor the station lockers where the kidnappers have stashed a hold-all and give pursuit to a man – Gus - who comes to collect it. As he enters the subway, a different 'unmarked' officer takes over monitoring the suspect at every station – turning the train into a moving panopticon.[68] Sensing he is being observed but unsure by whom, Gus moves seats several times before jumping off at a station on an elevated track on the outskirts of the city. Calhoun (alerted by his plain clothes colleagues) pursues him to a stockyard where he jumps into one of the pens and dies gruesomely in a stampede of bulls (the cattle scared by the sound of gunshots). The

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[67] The station is Union Station, Los Angeles not Chicago as some commentators have maintained. Confusingly, exteriors were filmed in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York.
http://dearoldhollywood.blogspot.com/2010/11/union-station-1950-film-locations.html
[68] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201. This pursuit resembles and fulfills 'the major effect of the Panopticon' for Foucault, which is 'to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power ... it is at once too much and too little that the prisoner should be constantly observed by an inspector: too little, for what matters is that he knows himself to be observed; too much, because he has no need in fact of being so.'

entire sequence is shot on location in a fluid documentary style without dialogue and while it foregrounds the effectiveness of police strategies of diligent observation in the spaces of the city, it brings the police no nearer to saving Lorna Murchison and may in fact further endanger her life.

Again the investigation returns to Union Station (the intersection of the city and the suburbs) where Lt Calhoun stages an elaborate 'stake-out' in which every space and individual is under the visual supervision of him and his men. In a carefully paced, wordless sequence of looks and furtive observation, the police – with the assistance of Joyce Willecombe – manage to apprehend one of the kidnappers, Vince. In a particularly *noir* scene Calhoun and Donnelly interrogate the man around the back of the station but he refuses to talk. Dissatisfied with the man's unwillingness to cooperate, Donnelly eschews the normal process of arresting him and instead insinuates to the plain-clothes men that he be thrown under a train: 'make it look accidental'. Frightened, the criminal reveals the whereabouts of the girl and, for the remainder of the film the police attempt to locate her amid the dark spaces of the city.

The tension of the crime narrative is interrupted at this point in the film by the developing personal relationship between Donnelly and Calhoun, reminiscent of intergenerational male relationships in *Going My Way* and *The Naked City*. Despite a tougher characterisation in *Union City*, Fitzgerald's character reverts to immigrant Catholic mode while the younger officers scour the city in search of Lorna. Recalling his years as a policeman on the beat he tells Calhoun:

– When I was a young cop I didn't believe much in prayers, a nightstick was more dependable. But, well, a man gets older . . . down on Newspaper Row, there's a church, Our Lady of Angels, there's a mass every night for the printers . . . Why not? Lots of people believe it helps.

We next see the two detectives after mass in Donnelly's modest home, the older man making hot rums. We learn that his wife is deceased, that he fought in WWI, and of his

attachment to his native faith - 'you know I always feel a little less of a heathen after mass'. Donnelly then offers the younger Calhoun two pieces of advice: that 'sometimes a man has to jump, feet first or head first' because that's how 'wars are won', and that he should be careful about becoming too close to his job.

- I'm a cop 24 hours a day. All I care about is my railroad station.
- It's the truth about you. Mind you, I'm not saying that's bad. A good cop ought to be working full-time. But a man has to be careful he doesn't become all cop.

Advocating a heroic masculinity linked to warfare and patriotism while warning him against becoming 'all cop' Donnelly indirectly alludes to the return of GIs of Calhoun's generation to American civilian life and the problems of readjustment. Irish-American masculinity functions to offer a mentor role once again here; a lived experience that can accommodate pre and post-war modes of white American manhood beyond the literal and symbolic space of the train station while including patriotism, professionalism, love and spirituality. In contrast to the mentoring functions we have seen in earlier films, this advice is offered not to marginal masculinities (e.g. *Boys Town*) or young Irish-Americans (*The Naked City*) but to the 'all-American' William Holden (whose stardom according to Steve Cohan 'exemplified' the 'basic honesty' of the American male in 1950s Hollywood)[69], offering an assimilated and normative American manhood that links the military heroism with the post-war 'nuclear' family.

As with *The Naked City*, a motif of seeing/sight recurs as a means of linking a panoptic police force and the moral authority of white manhood in the American metropolis. Lorna Murchison's blindness has a symbolic as well as a plot function in the narrative, gendering her status as a crime victim kidnapped from the affluent white suburbs;

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[69] Steve Cohan "Masquerading as the American Male: Picnic, William Holden and the Spectacle of Masculinity in Hollywood Film" in *Camera Obscura* (January/May 1991), 41-72. ; Steve Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 166-168. Cohan reports that Holden was a hugely popular star throughout the fifties including male star of the year in 1955 and 1956.

vulnerable and occluded from her family in the *noir* spaces of the city. This opposition is given a highly expressive dimension in the film's climactic scenes in which Calhoun combines traditional methods of policing with Donnelly's advice to take risks ('sometimes a man has to jump feet first'). Having discovered that Lorna has been dragged into the dangerous subway tunnels beneath the city and, without sight may be electrocuted by a wrong step, his 'all cop' manhood gives way to a compassionate act of seeing on behalf of a vulnerable white female. Injured and physically fatigued from the chase, Calhoun enters the perilous tunnel and, after shooting the criminal ringleader Beacom, becomes Lorna's 'eyes' as he locates her and brings her 'home'. Once outside he is rewarded with the romantic admiration of Joyce Willecombe who affectionately mocks him – 'I suppose it's a tough reputation you have -- tough Willie, afraid to holler out.'

Union Station concludes in a manner that releases the *noir* tension of the rest of the film and, through the figure of Donnelly, elides its cynical subtext. Hearing Joyce's remark, Fitzgerald's Donnelly gives a little laugh, scratches his head and dances a little jig; the hardened police officer giving way to a characterization that resembles and anticipates the match-maker Michaleen Og from *The Quiet Man* (1953). As he walks away, the crime drama comes to a romantic conclusion: the city has been made safe for heteronormative whiteness through combining masculinities based in heroic strategies of policing and immigrant values of home. Yet as Mark Fertig has noted:

> Like the maze of tunnels that dominate *Union Station*'s climax, something treacherous lurks under the surface of the film: it subtly undermines the methodology of by-the-book law enforcement, instead arguing for the kind of gung-ho maverick police officers who would eventually dominate the American crime film.[70]

It is the undoing of this 'by-the-book law enforcement' that I turn to now in examining the final phase of Classical Hollywood's construction of the Irish-American cop which

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[70] Mark Fertig, "Union Station" in Back Alley Noir (blog) posted 07-30-2012; Accessed 6 June 2013. http://www.backalleynoir.com/showthread.php?2752-Union-Station-%281950%29&p=13071#post13071

reverses the typology of the Fitzgerald characterisations and positions younger detectives as instances of untethered white manhood corrupted by centrifugal spaces and of post-war America.

A Long Way from Home: William P. McGivern's Rogue Cops

This chapter has traced the developing construction, function and authority of the Irish-American cop in American cinema in relation to spaces of whiteness/homeness – from the comic stereotypes who disrupted the home spaces of the 'native' (white) Americans during the early cinema era, through the positioning of the neighbourhood cop as defender of an idealized space of American community/family during the 1930s, to his mediating function between pre and post-war masculinities related to the decentering of urban space and the 'darkening' of the city in *film noir*. This section brings this analysis to a chronological and thematic conclusion with an examination of two films released in 1954 and adapted from novels by William P. McGivern that offer contrasting portraits of this mode of Irish American masculinity to the Fitzgerald narratives in their focus on corrupt Irish-American police detectives. These narratives represent a decisive shift in representations of Irish-American manhood away from benevolent figures of 'everyday' ethnic-whiteness (seen in the priest and the films discussed above) towards an 'ambivalent, transgressive and doomed male: the fractured masculinity of the 'rogue cop'.[71] While these characters are clear beneficiaries of white privilege in their social position and status, their pronounced Irish-American backgrounds serve to foreground their disconnection from traditional values of community and home constructed as normative. This wilful but ambivalent disconnection gives a particular dimension to Frank Krutnik's observation that 'There is a sense that the protagonists are not totally in control of their actions but are subject to darker, inner impulses - at times they seem driven into a direct transgression of the law by some fatal flaw within themselves.'[72] Set once again within the 'representational space' of *noir* described by Dimendberg, their narrative focus is the flip side of the Fitzgerald narratives: younger Irish-American detectives who seek to participate in the American dream of individual success and are

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[71] Brian Baker, *Masculinity in Fiction and Film: Representing Men in Popular Genres 1945-2000* (London: Continuum, 2006), Ch 6
[72] Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street*, 47

disconnected from pre-war spaces of home. Contrasting with earlier Irish-American narratives of assimilation, both films problematise post-war mobility while affirming – through the final suppression of such attitudes – an ideology of whiteness located in 'pure' values of honesty, community and hard work.

Rogue Cop and the Anxieties of Assimilation

The early sound feature *Public Enemy* is significant in not only launching the career of James Cagney but for introducing the influential narrative trope of Irish-American fraternal conflict in Hollywood cinema; a conflict often played out within a framework linking assimilation and styles of American masculinity. In Wellman's prohibition-era narrative, the flamboyant criminality of Tom Powers (James Cagney) stands apart from the mute authoritarianism of his immigrant father and the dutiful conformism of his brother Mike with whom he quarrels repeatedly about how to behave and achieve social advancement. Mike's ambition for assimilation into whiteness is pursued by means of night school, hard work and enlisting for military service in WWI while Tom retains close ties to his ethnic community and pursues a dynamic life of criminal gain that rejects hegemonic norms and laws. The dramatic struggle between the brothers establishes a narrative template that would be reworked in many Hollywood films of which *Rogue Cop* is a late, *film noir* variation.

While Sidney Boehm's screenplay for *Rogue Cop*[73] remains true to the source novel's focus on Irish-American brothers Chris (Robert Taylor) and Eddie Kelvaney (Steve Forest), it drops several Catholic references from McGivern's text; the removal of which elides the existential self-doubts of the lead character and accentuates the action of the drama. Robert Taylor's performance as Chris Kelvaney is of a tall, handsome and ruthless plain-clothes detective who wears expensive, well-cut suits, and demonstrates

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[73] Sidney Boehm scripted all of McGivern's screen adaptations.

a cold and cruel familiarity with women. Indeed, so far is Taylor's casting and characterisation from the precedents already discussed (from *Sgt Madden* to *Union Station*), that Kelvaney's status as another Irish-American cop would be difficult to justify were it not for two scenes (discussed below) that clearly identify his ancestry and its significance to the narrative.

The plot of *Rogue Cop* has the characteristic complexity and moral murkiness of mid-century *noir*. It derives from the murder of a drug dealer in a penny arcade by small-time criminal George Fallon (Peter Brocco) witnessed by patrolman Eddie Kelvaney (Forest) who later matches the killer with a mugshot. Familiar with Fallon, Kelvaney's older detective brother Chris offers to help track him down - which they do at a poker game - and arrest him. The following day Chris is contacted by slick mobster Dan Beaumont (George Raft) from whom he has been accepting pay-offs for years. Beaumont instructs Chris to offer Eddie a bribe not to identify Fallon or else, it is intimated, he will be killed. Chris reassures Beaumont that Eddie will cooperate fully but when he later meets him in a bar (where they are joined by his girlfriend Karen Stephenson [Janet Leigh]), Eddie refuses, distancing himself from his brother's corrupt methods and associations. Unable to change his brother's mind (despite trying to blackmail Karen to co-operate), Eddie is subsequently murdered by the mobsters. Following the discovery of his ties with Beaumont and the underworld, Chris is suspended from the Police Dept. Admitting his corruption he goes in search of his brother's killer, seeking revenge and a measure of redemption outside the law.

McGivern's narratives offer us constructions of Irish-American cops axiomatically opposed to those of *Union Station* and *The Naked City*. Rather than foregrounding first generation protagonists that enrich whiteness through experience and community values we confront post-war, assimilated descendents of such figures in need of redemption and recuperation. And while such characters share a criminality and

attitude with Cagney's anti-social gangsters they differ in the fundamental respect that

they stand squarely within the boundaries of whiteness as normative and underwritten

by state sanctioned force. Spaces of home in both narratives function to construct

characters ambivalent about their pursuit of reckless individualism rooted in material

greed.

Beyond his surname, there is at first little to identify the metropolitan, tough and utterly

assimilated Chris Kelvaney with the heritage of *Riley* and the neighbourhood Irish-

American cops that long defined Hollywood representations. There is however

recognition of his immigrant ancestry when he meets with Eddie to request that he not

testify. When Eddie tells him about his new girlfriend Karen Stephenson, Chris

(jokingly) advises him

- Tell her about the Kelvaneys and the Kings of Ireland . . . sure it's a matter of pure history that we Kelvaneys owned a dozen castles.
- There must be castles every square yard over there. You know I never met a Mick whose family didn't own one or two.

The light-hearted exchange introduces a shared childhood heritage with roots in the

past that remains strong enough to engender mutual affection, if not mutual respect.

Tellingly, it also reveals that Eddie is less prone to self-deception and notions of

grandeur than his aspirational brother and, albeit obliquely, it links masculine identity

with spaces of home. These themes are developed more concretely in the remainder of

the scene. Trying to convince his brother not to testify, Chris – echoing similar ideas

from Tom Powers and Dennis Madden – advises Eddie to make his own opportunities:

- They tell me marriage can be tough on $65 a week . . . you've got to make your own breaks kid . . . you've gotta figure the percentages . . . there comes a day when you've to decide which way you want to go.
- Thanks, I'll stick with the ribbon clerks.

The invocation of Kelvaney Snr. by Eddie ('I can feel Pop turning over in his grave')

provides the film with its moral lodestone, derived from the immigrant vision of

America as a meritocratic nation where honesty and hard-work can make a man prosper and give him dignity. The figure of their deceased immigrant father is a structuring absence in the dramatic conflict between the Kelvaney brothers and functions as representative of masculine values of a now 'lost' (pre-war) era. Chris's corruption is framed within the narrative therefore, less as a direct betrayal of his brother and fellow cops (who all know he's on the take) than the American ideal of working class meritocracy subscribed to by his father and those of his generation.

'The *film noir* cycle,' writes Dimendberg 'is in an incessant struggle between the perceptual indifference and engaged cognition, forgetfulness and remembrance, that confirms the understandings of metropolitan experience advanced by Simmel and Benjamin.'[74] These comments are especially apposite in relation to *Rogue Cop* in locating Kelvaney's wilfully anti-nostalgic individualism as an expression of the metropolitan experience and his eventual redemption through the 'remembrance' of communal ties coded as located in the Irish immigrant experience. This tension is given expression in the film through spaces of home and the city.

Rogue Cop follows its protagonist Chris Kelvaney restlessly moving through a number of public, private and professional spaces - street vendors, bars, the race track; the police station and a series of apartments - in a bid first to placate, then outwit Beaumont and Ackerman and then to avenge his brother's death and find his murderer. The fluidity and assurance of this mobility is interrupted by two visits to the family home in which he grew up. The first and most developed of these is prefaced and contextualized by two shorter scenes also set in 'home' spaces: at his apartment and at Karen Stephenson's. Chris' home exemplifies a 1950s 'bachelor pad', a high-rise metropolitan space described by Steve Cohan as 'the primary setting [of a] viable alternative to married

[74] Dimendberg, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity*, 31

life,'[75] containing a few pieces of modern furniture and little else. Emphasizing the independence of both his financial gains and rejection of domestic and communal niceties, Kelvaney treats the space in an unsentimental fashion: lighting a cigarette, pouring himself a whiskey, all the while talking on the phone and wearing his hat. Karen's apartment functions as a kind of feminine counterpoint. Far more modest in scale (reflecting her social status and income) it has a 'closet kitchen' and a pull-down bed that emphasize its private and domestic character both of which are scorned by Kelvaney's demeanour and attitude. Contrasting with both these spaces is the Kelvaney family home – an expansive turn-of-the-century brownstone building in a residential neighbourhood – where Chris is framed standing in the large hallway, looking around an interior he has clearly not see in some years. Eddie confirms this impression in his ironic greeting:

- ... Chris I'm glad you finally made it
- Everything's still the same isn't it?
- The only thing missing was you and now we've got that fixed, how about a beer . . . make yourself at home.

As he waits for his brother to return, Chris looks around the parlour, still filled with furniture and ornaments from his parents' era. The proportions of the space are outsized, the weight of the past seeming to dwarf and overwhelm Chris. His eye is caught by a series of framed documents on the wall, the first a 'Certificate of Appreciation' to his father, Patrick Kelvaney, 'for his 35 years of co-operation and faithful service by Stateside Consolidated Gas Company.' Beside this, hang a number of framed newspaper stories detailing his own career: 'Patrolman Kelvaney captures bandits; Kelvaney made Detective; Kelvaney is made Detective Sergeant.' His career progression reflects the wider trajectory of the Irish-American cop over half a century from the neighbourhood to the city while also contrasting his social mobility with the comparatively static working life of his working class Irish father. When Eddie returns

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[75] Steve Cohan, *Masked Men*, 271. Extended discussion of the bachelor pad in *Playboy Magazine* during the 1950s.

we learn that Chris' long absence from his childhood home was the result of arguments with his father:

- You're scared of what Pop stood for.
- What did he stand for? Do good? Do others good? Honesty is the best policy? The preaching smelled up the house.

His memory and conscience pricked, Chris insinuates that Karen is a woman with a dubious past and that he himself has had some relations with her. Unperturbed, his younger brother hits him and tells him to get out, repeating the earlier row and becoming a surrogate for his father's values. Regretful of their clash, Chris leaves, but he never has the opportunity to make amends: Eddie is shot dead by Beaumont's henchmen soon afterwards.

While the framed reports on the parlour wall suggests that Chris' professional progress was a source of pride to his father, there is an undercurrent of ambivalence around the legitimacy and legacy of this 'success' given our knowledge of Chris' ties to the mob. Extending Dimendberg's analysis of *noir* as located in a tension between remembering and forgetting, I would further argue that this simple, wordless set of images extend beyond the specifics of the Irish-American narrative to express anxieties surrounding post-war white masculinity and the cultural forgetting of pre-war 'home' values in favour of values of individualism and consumerism consistent with his metropolitan masculinity. Although he spends much of the early part of the film as a tough and independent rogue cop, this sense of crisis can be felt in the film's second half, as Chris comes to terms with Eddie's death, his role in it and his determination to make amends with the past.

Following notice that he is under investigation for links to Beaumont, Chris is suspended from the force but vows to use his policing skills (which brought his early promotions) to bring the killers of Eddie to justice, regardless of the risks to himself. Combining a

strategic and tactical understanding of the city, he locates (with the help of fellow Det. Sidney Myers) the hideout of the hit-man in a run-down neighbourhood and after cunningly gaining access, manages to arrest him. However, as they leave the safe house there is a shootout with Beaumont and Ackerman who have lying in wait. Both mobsters are killed in the ensuing gunfight and Kelvaney is injured. In the ambulance, he asks Sidney, whom he had once mocked for his honest principles, for forgiveness:

- Forgive me ... could you do that?
- Forgive you for what?

Although Myers doesn't understand, Kelvaney is implicitly asking the forgiveness of the men he has betrayed, including his father and brother. Symbolically, this act of remembering takes on spatial expression in his inheritance of the family home and the values it housed, particularly an ideal of American manhood as conscientious, hard-working and located in communal structures.

Chris Kelvaney's crisis of identity intersects with wider anxieties in white American masculinity during the 1950s as the American male returned to new spaces and gender roles of post-war America: *From Submarines to Suburbs* in Cynthia Lee Henthorn's memorable phrase.[76] Many commentators draw attention to Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s 1958 *Look* magazine article, 'The Crises of American Masculinity' as a key text in articulating this social moment.[77] While the essay is general in its comments, its unstated assumptions relate to normative manhood understood as white, heterosexual and heroic; qualities now in abeyance due to social pressures of conformity: 'What has happened to the American male? For a long time, he seemed utterly confident in his manhood, sure of his masculine role in society, easy and definite in his sense of sexual

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[76] Cynthia Lee Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs: Selling a better America 1939-1959* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006)
[77] James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

identity'?[78] Schlesinger recommends a recovery of 'self-awareness of an individual apart from a group' - 'one of the most sinister of today's doctrines is of togetherness' - and 'a new belief in apartness'[79] to countermand the 'overpowering conspiracy of blandness which seeks to conceal all tension and conflict in American life under a blanket of locker room affability.'[80] Before the death of his brother, Chris Kelvaney's views on his father and his fellow police officers, chime exactly with just such a rejection of 'blandness' and 'togetherness.' Writing contemporaneously, David Reisman's influential *The Lonely Crowd: A study of the Changing American Character* (1950), similarly laments the loss of 'inner-directed' (independent and resourceful) individuals in American life who had succumbed to the collective consumerism of 1950s and become instead 'outer-directed' (conformist) in order not to alienate peers: 'The outer-directed person wants to be loved rather than esteemed.'[81] Clearly Kelvaney stands apart from such a crowd, a resurgent and defiant instance of frontier masculinity that resists the dominant ethos. But *Rogue Cop* undercuts such calls for bold masculine independence in its representation of an anti-hero whose 'belief in apartness' comes at the cost of loyalties with both personal and social consequences. While Chris Kelvaney - the son of an Irish immigrant - has unequivocally assimilated into hegemonic white manhood in terms of social mobility, cultural status and the sanctioned use of power, the narrative suggests that this has resulted in a masculinity of self-serving cowardice rather than heroism. His alienation from the family home stands as a metaphorical abandonment of the values of his father and decent cops like his brother. In contrast to the detectives played by Barry Fitzgerald, Chris perverts a strategic mode of policing located in the social good by embracing self-serving tactics in which 'everyday life invents itself by poaching in

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[78] Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. "The Crises of American Masculinity" in *The Politics of Hope and The Bitter Heritage: American Liberalism in the 1960s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 292
[79] Schlesinger, *Crises of American Masculinity*, 301
[80] Schlesinger, *Crises of American Masculinity*, 301
[81] David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001)

countless ways on the property of others.'[82] Unlike Detectives Muldoon or Donnelley, the concluding scene of the film – in which he asks forgiveness - positions Kelvaney not as a benevolent protector of the post-war American family but a contrite dirty cop whose dishonesty has made him a symbolic and literal stranger in his father's house. Nevertheless and paradoxically, it is access to the memory and values of his Irish-American father and brother as role models that makes possible his recuperation into post-war white manhood. Thus, while he may or may not survive the shooting – he has in any case been 'punished' - the film concludes with a reassertion of contemporary normative manhood that is conformist and redeemed.

* * *

A corrupt Irish-American detective in search of home is also a central theme of *Shield for Murder* (a William McGivern adaptation also released in 1954); the final and bleakest representation of an Irish cop under consideration in this chapter. Unlike other films discussed here, this narrative features a protagonist who seems utterly assimilated into white American manhood with no reference to his ancestry in either cultural or familial ties. Edmond O'Brien plays hot-headed homicide detective Barney Nolan, who in a characteristically *noir* opening scene follows a bookie – Perk Martin – down a shadowy street and in an extraordinary and unprovoked abuse of power shoots him in the back and steals $25,000 that Perk is carrying for big-time gambler Packy Reed (Hugh Sanders). Nolan then fakes a shout of 'Stop. Police!' and fires off two shots to make it look like the 'suspect' evaded arrest. Confident that his status as detective will avoid any association of wrongdoing (and unaware that a witness has seen what has happened), Nolan waits for the arrival of the police, and specifically his young partner, Sgt. Mark Brewster (John Agar) who admits a measure of surprise but takes Nolan's explanation of an accident at face value.

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[82] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 127

Following the approbation of his colleagues at the police station ('When you gonna stop thinking with your trigger-finger,' asks his captain in a scene reminiscent of *Sergeant Madden*), Nolan goes to a club to collect his girlfriend Patty (Marla English) but is enraged to discover that she has been put working as a cigarette girl wearing little more than a corset and fishnets: 'I asked you to give her a job, not put her in a peepshow', he yells at the manager whom he then assaults. Nolan demonstrates a pathological disgust for the seedy city spaces he polices, counterbalanced by an idealized view of Patty as a feminine figure of purity and redemption. In the following scene we get an insight into Nolan's psychology that links the motivations behind the murder of the bookie with post-war spatial and masculine anxieties outlined in earlier sections of this chapter. Sitting in his car after the incident at the bar Patty asks him:

- What is it Barney – what makes you hate like that?
- Things are going to be different . . . you'll see. Think I'm going to be like those other boneheads?

The 'boneheads' he refers to are of course his fellow 'beat' cops, for whom he shares a contempt with Chris Dennis Madden and Chris Kelvaney but without their ties to family or home. Exiting the car, he takes Patti across the street to a house used to sell a development under construction:

- Barney, did you . . .?
- Not yet, it's not mine yet . . . if you like it . . . it's a model home, all furnished, ready to go.

The scene switches to the inside of the house. He turns on the light to reveal a fully furnished, ultra-contemporary interior: a utopian space of post-war white middle class aspirations. The house presents an ironic simulacrum of Bachelard's assertion that 'A *house that has been experienced is not an inert box*,' since, with its décor and dinner table fully set for an imagined family, it feigns 'experience' as a consumer commodity; an ersatz 'model [of] home . . . ready to go.'

Bachelard's comments on the 'house of the future' in *The Poetics of Space* (written in 1958) are useful in illuminating Nolan's motivations and connect with Dimendberg's comments on the tensions in *film noir* between past and future spaces:

> Sometimes the house of the future is better built, lighter and larger than all the houses of the past, so that the image of the dream house is opposed to that of the childhood home.... Maybe it is a good thing for us to keep a few dreams of a house that we shall live in later, always later, so much later, in fact, that we shall not have time to achieve it . . .[83]

In striking contrast to his cynical demeanour earlier, Nolan excitedly gives Patty a tour of the uninhabited house:

- Oh Barney, it's just beautiful.
- Let me show you the kitchen. It's a beauty-queen kitchen, everything's automatic, garbage disposal, electric stove and there's a refrigerator and deep freeze . . .
- Barney it has everything . . . it's just a darling house.

With his boyish, unbridled excitement, Nolan embodies Bachelard's phrase that, 'the house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace' within a context of post-war consumerism and the rapid expansion of suburban development. Telling Pattie to 'relax', Nolan goes out the back of the house and symbolically buries the stolen money underneath. This will be the foundation of his future happiness. Or so he believes.

Of the *film noirs* discussed in this section Nolan's suburban dream home corresponds most closely to Dimendberg's conceptualization of centrifugal space – a diffused and decentred space of 'opaque social and economic relations' and reflects most explicitly the phenomena – or ambition – of 'white flight'. john a. powell (sic) reflects the views of many scholars of race when he argues that the post-war suburbs had a highly racial character:

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[83] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas. (Boston: Beacon, 1994), 61

> In creating the suburbs it was explicit that the suburbs were for whites only . .
> You had the end of the war. You had blacks coming to the North and to urban
> areas in record numbers. You had demands for civil rights, and you had the
> federal government essentially paying white people to leave the central city and
> to live in this new space - a white space - called the suburbs.[84]

Once again Irish-American masculinity functions in the narrative as an emblematic and

mediating presence of broader social realities. George Lipscitz notes that:

> By defining large tracts of metropolitan space as exclusively white and by
> implication rendering the remaining space nonwhite, the forces of ghettoization
> and suburbanization undermined inbetweenness and racial heterogeneity.

Nolan's desire to escape the corrupt, 'noir' city for the sanctifying 'white' suburb can be

read against this backdrop; as illustrative of both wider cultural ambitions and anxieties

about the racialisation of post-war space. While Nolan's family background is not

explicitly acknowledged in the film his intertextual ties to earlier Irish-American cops in

Hollywood cinema films make him emblematic of a deracinated generation caught

between social constructions of space. 'For many, the central city became the place to

leave,' write Hanlon et al.:

> Urban renewal schemes in the 1950s and 1960s demolished many inner city
> neighbourhoods under slum clearance and highway building programmes. A
> maelstrom of destruction ripped the heart out of many cities.[85]

Patty articulates this sense of rupture – rather than outright condemnation – in her

sympathetic response to Nolan's mercurial personality. 'I think he's lonely, he needs

love . . .' she tells Mark Brewster (Nolan's partner) and the model home is an expression

of that need turned pathological obsession. Following Sobchack we can see Nolan as

illustrative of a wider social anxiety evident in *film noir*:

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[84] "Race: The Power of an Illusion" an Interview with John A Powell, (Posted 2003); Accessed 10 August
2013. http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-03-06.htm

[85] Bernadette Hanlon, John R. Short, Thomas J. Vicino, *Cities and suburbs: new metropolitan realities in the US*
(New York, London: Routledge, 2009), 7

Both during and after the war, the phenomenological coherence of the domestic life of family and home was shattered, dispersed and concretely remembered elsewhere: in hotels and boarding house rooms and motels, in diners in bars . . . all fragmented, rented social spaces rather than coherently generated spaces of social communion, all substitutes for the integral domestic space.[86]

Nolan is running the other way, desperately trying to put domesticity back together; to be 'at home' in a dark and fragmented world. *Shield For Murder* thus offers us an alternative exploration of normative white masculinity offered by American cinema during the 1950s. Steve Cohan writes:

As the movies told it, the hegemonic masculinity of the typical American male – identified with middle-class domesticity, white collar employment and the national character – seemed to fall into place as soon as World War II was over.[87]

For Cohan this dominant ideal was overwhelming and while 'there were major deviations from hegemonic masculinity in the movies . . . they still occurred with reference to the formidable ideal of the middle-class breadwinner, that typical American male . . .'[88]

Nolan's status as police detective places him within reach of this post-war white middle-class ideal but not close enough. Like Dennis Madden and Chris Kelvaney, he is frustrated by the limitations (financial and procedural) of honest police-work in the service of others and, like them, pursues a path to self-advancement via corrupt methods.

- For 16 years I've been a cop . . . for 16 years I've been living in dirt and believe me it's bound to rub off on you. You get to hate people, everyone you meet, I'm sick of them. You and me Patty, we'll go away, make a fresh start . .

Thus while Nolan's 'dream house' (in Bachelard's term) represents for him a purifying 'coming home' that links both racial and moral dimensions of whiteness, it is also a

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[86] Sobchack, *Lounge Time*, 146
[87] Cohan, *Masked Men*, 38-39
[88] Cohan, *Masked Men*, 38

'house of the future' in which he will never live because it is built on greed, deceit and the rejection of community.

Nolan is ultimately undone by a witness to his crime; an old man who cannot speak or hear but who, in a symbolic role of judgment, has seen all. When Nolan accidentally kills the man, his possibilities for making a 'fresh start' – the utopian trope of America as space of regeneration - wither completely. Pursued now by both gangsters and his fellow cops, Nolan is caught in a doomed struggle against a self-created fate. The final scenes of the film take place at night as the police deploy strategies and technologies across the city to hunt down one of their own. 'What's the model house got to do it,' asks one cop as a convoy of cars scream across Los Angeles (which Rodney Steiner describes as *the* centrifugal city')[89], tracking Nolan to his 'dream house' on the hill in search of the stashed money. In a vividly expressive use of architecture, he runs among the half-built tract homes and retrieves the cash only to be confronted by his colleagues who, in the glare of spotlights, gun him down in front of the model home. As they gather around his body and remove his badge, the camera pulls back revealing the fatuous illusion of his desire: no other houses have been completed.

Conclusion

This chapter explored constructions of the Irish-American cop in Hollywood cinema and argued that while the figure develops from the historical Irish-American association with urban police forces and is initially framed within the comic stereotypes of 19th century nativism, within the long 1940s it functions as a mechanism for reasserting normative values within a context of demographic transformations and shifts in socio-spatial relations. Extending Edward Dimendberg's theorizing of *film noir* as the representation of a mid-century clash between centripetal and centrifugal spaces of

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[89] Rodney Steiner, *Los Angeles: The Centrifugal City* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1981)

American society to take account of the racial dimensions of this conflict, I have argued that representations of the Irish-American cop link pre- and post-war masculine identities through an association with spaces of home. I contend that this motif aids a construction of the Irish-American cop linked to the class and social ties of earlier immigrant generations that functions to both mediate between spacio/temporal constructions of normative American manhood and disavow the patriarchal function of the police as the enforcer of normative whiteness. Visible in the transitional text *Sgt Madden* and more fully developed in the two films discussed featuring Barry Fitzgerald as a senior detective, the hegemonic function of the police - deployed through strategies of surveillance and fatal force where necessary - finds justification in its role as protectors of the post-war white (suburban) family by making safe the *noir* metropolis. Through his historical association with the immigrant neighbourhood, the Fitzgerald cop is constructed as selflessly combining human wisdom and the threat of force for the collective/national good.

The McGivern adaptations dealt with in the second section of the chapter, on the other hand - instances of Eric Lott's description of *film noir*'s relentless 'moral focus on the rotten souls of white folks'[90] - foreground corruptions of this ideal; renegade cops acting for their own benefit who nevertheless can be read in light of Dimendberg's identification of *film noir*'s "nostalgia and longing for older urban forms . . .';[91] symptoms of 'the dissolution of urban form and of the unravelling of a post-war concept of masculinity.'[92] While the criminality of Chris Kelvaney and Barney Nolan appear as second generation antithesis' of Fitzgerald's life-long and selfless dedication to law enforcement, their actions are mitigated by a recognition to escape the corrupting spaces of the city and return 'home.' In *Rogue Cop*, Kelvaney has chosen to disavow an older model of masculinity embodied by his immigrant father, inherited by his cop

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[90] Eric Lott, "The Whiteness of Film Noir" in *American Literary History* (Fall 1997) Vol. 9 Issue 3, 543
[91] Dimendberg, Film Noir, 7
[92] Dimendberg, Film Noir, 257

brother and give spatial expression in the family home, in favour of an individualist,

deracinated and consumerist ideal of a bachelor pad and flash clothes. His role in his

brother's death however brings about a Damascene conversion where he seeks to once

again enforce the law with the fervour and commitment that made his father proud and

'purify' the city. While the film's conclusion remains open following his shooting, his

desire for forgiveness within the symbolically healing space of the ambulance illustrates

a re-assertion of traditional values as constituent of hegemonic white masculinity.

Shield For Murder presents the most extreme and *noir* construction of the Irish-

American cop in this study; a seemingly irredeemable study in sociopathic rage and

moral corruption at the furthest end of the spectrum from American cinema's early

comic buffoons. Yet Barney Nolan's hot temper and heartless shooting of a bookie is

mitigated by the sympathy of his girlfriend and rookie partner; and his 'innocent'

enthusiasm for a future house on a hill far from the corruptions of the dark city. Unlike

Kelvaney, Nolan shows no remorse but nor does he have any memory of an immigrant

heritage to draw on; his journey 'home' is a fated scramble pursued by cops to an ersatz

model house in an uncompleted centrifugal 'white' suburb shrouded in darkness.

Eric Lott has proposed a reading of *film noir* as the oblique expression of racial tensions

in American society that replaced earlier (pre-war) anxieties about class. He argues that:

> *Noir* responded to this problem not by presenting it outright but by taking the
> social energy associated with its social threat and subsuming it into the
> untoward aspects of white selves ... *Film noir* is in this sense a sort of whiteface
> dream-work of social anxieties with explicitly racial sources, condensed on film
> into the criminal undertakings of abjected whites.[93]

Lott's description of *noir* as 'whiteface dream-work of social anxieties' is helpful in

uniting the critical strands of this chapter. Once again we find the historical experience

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[93] Eric Lott, 'The Whiteness of Film Noir,' in *American Literary History*, (Fall 1997) Vol. 9 Issue 3, 542

of Irish-American masculinity deployed by Hollywood in a mediating role which, more pointedly than in modes discussed in earlier chapters functions to 'reproduce' white masculinity as normative by linking it to both the law and the nostalgic associations of the immigrant homestead – whether that be the remembered homeland that the Maddens sing about; the warm recollections of an earlier period in his life by a widowed paternal detective played by Barry Fitzgerald; Kelvaney's recollections of 'the old man' or Nolan's ambition for a home beyond the dirty city. Even at its most abject it remains tethered to a vision of American manhood that balances Hollywood's nineteenth century frontier ideal: solitary perhaps, but rooted in community.

Chapter 5

I Go Back:

Postwar Irish-American Masculinity and Spaces of Enchanted Whiteness

In the aftermath of WWII and the return home of large numbers of still-young GIs, the United States experienced dramatic changes in patterns of social and spatial organisation. Eric Avila encapsulates such transformations in his observation that:

> In their pursuit of new cultural experiences post-war Americans opted for something different – an emergent socio-spatial order that promised a respite from the well known inconveniences of the modern city: congestion, crime, pollution, anonymity, promiscuity and diversity . . . [a] search for order that provided an underlying impetus for the post World War II phase of mass suburbanization . . .'[1]

Similarly, Thomas Sugrue observes that while 'black' urban spaces became increasingly synonymous with deprivation and decay, suburban development during this period 'sanctioned the formation of a new 'white' identity.'[2] This chapter examines Hollywood's deployment of Irish-American masculinity in imagining this identity, arguing that it functions to position the ideologically conservative character of post-war white 'flight' from urban living as an emigrant desire to return to a re-enchanted space of home. In contrast to the 'melting pot' imaginary that framed cinematic constructions of Irish-American identities in the inter-war decades and linked them with urban modernity and mobility, this 'suburban imaginary' fantasised a pre-modern space of belonging where white manhood could 'return' to a restorative and more innocent space free from the cultural conformism of post-war corporate capitalism. Such visions, I shall argue, served to both elide and justify the increasingly conservative gender identities located in idealised visions of domestic conformity.

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[1] Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2004), XV

[2] Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1996), 5

Introduction: 'I Go Back . . . '

In a 1951 *Collier's Magazine* essay entitled 'I Go Back', the *Pulitzer* Prize-winning

novelist John Steinbeck writes of a recent 'return' to Ireland, from where his maternal

grandfather Samuel Hamilton had emigrated. It begins:

> There must be a kind of apprehension in the sleepy villages of Italy, Germany,
> England and Ireland in the summer, when the descendent of the native comes
> back to discover the seat of his culture. I suppose Ireland suffers from this more
> than any other land. Every Irishman - and that means anyone with one drop of
> Irish blood-sooner or later makes a pilgrimage to the home of his ancestor . . . I
> should have gone long ago, but I didn't.[3]

While Steinbeck admits that he often meant to 'go back' at earlier junctures, his 1950s

visit offers one narrative perspective on a wider post-war cultural trope of the 'returned

Yank' to the Ireland as a site of pre-modern enchantment.[4] Indeed his essay is framed as

such by Colliers: 'Just about everyone with a drop of Irish blood in his veins wants one

day to make a pilgrimage to the old sod, to see for himself that green paradise, land of

heroes, kings and leprechauns.'[5] For Steinbeck Ireland is a place of poetic and

supernatural sensibilities: the visit prompts him to recall elegantly written letters from

his (now dead) great aunt – 'we didn't really believe that any dull or illiterate Irish

existed' – and that his (also deceased) Irish grandmother, 'put milk out for the

leprechauns in the hills behind King City, California.' The reality, however, is

underwhelming. Derry, where Steinbeck and his wife spend the night, is insipid and

inhospitable and the travelogue concludes with a visit to the graveyard in Ballykelly

where his Hamilton ancestors are buried and their emigrant relatives forgotten by the

local priest. Soon after his return to the United States Steinbeck published *East of Eden*

(1952) – a biblical tale of the Irish immigrant Samuel Hamilton and his Californian

descendants, of whom he - the great chronicler of 'the elusive *American* Dream' - was the

most famous. Perhaps he had contemplated including in the narrative something of the

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[3] John Steinbeck, 'I Go Back to Ireland,' *Collier's Weekly*, January 31, 1953, 48-51
[4] Stephanie Rains, *The Irish-American in Popular Culture 1945-1990* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007)
[5] John Steinbeck, 'I Go Back to Ireland, 48.

Ireland these people came from, but ultimately he had no use of it. Like his grandfather who 'was too busy for nostalgia,'[6] his imagination is rooted in the epic promise of America.

In contrast to Steinbeck's disenchantment with the idea of Irish-American re-connection, the Irish-American male returning to Ireland proved a popular trope in post-war Hollywood and offered a useful cipher for the exploration of anxieties as well as the reinforcement of normative white masculinity in this period. The previous chapter concluded with Det. Barney Nolan shot dead in front of the suburban model home he hoped to buy with stolen money: the utopian fiction of (white) domestic redemption beyond his corrupt - and corrupting - reach. This chapter develops from this image by linking the Irish-American protagonists of late, melancholic *film noir* texts to a series of enchanted, 'green world' romantic comedies set in an imaginary space of 'Ireland', and argues that such texts function to construct a utopian conception of white heteronormative domesticity, set apart from the corruption of the city, as the post-war ideal of American community. While such texts might, on a literal reading, be understood as offering subversive critiques of hegemonic masculinity in their protagonists' rejection of contemporary America, I read them as expressions of racially homogenous 'bourgeois utopias;'[7] allegories of the post-war suburban whiteness - which superficially eschew norms of corporate/capitalist masculinities while espousing a mode of white heterosexual marriage located in a nostalgic construction of gender

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6 John Steinbeck, *East of Eden* (Washington: Library of America, 2001) 354. Steinbeck's novel *East of Eden* (1952) is a fictionalized account of Steinbeck's family history published in the same year that he visited north-west Ireland. Its attitude towards Ireland is consistent with the *Collier's* article: 'It was a whole clot of Hamiltons growing up on the ranch to the *east* of King City. And they were American children and young men and women. Samuel never went back to *Ireland* and gradually he forgot it entirely. He was a busy man. He had no time for nostalgia.'
7 Robert's Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise And Fall Of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987)

relations.[8] The reconciliation of such tensions, I argue, is achieved through the construction of an 'enchanted whiteness.'

I Nostalgia, Whiteness, Return

Steinbeck's '*I Go Back*' editorial offers the antithesis of immigrant nostalgia: the past is a damp, unessential memory that ends in an anonymous graveyard. In contrast, the Hollywood films discussed in this chapter advance a fantasy of home as a fecund space centered on a domestic imaginary set outside of modernity. Driving these narratives is memory of the feminine for their Irish American male protagonists: in *Asphalt Jungle* a memory of nature and childhood innocence lost in the corrupting city; in *Reckless Moment* a dimly recalled mother; in *The Luck of the Irish*, it is Stephen Fitzgerald's memory of Nora and her 'natural' domestic ambitions; in *The Quiet Man*, Sean Thornton crosses the Atlantic to reclaim the cottage of his childhood – emblem and site of maternal love and redemption. Clearly the motif of memory might be identified more generally with the post-war Irish-American experience and the wishes of immigrant descendants to reconnect with their heritage and origins (a desire most crystallized in President JFK's return 'home' to Ireland in 1963).[9] In her book-length study of this trope – *The Irish American figure in Popular Culture 1945-1990* - Stephanie Rains notes that:

> [It is] very specifically within the post Second World War period that the figure of the Irish American 'returning' (often for the first time) to Ireland begins to recur with growing frequency in films, novels and memoirs as well as tourism. As early as 1952, this was being reflected in the plot of *The Quiet Man*, and over the coming decades this theme would proliferate . . .[10]

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[8] Michael Warner, ed. *Fear of a Queer Planet* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxi: 'Heteronormativity constructs certain bodies, life styles, and identities as privileged, proper, and pure in opposition to those constructed as deviant, impossible, and "others"

[9] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009); This is the best exploration of this understanding of JFK's visit and its implications for the development of 'ethnic whiteness' in the 1960s and 1970s

[10] Rains, *Irish-American,* 3

The Quiet Man has long been the central text for reflection on this theme of return - which, in fact, stretches right back to the very beginnings of American cinema[11] - and recent scholarship has been increasingly sophisticated in reading the role of memory in the film; extending beyond readings which stressed the primacy of John Ford's ambition to return to his Irish roots in both literal and cinematic ways. Jeanne Armstrong, for instance, understands the film within the general context of immigrant experience: 'Sean Thornton's iconic statement in *The Quiet Man*, "Is that real, she can't be," is the prototype of the exile's nostalgia for an imagined homeland,' and this 'nostalgia owes its origins to the need for a therapeutic model of the past to alleviate the memory of suffering or oppression.'[12] Stephanie Rains argues that the film's 'model of the past' is more ambiguous in intent and perhaps closer to John Steinbeck's response than is commonly assumed:

> ... representation of that attachment to memories and images of the individually inexperienced 'home' was a serious assessment of the diasporic experience ... the Irish-American 'sentimentality' for Ireland of which *The Quiet Man* was so vigorously accused is shown within the film to already contain an inherent understanding of the inherent division between the diasporic image and the reality of experience.[13]

Luke Gibbons underlines the preeminent role of the mother in motivating Sean Thornton's return, arguing that it arises from nostalgia's:

> ... identification with the feminine [that is] intrinsically bound up with ... an evocation of an idealized past, but [also] a very distinctive form of longing: *nostos*, to return home, *algos*, a painful condition - the painful desire to restore the sense of belonging that is associated with childhood, and the emotional resonance of the maternal.[14]

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[11] In early Kalem films like *The Lad from Old Ireland* (1910) *His Mother* (1913) and *Come Back to Erin* (1914) or Edison's *A Sprig of Shamrock* (1915) Ireland and America exist in a tension between polarities of tradition and modernity that must be negotiated by their (mostly male) central protagonists. In these migration narratives the experience of exile is depicted as a move from a space bounded by the past, imagined as agricultural and 'land-locked', to a metropolitan, future-orientated, environment defined by opportunity.

[12] Jeanne Armstrong, 'Real Tensions and Pastoral Fantasies in Three Films about the West of Ireland', Paper Presented in May 2010 at ACIS Conference, State College, Pennsylvania. Accessed 21 July 2014. http://faculty.wwu.edu/jeannea/quietman10.29.10.pdf

[13] Stephanie Rains, "Home from Home: Diasporic Images of Ireland in Film and Tourism", in *Irish Tourism: Image, Culture and Identity*, Michael Cronin and Barbara O'Connor, Eds. (Bristol: Channel View Pubications, 2003), 196-215, 202

[14] Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 39

In the discussion that follows, I propose that this feminisation of nostalgia and its link to idealized and 'lost' spaces of home extends beyond *The Quiet Man* to a number of related Hollywood texts from the post-war period which deploys Irish-American masculinity in similar ways. More generally, these texts can be seen as extending Elizabeth Bronfen's analysis of the imaginary geography of Hollywood in which, she argues, home plays a central role. Echoing Gibbons, she contends that:

> [Hollywood] Cinematic narratives, particularly when they are concerned with concepts of home, are inscribed by a nostalgia for an untainted sense of belonging, and the impossibility of achieving that is also the catalyst for fantasies about recuperation and healing.[15]

While acknowledging that *The Quiet Man* and related films can be fruitfully read in terms of 'diasporic images' (simultaneously located in the Irish-American community while general to the twentieth century American experience), I argue that these narratives also reflect wider concerns about white manhood and its relationship to the domestic spaces of 'home front' of post-war America. On the one hand, the nostalgic subtext of such films reflects a desire for rehabilitation after the traumatic experience of war years as well as anxieties around the dominance of the 'organization man'[16]and corporate manhood - reflected in other contemporary narratives.[17] On the other, the nostalgic construction of Ireland as pre-modern idyll functions to construct an enchanted whiteness rooted in an imaginary of nature and origins in order to secure its cultural hegemony. Such a reading reflects Svetlana Boym's observation that:

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[15] 'Elizabeth Bronfen, *Home in Hollywood* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2004), 21
[16] William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956) 1. "This book is about the organization man. If the term is vague, it is because I can think of no other way to describe the people I am talking about. They are not the workers, nor are they the white-collar people in the usual, clerk sense of the word. These people only work for The Organization. The ones I am talking about belong to it as well. They are the ones of our middle class who have left home, spiritually as well as physically, to take the vows of organization life, and it is they who are the mind and soul of our great self-perpetuating institutions."
[17] I refer to such narratives as *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* (1956), *Revolutionary Road* (1961), *Bigger Than Life* (1956), etc.

A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images—of home and abroad, of past and present, of dream and everyday life. The moment we try to force it into a single image, it breaks the frame or burns the surface.[18]

Return to the *Home Front:* Spaces of White Domesticity and Post-War Cinema

In establishing a context for discussions of the spaces of *film noir* Vivian Sobchack speaks of a familiar 'national scenario' in which a strictly gendered 'home front' of everyday domesticity was central to the establishment of peacetime America:

> Returning veterans and their attempts to reinsert themselves into the workplace and family life after a long absence; working women . . . being remanded, not always willingly, to the hearth and motherhood; official rhetoric establishing the family unit and the suburban home as the domestic matrix of democracy . . . social ambivalence about the future deepening as the home front was reconfigured from a war economy that promoted the social unity of production and self-sacrifice to a peacetime economy emphasising the privatised pleasure of consumption.'[19]

Sobchack describes the period as a 'transitional era' in which a 'lived sense of insecurity, instability and social incoherence' was palpable in Hollywood's fascination with a 'highly mythologised "home front."'[20] Her primary interest lies in understanding the spaces of *film noir* as transient and un-homely within such a context; proposing a conceptual framework of the 'chronotope' (borrowed from Bakhtin) to discuss how particular narrative genres link space and time. Sobchack characterizes the chronotope of *film noir* as 'lounge time': 'a perverse and dark response on the one hand to the loss of home and a felicitous, carefree a historicity to imagine being at home . . . at this time.'[21]

The Irish-American themed films discussed in this chapter illustrate specific aspects of Sobchack's analysis of the era's social/ideological instabilities and offer a counterpoint to her chronotope of 'lounge time' in their fantasy of 'home-front' spaces of whiteness

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[18] William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man,* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956)
[19] Vivian Sobchack, "Lounge Time: Postwar Crises and the Chronotrope of Film Noir", in Nick Browne, ed., *Refiguring American Film Genres: Theory and History* (University of California Press, 1998), 129–70. 130
[20] Sobchack, 'Lounge Time', 130
[21] Sobchack, 'Lounge Time', 131

separate from the contemporary city. Before turning to the films that explicitly reference a pastoral image of Ireland as utopian home-space, I want to develop Sobchak's argument in relation to two *film noirs* that introduce the figure of the Irish-American male protagonist seeking a lost ideal of 'home'. With their ethnic/immigrant resonances, I read the *Asphalt Jungle* (1950) and *The Reckless Moment* (1949) as complimentary texts to the Ireland-set films and instances of Sobchack's contention that what links the diversity of films designated as *film noir* are 'particular places' that:

> . . . evoke the pastoral, the familial, the generational, the secure and stable world of an idyllic time-space that we will - in the historical context of *noir* - (re)call the home front . . . an unquenchable nostalgia for the sweetness of an American forever lost from view.'[22]

In the discussion that follows I underscore the implicitly racial character of this 'home front' linking its 'sweetness' to the social construction and function of post-war whiteness.

Unquenchable Nostalgia: The Irish-American in *Film Noir*

John Huston's heist film *Asphalt Jungle* centers on a gang of male misfits who gather to commit a large jewellery heist before going their separate ways. Although the brains of the operation is 'Doc' Erwin Riedenschneider (Sam Jaffe), it is the taciturn Dix Handley (Sterling Hayden) who is the 'brawn' of the operation. Like everyone else on the gang Handley has his reasons for doing the robbery: he has debts from horseracing and he needs to escape the moral contamination of the city. Adapted from W.R. Burnett's (1949) novel of the same name, the film closely follows the narrative and emotions of its source material. In both, Handley is Irish-American and hails from Kentucky where his father raised thoroughbreds. His gambling debts and involvement in crime are explained as the corrupted legacy of an idyllic childhood among horses and his desire to reclaim the lost family farm. 'Doll' Conovan (Jean Hagen) is in love with Dix but – jaded,

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[22] Sobchack, 'Lounge Time', 138

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cynical and corrupted - he has no imagination for marriage. Instead of looking to the future, his actions and ambitions remain driven by 'an unquenchable nostalgia':

> One of my ancestors imported the first Irish thoroughbred into our county . . . Why our farm was in the family for generations, one hundred sixty acres - thirty in bluegrass and the rest in crops. A fine barn and seven brood mares...And then everything happened at once. My old man died and we lost our corn crop. That black colt I was telling you about, he broke his leg and had to be shot. That was a rotten year. I'll never forget the day we left. Me and my brother swore we'd buy Hickory Wood Farm back some day...Twelve grand would have swung it, and I almost made it once. I had more than five thousand dollars in my pocket and Pampoon was runnin' in the Suburban. I figured he couldn't lose. I put it all on his nose. He lost by a nose . . . The way I figure, my luck's just gotta turn. One of these days, I'll make a real killin' and then I'm gonna head for home. First thing I do when I get there is take a bath in the creek, and get this city dirt off me.[23]

The heist is a success but Doc's meticulous plans begin to quickly unravel: by a quirk of fate one of the gang is shot and they are double-crossed by the lawyer Emmerich (Louis Calhern) leading to another murder and the intervention of the police who quickly track the surviving members of gang. In the film's final scenes Dix, bleeding heavily from a gunshot wound, makes a desperate attempt to get back to his beloved farm, hallucinating as Doll drives him 'home.' In the film's final scene, he stumbles through open fields – the antithesis of the dark city streets he's escaped - then collapses and dies, surrounded by the grazing colts he dreamed of owning once again.

Unlike the Irish-American gangsters of the early 1930s epitomized by James Cagney, Dix Handley is no career criminal on the make, hungry for material enrichment by any available means. He is taciturn and melancholic – probably a migrant from the Depression - exhausted by modernity and sustained by the memory of a 'home' space that offers respite and reinvigoration. Where Cagney and the other 'city boys' of the 30s dreamed of metropolitan mobility expressed through consumption, Handley wants to move in the opposite direction, to a space of isolation and simplicity. This lost homestead is coded in terms of Irish-American immigration - his father who worked on the land and imported Irish racehorses – and invoked as a rural landscape where he can

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[23] *Asphalt Jungle* (1950)

be washed clean from the dirt of the city. The contrast between the (moral) darkness of the 'jungle' and the brightness of the farm is illustrative of the way in which space takes on racial associations in post-war Hollywood.[24] While the fatalism of the film's *noir* outlook ultimately destroys Dix Handley's dream of 'going home', the theme finds brighter interpretations in more escapist Hollywood expressions of Irish-American male nostalgia.

'In *noir*', writes Sobchack, 'a house is almost never a home. Indeed the loss of home becomes a structuring absence . . .'. While Dix Hanley's desire for the green fields of Kentucky exemplifies this tendency, it can be felt in a less direct way in Max Ophul's *The Reckless Moment* (1949) an atypical *noir* text that also offers a revealing counterpoint to the return to Ireland narratives but which more directly invokes the theme of heteronormative domesticity. Adapted from the contemporary best-selling novel *The Blank Wall* (1947)[25], the film is unusual in a number of ways, not least in the melancholic character of Irish conman Martin Donnelly (James Mason). Its significance here lies in the wistful relationship between Donnelly and the film's self-sacrificing maternal character Lucia (Joan Bennett).[26] Developing themes present in *Asphalt Jungle*, the unrequited relationship between an Irish-American criminal male and a white female is again explored through a desire for romantic escape from contemporary circumstances.

[24] Eric Lott, "The Whiteness of Film Noir", in Ed Hill (Ed.), *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 81-101. Eric Avila argues that 'the racial implications of noir's use of light and darkness reflect a broader 'culture of light' in the West in which light and dark are associated with social meanings . . . The cinematic combination of white skin and light evokes ethical connotations that associate whiteness with moral purity and spiritual hygiene . . .' Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 2004), 260
[25] Elizabeth Sanxay Holding, *The Blank Wall* (New York: Pocket Books Inc. 1947)
[26] This was an inventive instance of casting against type by *Ophüls*. Bennett was widely identified as a *femme fatale* in contemporary *film noir* notably those by fellow German émigré Fritz Lang - *The Woman in the Window* (1944) and *Scarlet Street* (1945)

The Reckless Moment centres on the middle-class white Harper family and specifically Lucia (Bennett), whose husband Tom is absent throughout the narrative,[27] leaving her to shoulder all domestic obligations. As the film opens, Lucia is setting out from the family home to confront Ted Darby (Shepperd Strudwick), a shady ex-art dealer in his thirties who is dating her seventeen year old daughter Bea (Geraldine Brooks). When Lucia demands that he break up with Bea, he counters that he might do so for a price. When Darby visits the Harper house later that night, he dies as an accidental consequence of being hit by Bea. When she discovers the body the following morning, Lucia acts to dispose of the corpse and hide the death from her daughter and the authorities. But her mastery of the situation is short lived. First Darby's body is found, prompting an investigation. Secondly Martin Donnelly turns up on her doorstep with Bea's love-letters to Darby demanding $5,000 for them. Donnelly says he is working on behalf of a mysterious and unforgiving criminal figure named Nagle. If he doesn't get the money, he threatens to turn the letters over to the police, implicating Bea in Darby's death. The remainder of the complex plot chronicles the growing relationship between Donnelly and Lucia and the eventual arrival of Nagle (Roy Roberts) demanding the money himself.

Lucia is a variation on the lone mother figure of the 'white maternal melodrama'[28] - familiar from films such as *Stella Dallas* (1937) , *Now Voyager* (1942), *Mildred Pierce* (1945), *Written on the Wind* (1956) – a genre described by Mary Ann Doane as 'a ritualized mourning of the woman's losses in a patriarchal society.'[29] Like the women of those films she is defined by her relationship to men and her lack of independence in a

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[27] In the source novel Tom was away at war but the film updates this to his role in post-war reconstruction as an engineer. The shift is decisive because it identifies the couple with hegemonic post war gender norms of 'breadwinner' and homemaker.
[28] Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *Performing Whiteness: Postmodern Re/Constructions in the Cinema* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), 117. 'The white maternal melodrama centres on maternal suffering, class strife and the wages of infidelity ... [in which] the white child is always more important than the white woman.'
[29] Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Indiana University Press 1987), 78

world structured by white patriarchy.[30] The absent husband not only leaves Lucia and her children vulnerable to menacing masculine forces, but exposes the repression of desire within her conventional marriage, sublimated by a consuming sense of duty towards her children. Doane has described *The Reckless Moment* as 'the most aberrant and even, at times subversive of maternal melodramas, [in which] Mrs Harper, concentrating on the protection of her daughter, does not even recognize that she is involved in a love story with the blackmailer Donnelly until it is too late . . . a situation in which maternal love becomes a sign of the impossibility of female desire.'[31]

Martin Donnelly shares with Dix Handley a criminal characterization that seems more determined by circumstance than ambition. Taking advantage of an absent husband – symbolically disembodied as a mere telephone presence – Donnelly is at first represented as an opportunist and cruel interloper, a counterfeit male presence bent on exploiting Lucia's vulnerability. But despite initially predatory motivations, her commitment to defending her children and home moves him; evoking some undefined sense of loss in his own life, alluded to in two references to his mother. His initial taunt that her life is 'a prison' gives way to a melancholic sense of yearning to be part of it, revealed in a scene in a telephone booth that parallels Lucia's relationship with her husband. Instead of the audience seeing her and imagining Tom, the roles are reversed producing a contrast in masculinities between her efficient, capable and absent husband and the romantic, cuckolding Irishman. Relenting on his earlier impatience to get the $5,000, Donnelly tells the unseen (and unheard – "are you there") Lucia that he's told Nagle he doesn't want his part of the blackmail – "I wish things could have been different in many ways . . . only one good thing came of it . . . I met you . . ."; offering an inarticulate and unexpected declaration of love.

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[30] Andrew Britton, "The Family in The Reckless Moment", in *Britton on film: the complete film criticism of Andrew Britton*.(Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 230
[31] Mary Ann Doane, *Desire to Desire*, 94

Like Dix Hanley, Donnelly dies without attaining his fantasy idyll of home; a car accident functioning as the real and symbolic road-block to possible 'return'. He tells Lucia (who has followed him) to leave the scene of the accident and go back to her family, and we next see her alone, weeping violently in her bedroom, before a final scene where she talks to her husband once again on the telephone reassuring him everything is alright. Doane observes: 'The stability of the united family is restored at the cost of permanent denial.'[32] As the film concludes, the white post-war home – the absent husband, his wife trapped by conformity and sterile duty – is re-affirmed in only the most superficial and unconvincing of ways.

Although very different in plot and tone, *Asphalt Jungle* and *The Reckless Moment* conform to Sobchack's observation that *film noir* expresses an instability and gendered anxiety around post-war white domesticity. The melancholic, displaced Irish-American male characters in these films evoke a nostalgic sense of home that remains just beyond their grasp; the pursuit of which ends in romantic frustration and death. Andrew Britton is therefore only partially correct when he observes that 'Donnelly is characterized by a sort of nostalgia for, and an idealization of, the bourgeoisie from which he feels he has fallen . . . and in the name of which he is even prepared to let an innocent man be executed for Darby's murder."[33] James Mason's yearning criminal - like Dix Handley - desires domestic stability for more than status (there is no indication he has fallen from bourgeoisie); a home-space which like Sean Thornton in *The Quiet Man*, is associated with (Irish) maternal memories and redemption from the corruption of modernity. Donnelly retains obvious associations with the 'Old World' (emphasized through a heavy brogue and awkward demeanor) and his anachronistic presence in the midst of contemporary American characters and settings nostalgically evokes something missing in the current moment of 'prosperity'. In an uncommon strategy for *film noir*, Donnelly's

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[32] Mary Ann Doane *Desire to Desire*, 231
[33] Britton, *Britton on film,* 230

attraction to Lucia is not located in some imagined erotic future but in a half remembered emotional past. Her attraction to him stems from his separateness from the conformity and compromises required of post-war gender constructions.[34]

The return to Ireland narratives provide time-space structures that escape the fatalism and cultural anxieties of these *film noir* texts through the construction of spaces of 'enchanted whiteness'. Within three narratives that are broadly naturalistic and located within the contemporary, Irish-American protagonists withdraw to a chronotope of pre-modern values and settings and focialised through heteronormative (white) marriage free of labour and consumption. Such settings, I contend, can be read as reflecting and reinforcing the wider linking of race and space expressed in the post-war white suburb. In particular, the privileging of the emotional over the economic finds a parallel in the moral/racial ideology of separateness underpinning the 'suburban sanctuary' where, in Karen Franck's description:

> The suburban home and neighbourhood form not only a retreat from the world of work, public activities and all people unlike one' s self and one' s neighbours, but also a morally superior domain. The sacredness of this sanctuary — its separation from the profane world of earning money, contact with possibly unknown persons, possibly dissolute habits, and any stress or conflict — must be protected actually and symbolically. [35]

In the films discussed in the next section we encounter a range of domestic settings – typically the traditional white cottage – to which the central male character similarly withdraws from the contemporary, urban-set world of late capitalism to a utopian society of community, pastoral tradition and romance.

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[34] A melodramatic conceit the film shares with films such as *Brief Encounter* (1946) and *All That Heaven Allows* (1955) among others.
[35] Karen A. Franck, "The Suburban Sanctuary Mapping a Moral Landscape", in Gray, Madi (ed.), *Evolving Environmental Ideals - Changing Way of Life, Values and Design Practices* (IAPS 14 Conference Proceedings), 30 July-3 August 1996, 171-176 http://iaps.architexturez.net/system/files/pdf/1202bm1021.content.pdf

II: Homeward Bound: White Flight and the Suburban Imaginary

Between 1950 and 1960, 20 million Americans moved to suburban housing developments on the periphery of America's cities becoming as Kenneth T. Jackson put it, 'the quintessential achievement of the United States . . . the fullest, most unadulterated embodiment of contemporary culture.'[36]

As scholarship on the American suburbs has shown,[37] the reasons for this explosive expansion in the post-war era are varied and intersecting but can be primarily located within dramatic changes in demographics, and the reconceptualisation of national space identified by Edward Dimendberg (discussed in the previous chapter) from 'centripetal' to 'centrifugal', a shift significantly aided by Federal polices and initiatives. In the aftermath of war, thousands of GIs returned home and the United States experienced an unprecedented escalation in marriage and subsequent baby boom.[38] 'In individual terms,' writes Jackson, 'this rise in family formation coupled with the decline in housing starts meant that there were virtually no homes for sale or apartments for rent at war's end.'[39] In response, thirteen million new homes were built in the 1950s to shelter these new families – eleven million outside of cities.[40] The earliest and most cited example of this suburban boom was Levittown, Long Island:

> Mr. Levitt built the largest housing development ever put up by a single builder.
> Before the first 600 houses were finished, customers were standing in line.
> Within a few years, Levittown included 17,000 families, each living in a 750-
> square-foot house: living room, two bedrooms, and an unfinished attic. These

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[36] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1985) 4. "Suburbia represents the fullest, most unadulterated embodiment of contemporary culture. It is a manifestation of such fundamental characteristics of American society as conspicuous consumption, a reliance on the private automobile, upward mobility, the separation of the family into nuclear units, the widening division between work and leisure and a tendency towards racial and economic exclusiveness."

[37] Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise And Fall Of Suburbia*; Phelan, *The Suburbs*, Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 1962, Avila

[38] Jackson, *Crabtree Frontier*, 232

[39] Jackson, *Crabtree Frontier,* 232

[40] Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (University of Georgia Press, 2009), xii

houses marked the growing prosperity of middle-class Americans in the postwar years.[41]

Lizabeth Cohen notes that migration patterns during wartime were key contributors to the subsequent racial character of the suburbs:

> Race was intrinsic to the process of postwar suburbanization as the steady influx of African-Americans to Northern and Western cities during the war, and the second great migration out of the South that followed it, helped motivate urban whites to leave.[42]

From the outset, restrictive covenants (forbidding 'any person other than members of the Caucasian *race*')[43] were a dominant characteristic of Levittown (and elsewhere), collating spaces of whiteness and normative American identity. Jackson notes that over a decade later, 'In 1960 not a single one of Long Island Levittown's 82,000 residents was black.'[44] 'The enchantment of suburbia to middle-class whites,' writes Paul Knox in comments that reflect Sobchack's comments on *film noir*, 'was its sense of a unique place apart from the complexities of modernity.'[45] As Knox and other commentators note, the key contributor to this 'enchantment' and the mono-racial profile of American suburbia was the 1926 landmark US Supreme Court zoning law 'Village Euclid, Ohio Vs. Amber Reality Co.' which provided the legal basis for the development of zoning as an extension of police power municipalities with the power to zone against anything – including race – that constituted 'a nuisance.'[46] Noting additional factors such as employment discrimination in urban centres, David M. P. Freund argues that, 'Many whites concluded that integration would threaten their status, their pocketbooks, and ultimately their way of life' resulting in:

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[41] Peter Filene, "Suburbia in the 1950s: Family Life in an Age of Anxiety", Accessed 12/10/2014 http://www.dlt.ncssm.edu/lmtm/docs/suburbia/script.doc.
[42] Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008), 212
[43] Melissa F Weiner, "Housing Covenants", in *The Jim Crow Encyclopedia: Greenwood Milestones in African American History*, ed. Nikki L. M. Brown, Barry M. Stentiford (Greenwood Press, 2008), 383-386
[44] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 241
[45] Paul Knox, "Vulgaria: The Re-Enchantment of Suburbia," *Opolis: An International Journal of Suburban and Metropolitan Studies* 1, No. 2 (2005): 4. Accessed 19 October 2012. http://repositories.cdlib.org/cssd/opolis/vol1/iss2/art3
[46] Matthew J. Lindstrom (Ed), *Encyclopedia of the U.S. Government and the Environment: History, Policy and Politics*, Volume 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 787-797

... a spatial separation of jobs and wealth, with suburban growth and affluence creating a striking and very visible difference to the physical deterioration, overcrowding and relative poverty of black, central city neighbourhoods.[47]

Thus, writes Michael Vastola, a 'suburban imaginary' was produced, whereby:

The true suburbs are white and prosperous; the true urban core is ethnic and poor. Suburban culture is a utopian universality; urban culture is the dystopian Other.[48]

In her historical survey of the development of the American suburb, Dolores Hayden provides context for this imaginary in arguing that (white) suburbia has always been imagined as 'the site of promises, dreams, and fantasies . . . a landscape of the imagination.'[49] Hayden's analysis is especially useful to my discussion in locating such a landscape within cultural understandings of the home and gender originating in white American Protestantism. She writes:

From the beginning, the dream conflated piety and gender-stereotyped "family values." The ideology of female domesticity, developed in the United States during the same era when suburban borderlands were first attracting settlers, elevated the religious significance of woman's work, defined as bearing and rearing children in the strong moral atmosphere of a Protestant home set in a natural landscape. The single-family house was invested with churchlike symbols as a sacred space where women's work would win a reward in heaven.[50]

Similarly, Paul Knox has argued that 'American suburbs are best understood in terms of the ideals of progressive Arcadian utopias that are rooted in the Jeffersonian Arcadian Myth or the Frontier Myth.'[51] By the late 1950s however, Knox suggests that:

. . . the moral landscape of the suburbs now became one of democracy and material well-being: the classic American Dream. A Fordist political economy brought mass production and mass consumption, with Levittown the precursor of hundreds of thousands of acres of standardized subdivisions of "sitcom suburbs" (Hayden 2003). Suburban homes became idealized settings for family life, and suburbia became the locus of a "Paradise Spell" (Brooks 2004) of

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[47] David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2010), 6
[48] Michael Vastola, *Postwar American culture and the ideological inscription of the suburban norm*, (MA Thesis, University of Florida, 2006), 48
[49] Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003), 5
[50] Hayden, *Building Suburbia*, 6
[51] Paul Knox, "Vulgaria: The Re-Enchantment of Suburbia", *Opolis: An International Journal of Suburban and Metropolitan Studies,* Volume 1, Issue 2 (2005), 33-46

relentless aspiration and restless consumption.[52]

Paradoxically, argues Knox, at the moment of greatest popularity and cultural triumph, suburbia's integration into modes of mass production and consumerism resulted in ambivalences around its utopian promise; bringing about what he describes as a 'disenchantment':

> Although Fordism had schooled Americans to think of consumption in terms of quantity and value rather than excellence or distinction, the realities of "post-Utopian suburbia" (Rybczynski 1995) led to a conventional wisdom of suburbia as some kind of placeless "subtopia."[53]

This disenchantment can be identified in the writings of several contemporary commentators. Among the most caustic was Lewis Mumford's 1961 critique in *The City in History*:

> The ultimate outcome of the suburb's alienation from the city became visible only in the twentieth century . . . In the mass movement into suburban areas a new kind of community was produced, which caricatured both the historic city and the archetypal suburban refuge: a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless pre-fabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mold, manufactured in the central metropolis. Thus the ultimate effect of the suburban escape in our time is, ironically, a low-grade uniform environment from which escape is impossible.[54]

David Reisman's classic text, *The Lonely Crowd* (1954) takes a similarly disenchanted view. While he likens the suburb on one hand to the mythical space of the western frontier he also sees it as a space of isolation and loss of community:

> I think we can look at the people of this [middle-American] suburb rather differently.... We can see them, for one thing, as explorers. Whereas the explorers of the last century moved to the frontiers of production and opened fisheries, mines, and mills, the explorers of this century seem... to be moving to the frontiers of consumption.... The move to the suburb, as it occurs in contemporary America, is emotionally, if not geographically, something almost unprecedented historically; and those who move to any new frontier are likely to pay a price, in loneliness and discomfort[55]

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52 Knox, Vulgaria
53 Knox, Vulgaria
54 Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1961), 486, 510-511
55 David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 211-212

Spaces of Enchanted Whiteness: Hollywood's Post-War Ireland

In her disucssion of the motif of home in classical Hollywood cinema, Elizabth Bronfen

has written that:

> The concept of home refers to an impossible place, a utopia – but also to an
> extimate place, a notion of belonging as a possibility that one carries around
> with oneself in fantasy to mitigate the lack of satisfaction in one's real living
> conditions . . . a symbolic fiction that makes one's actual place of habitation
> bearable.[56]

Luck of the Irish, Top of the Mornin' and *The Quiet Man* present a thematically linked

aggolomeration of Bronfen's conceptualisation of home as 'symbolic fiction' which I read

as fantasy spaces of home for post-war whiteness separated from modernity (the city)

and Weberian disenchantment[57]. As such, these films constitute a revisiting and reversal

of the earliest moving images of Ireland in American cinema – *The Lad from Old Ireland*

(Kalem:1910), *His Mother* (Kalem:1913) and *Come Back to Erin* (Kalem:1914) or *A Sprig*

of Shamrock (Edison: 1915) - in which (predominantly male) protagonists journeyed in

the opposite direction across the Atlantic in pursuit of work, social mobility and the

utopian promise of the New World.[58]

The opening scenes of John Ford's *The Quiet Man* offer the most explicit instance of this

revision of earlier cinematic narratives and the function of Irish-American manhood

within them. The return of Sean Thornton (John Wayne) to his childhood home of

Innisfree closely resembles a similar return towards the conclusion of *The Lad from Old*

Ireland in its passage from the modern – symbolized by the train– to the pastoral –

symbolized by the pony and trap. In both, home is given the material form of a

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[56] Elizabeth Bronfen, *Home in Hollywood: The Imaginary Geography of Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 73

[57] Anthony J. Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). In his later published 1917 lecture 'Science as Vocation,' Max Weber, famously wrote of 'the disenchantment of the world' to describe the diminution of magical and animistic beliefs rooted in nature and their replacement, as a consequence of modernity, by a process of 'rationalization.'

[58] Denis Condon, *Early Irish Cinema, 1895–1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press. 2008)

whitewashed thatched cottage, but while in the earlier film the titular 'lad' – now a successful politician in New York - returns with money to save his sweetheart's homestead from repossession and marry her[59], Ford's film depicts a 'lad' willfully returning to buy back a fetishised space of peace and plenitude where he wants to live far from the 'hell-fire' of Pittsburgh and modernity. As Luke Gibbons suggests, he is drawn to this place not by his own memories (as with the first film), but by those of his mother – which we hear in voice over. While this situates the return-romance narrative within a nostalgic framework defined by Gibbons and Boym, the 'longing for home' is not generated directly from within the subjectivity of the male protagonist. This subtle but important discrepancy allows me to link such texts as expressions of enchanted whiteness with Robert Fishman's famous description of the American suburbs as 'bourgeois utopias': 'a refuge not only from threatening elements in the city but also from discordant elements in bourgeois society itself.' [60] Indeed, all three films correspond to the 'self segregation' – which is both class and race based - endemic to Fishman's analysis of the suburb:

> From its origins, the suburban world of leisure, family life, and union with nature was based on the principle of exclusion. Work was excluded from the family residence; middle-class villas were segregated from working-class housing; the greenery of suburbia stood in contrast to a gray, polluted urban environment . . . This self-segregation soon enveloped all aspects of bourgeois culture.[61]

Hollywood's first representation of Ireland as such a post-war space of exclusion comes in *The Luck of the Irish* (1948); a hybrid text combining naturalistic and fantasy elements in a narrative centering on the romantic choices of an 'eligible' Irish American male.

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[59] The narrative conclusion of this early film is uncertain as the final scene of the film is missing: the lost scene is of the reading of the Banns at Sunday mass, thus announcing the couple's forthcoming wedding. Kevin Rockett, *Irish Film & TV Research Online*, 'The Lad from Old Ireland'. Accessed 12 October 2013. http://www.tcd.ie/irishfilm/showfilm.php?fid=57792
[60] Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, 22
[61] Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, 4

The Luck of the Irish - despite its whimsy and nineteenth century stereotype (the New York Times described it as 'a modernized version of a Chauncey Olcott-type of Irish comedy')[62] – nevertheless marks a significant departure from pre-war representations of the Irish in Hollywood cinema in its abandonment of assimilation themes (its protagonist is unequivocally white) and in its construction of Ireland as an idealised site of masculine fulfilment that is contrasted with contemporary America. Adapted from the contemporary best-seller *There Was a Little Man* (1948)[63] by noted Irish-American writer Philip Dunne, it revisits the themes and structure of Joy and Constance Jones' previous novel (and adaptation) *Peabody's Mermaid* (1947) in making use of a folkloric figure to explore anxieties surrounding white American masculinity in the aftermath of WWII. The 1948 adaptation *Mr Peabody and the Mermaid*, centred on the eponymous Arthur Peabody (William Powell), a businessman about to turn fifty who is forced by his wife to see a psychiatrist on account of 'abnormal' behavior. In flashback, he tells the therapist of his recent vacation in the Caribbean with his wife where, while fishing one day, he caught a mermaid, Lenore (Ann Blyth). He subsequently transported the creature to the pond of his rented villa and fell in love with her. Unfortunately no one but Peabody could see the mermaid and anyone he told thought he was experiencing some kind of hallucination. Matters became predictably complicated until, in the end, Peabody returned Lenore to the sea and returned home to the United States to rejoin his wife.

This plot is worth recounting because it allows us to understand *There was a Little Man* less as an Irish-American oddity than a development of an already popular comic exploration of male identity crises set within the cultural context of 1950s white, middle-class life. In both narratives 'typical' white men find heternormative relations

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[62] Bosley Crowther, "THE SCREEN IN REVIEW; Tyrone Power, Anne Baxter and Cecil Kellaway Test 'Luck of the Irish,' at the Roxy". *New York Times*, September 16, 1948; Accessed 12 September 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=940CE0D6123FE23ABC4E52DFBF668383659EDE
[63] Guy and Constance Jones, *There Was a Little Man* (New York: Random House, 1948)

disturbed by an encounter with a folkloric figure (mermaid, leprechaun) who beckons them to a romantic life outside of the conformist corporate masculinity of the era. *There was a Little Man* nevertheless pushes beyond the temporary 'abnormality' of *Mr Peabody* in its progression from 'holiday romance' to a full rejection of post war social norms. The construction of Ireland as an alternative home space is a crucial element of this development, to which the central white male character can escape to a more fulfilling construction of masculinity. Such a rejection however, might also be read as an allegorical parallel with the contemporary flight to suburbia as a utopian space of 'exclusion.'

Luck of the Irish opens with the image of a castle (recognisable as the tourist destination of Blarney, Co Cork - also the setting of *Top O' the Mornin*) - revealed to be part of a poster advertising 'Great Southern Railways'.[64] As with the films discussed above, the modernity and tradition are again linked in the Irish setting through the Irish-American Stephen 'Fitz' Fitzgerald (Tyrone Power), a journalist travelling in Ireland for an unspecified purpose but keen to leave as soon as possible. We first encounter him careering through the Irish countryside in an antiquated car (exaggerating the backwardness of the setting) anxious to get to 'Shannon Airport' in order to make a flight to New York for an important meeting with D.C. Augur (Lee J. Cobb).[65] The scene counterpoints his sense of speed with the bucolic languor of his surroundings. To emphasize the remoteness as well as the psychological nature of the setting - a state of place and mind - the road he is travelling is not on any map – "the Irish way," his travelling companion Bill (James Todd) dryly notes. As they cross an old wooden bridge, it gives way and the car sinks. Fitz sets off to in search of assistance and encounters an old man – Horace (Cecil Kellaway) - mending a shoe by a waterfall, who is at first

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[64] Great Southern Railways Company existed from 1925 until 1945. The Transport Act of 1944 dissolved the Company and transferred its assets to the national, integrated transport organisation 'Coras Iompair Éireann' – CIE.

[65] Scheduled transatlantic flights started running from Shannon Airport from 1945 (when the runways were extended) and were a crucial element of post-war tourism.

surprised that the traveller has not come looking for him. He then directs him to the Kittiwake Inn, where Fitzgerald is informed by the innkeeper Taedy (J.M. Kerrigan) that there is no waterfall in the locality and no-one has any idea who the old man he encountered might be, suggesting it was a leprechaun. As there are no other means of transport, he will have to spend the night.

In these early scenes, key elements of Hollywood's post-war Irish chronotope are established: a recognisable pastoral and segregated space that is utopian in its social relations, mono-racial (white) and whimsical in its attitude to the rational. It is also a gendered construction in which Ireland is equated with the feminine, sylvan and home. Finally, there is the recurring 'trickster' type (played by Barry Fitzgerald in two of the films) – a contradictory figure of disruption and mediation who challenges the white American male protagonist's emotional/intellectual independence and forces a reevaluation of the normative values to which he subscribes. This humorous conflict forms a central element of all three romance-comedies, directing the American towards a revised hetero-normative domesticity that he initially scorns.

Atypical of the post-war Irish-American tourist, Fitz is gruff and bad-tempered, impatient with the arcane, 'illogical' ways of the Irish. Forced to spend the night at Kittiwake Inn he tells his travelling companion Bill:

> - "I'll be glad to get back to New York where things make sense."
> - "I like the Irish."
> - "You can have them, all of them, including me."

The Innkeeper's daughter Nora (Ann Blyth) begs his indulgence (with some irony): "You mustn't be too hard on us . . . we're not used to having such grand guests all the way from America." It's the first of several encounters between Stephen and the Irish that humorously undermine his authority and confidence. His brief enforced detainment in the town of 'Bally na Bun' (a rough translation would be 'Town at the End' [of the

world?]) precipitates a challenge to a world-view rooted in corporate careerism and progress that while framed within a romance-comedy narrative articulates deeper anxieties within post-war American masculinity.

Preparing for bed at the Kittiwake Inn, Fitz spots Horace (the leprechaun he encountered earlier) outside his window and proceeds to chase him. Deranged by whiskey and tall tales at dinner he pins the diminutive man to the ground:

- Where's the gold, the gold? Where is it? I mean business. Dig. Come on dig! Hurry Up!

A frightened Horace finally procures a spade and digs up a pot of gold coins from beneath a thorn bush. While Fitz is clearly surprised by the gold, he refuses to take it - 'You didn't think I'd steal your savings' - and he gives them back. Equally surprised at this uncommon gesture by a mortal, Horace gives him a coin and promises his 'undying gratitude'.

Fitz's initial incredulity that the coins are 'real' is the first of a recurring 'leap of faith' theme in the return to Ireland film narratives that link masculine agency and marriage within an enchanted whiteness. It anticipates Joe Mulqueen's (Bing Crosby) initial disbelief of folklore and superstitions in *Top o' the Morning* and Sean Thornton's (John Wayne) reaction to his first sight of Mary Kate Danaher in a sheep meadow: 'Is that real?' A conversion from masculine / modern rationality is central to the resolution of all three narratives where conflicts between contemporary and traditional paradigms of knowledge are contrasted and ultimately reconciled within a generic framework of romantic comedy.

In discussing the settings of Shakespearean romantic comedy, Northrop Frye describes the space of the action as the 'Green World' - sites of passions beyond the everyday 'where lovers can indulge their appetites, escape from the restrictions of the social order

and seek a new identity in union.'[66] Similarly, Celestino Delayto speaks of a 'magical space' that allows for the breakdown of inhibition and the expression of desire as a key convention of the Hollywood rom-com film genre.[67] While the films under consideration here similarly position 'Ireland' as just such a 'green world' / 'magical place' outside of contemporary rationality and behavior, this space occupies a more tangible status than merely a genre requirement. Across all three, the central couple do not return to the 'real world' (posited as the contemporary, metropolitan spaces of the United States) – thereby reversing earlier emigration film narratives - choosing instead to occupy a rustic setting of domestic bliss surrounded by a close-knit white community. Such conclusions offer, I would argue, a clear correlation to the withdrawal to suburban spaces by post-war white couples in a bid 'to escape'; as *Look* magazine put it: '- to escape minority groups, escape taxes, escape the mental and moral restraints of the city.'[68] In these films, this 'flight' to domesticity is constructed in terms of male choice – the abandonment of a repressive modernity in favour of an enchanted whiteness free from labour and a nostalgic restoration of 'traditional' romance structures.

The Luck of the Irish establishes tensions between contemporary and traditional gender relations early on in a brief, seemingly insignificant, conversation between Fitz and Nora before he leaves for Shannon Airport and New York. She enquires if he's married; he replies that he isn't:

- I've always been fond of my freedom.
- Oh don't say that – it' a natural thing and a good thing altogether.

As he leaves, Nora offers a contradictory response - 'You mustn't be looking backwards Stephen, but forwards to what you want from life' – simultaneously endorsing New World individualism and the freedom to embrace tradition. Nevertheless, she weeps

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[66] Leger Grindon, *The Hollywood Romantic Comedy: Conventions, History and Controversies* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 19

[67] Celestino Deleyto, *The Secret Life of Romantic Comedy*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009)

[68] John Arche, *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House, 1690-2000* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 255

when he's gone, suggesting not only the purity of her emotions but also her fear that their values are far apart.

A rapid change in setting and tempo signals Fitz' return to the United States where he takes up employment at the aptly titled 'New Era Publications'. The mood and sense of opportunity is clearly a reflection of post-war buoyancy, and Fitz a thinly disguised representative of one of the millions of returned US servicemen. He has been lured back to New York after several years of 'freelance journalism' in Europe by the promise of a well paying job by media mogul D.C. Augur. Augur intends to run for the US Senate and wants Fitzgerald to write his campaign speeches. While the younger man clearly harbors more liberal views than his new boss, Fitz is prepared to sacrifice principle for financial security. We are also introduced to Francis Augur (Jayne Meadows), the confident and ambitious daughter of DC, romantic interest and agent for Fitz' future success who not only arranged for his new job but has taken it on herself to find and decorate a new apartment for him. Decisive, independent and utterly modern, she is the very antithesis of the retiring and 'homely' Nora. The film invites comparison between these potential/future spouses in relation to spaces of home. When Francis brings 'Fitz' to the high-rise apartment she has rented and decorated for him, he seems uncomfortable and derides a large painting she has chosen as a 'modernist nightmare' - a comment that anticipates his feelings about his new life and surroundings. Indeed, Frances' assertiveness regarding Fitz' employment and living space references anxieties within wider 1950s culture relating to the status and social role of post-war white American manhood where, as Kenneth Paradis puts it, the 'spectre of corporate emasculation was extended to the home environment of the male office worker: the developing suburbs and the kinds of family they housed.'[69] Writing in 1961, Winston White's *Beyond Conformity* similarly asserted that: "The *American* male, once hardy,

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[69] Kenneth Paradis, *Sex, Paranoia, and Modern Masculinity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 198

vigorous and unflattering ... has *become a yes-man to both wife and family.*'[70] While Fitz

earlier described the United States as a place that 'makes sense', there is a progressive

shifting in this view from the moment he returns. In this regard he resembles Michael

Moreno's description of the confusion experienced by returning GIs in post-war

suburbia:

> Torn between the new world order of the consumption, leisure and family
> centric lifestyles of the suburbs and the desire for masculinity fostered by
> frontier idealism and war heroism, the white male suburbanite experienced a
> growing sense of what I term 'white plight' [where] the cold
> warrior/organization man became a veritable foot soldier in the service of the
> industrial economy [and] abandon claim to any form of independence that ran
> contrary to the American ideal of conformity and consumerism.[71]

My argument here is that even as *Luck of the Irish* and the other return-to-Ireland films

demonstrate an awareness of such masculine disenchantment, they seek to evoke ideal

spaces of home beyond 'conformity and consumerism' and rooted in an idealized past.

In opposing such spaces to the American metropolis, they imagine a utopian allegory of

suburbia in which white masculinity is fulfilled through a nexus of domestic ties and

relations.

No sooner has Fitz moved into his 'bachelor pad' (a masculine private space of post-war

consumerism that is paradoxically associated with the independent Frances) than

Horace arrives as a butler allegedly sent by an agency. The leprechaun from 'Baile an

Bun' is even more out of his depth in a contemporary New York apartment than Fitz,

who tries to fire him for incompetence but is dissuaded by the little man's emotional

plea to be retained. It is at this point that we become aware of Horace's self-appointed

mission: to act as matchmaker between Fitz and Nora.

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[70] Winston White, *Beyond Conformity* (Glencoe Illinois: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), 19
[71] Michael P. Moreno, "Consuming the Frontier Illusion: The Construction of Suburban Masculinity in Richard Yates's Revolutionary Road" in *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 3, Fall 2003. Accessed on 20 July 2013. http://www.uiowa.edu/ijcs/suburbia-3, np

Nora, it transpires, is in New York for a wedding and after a chance meeting orchestrated by Horace, she and Fitz have lunch in an Irish bar. Although clearly pleased to see her, Fitz is untroubled by Nora's reappearance in 'his' world and, maintaining his ambitions for social mobility he subsequently proposes to Francis Augur. Returning to his apartment he tells Horace that he is to be married. 'There must be something about the tall lady that made you select her as a partner for life,' Horace mischievously enquires:

- Well, she's beautiful for one thing . . . with a man's courage and a man's brains.
- Is there anything wrong with a woman's courage and a woman's brains?

When he subsequently attends a (raucous) Irish wedding that Nora has invited him to, he also tells her he is to be married. Disappointed, she wishes him well but Horace is less pleased. 'I offered you gold,' he tells him, 'and you prefer a pebble. I don't mind telling you I'm a little bit homesick . . . it's sad indeed that I can't complete my mission and must leave you a failure.' To Fitz's surprise, the little man he has only just recognized as the Irish leprechaun from under the waterfall disappears.

Central to the development of the narrative from this point is Fitz's sense of himself as a free man; a core value of American masculine identity. Earlier Horace described him as 'A proud free man . . . you wear no man's collar'. When Augur unexpectedly announces that Fitz will replace him at the head of New Era Publications should he win the election, Fitz sees only images of Horace in the pop of the photographer's flashbulbs and experiences some kind of epiphany. 'I can't accept,' is all he can respond. When asked what his plans are instead, he replies, 'I haven't any, except to sit under a waterfall with an old friend of mine.' Fitz thus finally rejects the Augars; representatives of a metropolitan corporate capitalism that offers 'progress' but demands submission.

The final scenes of the film find Fitz back in Ireland but now a radically changed man from the film's opening. Through the intercession of Horace, he has apparently reversed

his ambitions and outlook. Having rejected the 'man in the gray flannel suit' archetype and the 'New Era' criteria of success, we witness in the final scenes a contented married man smoking a pipe and leaving a bottle of whisky out for the fairies. As Luke Gibbons describes it:

> ...Nora, with a little help from Horace the leprechaun, finally convinces Stephen that it is precisely the trappings of American capitalism which are preventing him from realizing his true potential, the self which is expressed through his mastery of language.[72]

Yet this is not entirely the film's conclusion: Fitz achieves his 'true potential', it suggests, by rejecting a brash macho capitalism and its 'modernist' spaces in favour of white hetero-normative domesticity in an idyllic place apart. His initial return to the United States thus concludes with a 'coming home' to a setting that parallels the ambitions and movement of returning GIs. In its construction of Frances as an ambitious independent woman 'with a man's courage and a man's brains,' the film sets up an ideal of womanhood 'worth' returning to. Writing in 1963 Betty Friedan wrote of 'The Problem With No Name' as the post-war ideal for women to be 'domestic and quiescent':

> Fulfilment as a woman had only one definition for American women after 1949—the housewife-mother. As swiftly as in a dream, the image of the American woman as a changing, growing individual in a changing world was shattered. Her solo flight to find her own identity was forgotten in the rush for the security of togetherness. Her world shrank to the cosy walls of home.[73]

Luck of the Irish clearly participates in this cultural process. The film's conclusion leaves us in no doubt that 'home' / America is a space of gender and racial politics defined by nostalgic whiteness. The white male retains the choice to access and participate in metropolitan modernity even as the film endorses a 'bourgeois utopia' of detachment and enchantment.

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[72] Luke Gibbons, *The Quiet Man*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002) 44
[73] Betty Friedan, "The Feminine Mystique," in Peter B. Levy, ed., *100 Key Documents in American Democracy*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1994), 431-436, 431

While *Top o' the Morning* is even less evidently topical than *Luck of the Irish* it is nonetheless significant in its mainstreaming of the Hollywood tropes of the Irish 'home-time' chronotope through the casting of Bing Crosby – the iconic popular representation of mid-century white American manhood constructed as laconic, good-natured and typical. Ireland is again imagined as a white 'magic space' set apart from contemporary United States, where an everyday corporate male might fall in love with a pure, white Colleen and happily remain. The far-fetched plot centres on the theft of the Blarney Stone - perhaps the most widely circulated totem of Ireland as a space of enchantment, dating back to late nineteenth century tourism.[74] Insurance assessor Joe Mulqueen (Bing Crosby) is sent by his New York employer Manhattan Insurance Corporation to retrieve the stone and avoid any insurance claim. Once in Ireland however he finds his investigation obstructed by the local police officer Briany McNaughton (Barry Fitzgerald in his more usual Irish trickster persona) who is unwilling to co-operate with a 'foreigner'; convinced that only local knowledge can solve the crime. Meanwhile Briany's pretty daughter Conn McNaughton (Ann Blyth) catches Joe's eye and hopes that he might be the future husband described in an ancient prophecy.

The last of four films co-starring Bing Crosby and Barry Fitzgerald, *Luck of the Irish* is an entirely whimsical variation on their initial and biggest success, *Going My Way* (1944); a film that drew on the historical experience of Irish-America and its 'coming of age' in the post-war era. It shares with that earlier film a plot structure in which a relaxed and resourceful young Irish-American (played by Crosby) is sent on a 'rescue' mission by head office, only to find his efforts thwarted by the charming but old-fashioned first generation Irishman played by Fitzgerald. As Shannon and others have noted, such structures were indicative of a generation conflict amongst Irish-Americans between

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[74] Mark Wycliffe Samuel, Kate Hamlyn, *Blarney Castle: Its History, Development, and Purpose* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2007), 65-75. The tradition of visiting Blarney Castle and kissing its famous 'stone' (a contested artifact in origin and identity) dates from the late nineteenth century and the cult of the picturesque that dominated tourism in that period.

immigrant and post-war masculinities. Charles A. Coletta Jr. for instance, suggests that 'The scene in which O'Malley and Fitzgibbon share a drink and croon "Too-raa-loora" symbolizes a "passing of the torch."'[75] As the third consecutive Irish-themed film made by Bing Crosby Production,[76]the film might also be understood as an expression of its star's growing sense of his own Irish roots and their cultural capital: the early stirrings of what Matthew Frye Jacobson (among others) would later refer to as 'Ellis Island whiteness'.[77] However, the genealogical dimension of Crosby's character/persona is entirely underplayed in *Top o the Morning*, positioning ancestral ties as coincidental rather than determining and deploying 'Irishness' as a marker of enchanted white domesticity.

Like Stephen Fitzgerald, Joe Mulqueen is an independent white male with prospects in the corporate world and little interest in marriage. Early in the film we see him nonchalantly arrive for work at a Manhattan skyscraper where his boss tells him that he must leave for Ireland in two hours. The laconic Mulqueen is unimpressed:

- Why pick on me?
- Your mother came from there.
- That's no advantage.
- The only other guy is Mannie Epstein.
- That's no advantage either.

The implication is that he is a 'post-ethnic', assimilated American who knows/cares as much about Ireland as the Jewish Epstein. Once in Ireland, Mulqueen exhibits a tourist's bemusement towards the locals and their quaint ways, evident in a dictated memo for head office (his voice-recorder – like Sean Thornton's sleeping bag - an allegory of American male individualism/modernity in the communal/enchanted culture of Ireland). While he praises the efficiency of Inspector Fallon from the Cork police, he

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[75] Charles A. Coletta Jr., 'How Bing Crosby Helped the Irish Become White.' Unpublished paper delivered at "Bing! Crosby and American Culture," Hofstra University 2012.
[76] *The Great John L* (1945); *Abie's Irish Rose* (1946)
[77] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post - Civil Rights America* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2006)

jokes that local Officer Devine 'may have swallowed the Blarney Stone' and while his 'superior,' McNaughton is a 'sweet old man,' he 'couldn't find the curve in a pretzel.' While he downplayed his ethnic background in the opening scenes, Mulqueen (like the all-American Crosby) is nevertheless well acquainted with sentimental Irish music, which he sings at every available opportunity; mainly in the presence of Conn. Mulqueen is thus positioned as having a foot in both worlds – the masculine logic and modernity of his professional life as well as an openness to the feminine and romantic inherited from his mother. Nevertheless, this 'openness' retains the agency and point of view of white masculinity even as it is 'converted' from bachelorhood to marriage.

Like Nora in *Luck of the Irish*, Conn is presented as a pure and chaste colleen who lives with her father (there is no maternal presence at home; a feature of all three films) and is seen mainly engaged in 'timeless' domestic duties – she is first seen by Mulqueen washing clothes in a river. As with the earlier film, the romantic pairing of Conn and Joe is the result of folkloric influence and intervention. The matchmaker here is ancient wise woman Biddy O'Devlin (Eileen Crowe), who was given a prediction that Conn would find her love through the fulfillment of a number of obscure conditions. Impatient with the abstruse prophesies, Joe makes his feelings known in a modern 'efficient' manner:

- You folks overdo it a bit - do you have to believe in everything?
- It's true we believe in fairytales but we know they're fairytales.
- Where do I get in line? You're very attractive, you have lovely eyes and hair, you're just loaded with natural appeal . . .
- Joe Mulqueen, what are you doin?
- Back home they call this making a pitch.
- Could I ask you, back home is there such a thing as a slow pitch?

Top o' the Morning differs from *Luck of the Irish* in that Mulqueen never expresses dissatisfaction with contemporary America nor, in fact, does he ever give the impression that he feels oppressed by the corporate constructions of masculinity we have considered above. This is hardly surprising since it is Crosby's persona that is at the centre of the drama; his laid back demeanor, closely identified with leisure (when we

first meet Mulqueen in his Manhattan office he is carrying a golf club) exemplifies a version of mid-century American whiteness that combines privilege and prosperity with wholesome values. In her analysis of styles of masculinity that emerged in white American popular music culture during the 1930s and 1940s, Bryd McDaniel captures the essence of Crosby's persona as a balancing of the feminised sensitivity of the 'crooner' and earlier values:

> Bing Crosby took crooning and reestablished it within a masculine tradition of performance. Crosby placed himself against the emasculated images of crooners by embracing a white, heteronormative identity. As an actor in numerous films, Crosby often played the manly role that contrasted with an effeminate "sissy" man. In film, he relates to the strong, male characters and feels more comfortable among burly men than domestic housewives ... In contrast to the effeminate appeal of Vallee, Crosby highlights his normative masculinity through touting his strong work ethic, religious beliefs, whiteness, and emotional restraint.[78]

In keeping with this persona, Crosby's Mulqueen solves the crime plot through some dispassionate logic and investigation, and once again balancing masculine styles, apprehends the culprit (McNaughton's assistant Devine) with the cunning assistance of the old policeman. Indeed it is Fitzgerald's Briany who finally recovers the Stone – albeit accidentally, by sitting on it. As with *Going My Way*, pre and post-war masculinities are reconciled and seen as mutually enhancing, but unlike that earlier narrative of American Catholicism, the younger man does not move on to another 'parish.' Despite his earlier sense of superiority and mild condescension, he decides to stay on in this enchanted community and marry the fair Conn.

Top o' the Morning (like the other return narratives) sets up an idyllic state of social relations that I have identified as the 'home-time' chronotope of Ireland. Richard Dyer has pointed out that popular entertainment:

> does not ... present models of utopian worlds, as in the classical utopias of Sir Thomas More, William Morris, et al. Rather the utopianism is contained in the

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[78] Byrd McDaniel, "Crooning, Country, and the Blues: Redefining Masculinity in Popular Music in the 1930s and 1940s", *NeoAmericanist*, Vol. 6 No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2012)

feelings it embodies. It presents, head on as it were, what utopia would feel like [i.e. pleasure] rather than how it would be organised.'[79]

The film's musical conclusion - Crosby sings *'Top o' the Morning'* while linking Conn and her father - communicates just such a 'structure of feeling'[80], uniting contemporary and enchanted modes of white manhood and appeasing anxieties about post-war changes in gender, social and spatial relations. Though its association with popular nineteenth century modes of Irish representation ('only entertainment,' as Dyer puts it elsewhere)[81], the racial homogeneity of this utopian vision is effaced while the 'naturalness' of white marriage as cultural norm is reasserted.

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III 'I've come home . . . and home I'm gonna stay': Enchanted Whiteness and Domestic Space in *The Quiet Man*

The Quiet Man is the most celebrated of the Irish return narratives produced in the aftermath of WWII and the final focus of this chapter. Like the earlier films it offers a 'home-time' chronotope of white manhood in flight from inhospitable modernity, but is unique in the outright rejection by its first-generation Irish protagonist of the emigrant ambition for assimilation and social mobility that defined cinematic portraits of the Irish-American male. This element of the narrative is more pronounced in the film's source material, Maurice Walsh's short story's description of its eponymous 'Quiet Man' working his land and seeing ships set for America:

> Then he would smile to himself—a pitying smile—thinking of the poor devils, with dreams of fortune luring them, going out to sweat in Ironville, or to bootleg bad whiskey down the hidden way, or to stand in a bread line. All these things were behind Shawn forever.[82]

[79] Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia.' in *Genre: The Musical: A Reader*. edit. Rick Altman, (London: Routledge, 1981): 175-189, 177
[80] The term comes from Raymond Williams, Ch.9 "Structures of feeling," in *Marxism and Literature* (1977)
[81] Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment*, 2nd Ed. (London: Routledge, 1992) 2002
[82] Maurice Walsh, "The Quiet Man" in *Green Rushes*, (London: W. & R. Chambers 1950)

While this elision might suggest a shift in emphasis or that Ford wished to minimize its seeming 'anti-American' sentiment in light of McCarthyism, [83] Thornton's return is evoked less in terms of a contempt for the past than optimism for the future which is from the outset explicitly linked to marriage and domesticity.[84] For while its period setting in the 1920s and its heightened visual elements might suggest that the film is less topical than the contemporary-set films discussed above, its self-consciousness and Brechtian elements (most notably, the final bow to camera by the principle actors), the absence of folkloric/supernatural elements and well documented use of 'authentic' Irish locations (in contrast to the stage substitute/sound-stage settings of the previous two Ireland-set films) combine to produce a complex text that is both imagined and actual; simultaneously located in memory and the present. [85] Ruth Barton notes a similar complexity in the film's construction of Ireland:

> Certainly its Technicolor vision of a land of rosy-cheeked colleens, leprechaun-like intercessionaries and humane clergy united by song, drink and public brawling had little in common with the Ireland of the 1920s in which it is ostensibly set. On the other hand, the film lends itself readily to readings that affirm Ford's playful acknowledgement of his fictionalizing.[86]

Or, as Luke Gibbons puts it:

> Almost every aspect of the film, from Sean's arrival at the station to the final curtain call . . . raises questions over what exactly it is we are seeing, and where reality ends and imagination begins.[87]

Developing this ambiguity and Boym's related comments on the double nature of nostalgia in cinema, I propose that Sean Thornton's driving ambition to own his idyllic cottage and live there happily with his new bride can be read as both romantic fantasy

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[83] Ben Schwartz, "The Subversive St. Patrick's Day Classic: How John Ford fought McCarthyism" in *The New Republic,* March 16th, 2013. Accessed 25 July 2013. Schwartz sees in the film Ford's contempt for McCarthyism – then at its height: .. it was one of the more subversive movies made during the blacklist era. It's about a man who can't stand America, leaves it, and hopes never to see it again. Ford being Ford, he even got John Wayne to play him.' http://www.newrepublic.com/article/112666/john-fords-quiet-man-subversive-st-patricks-day-staple;

[84] In the film Thornton spots the 'vision' of Mary Kate just after he has arrived in Inisfree and is immediately curious to get to know her; whereas in the story Shawn Kelvin is happily resident in his cottage, alone and with no intention of marriage to Ellen O'Grady until her brother proposes the match.

[85] Tag Gallagher argues that: "Indeed, the film's commercialism and intoxicating Technicolor tend to obscure its documentary and Brechtian aspects." *John Ford: The Man and His Films* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 279

[86] Ruth Barton, *Irish National Cinema* (New York, London: Routledge, 2004), 72-73

[87] Luke Gibbons, *The Quiet Man* (Cork: Cork U Press, 2002), 19

and an image of post-war American manhood returning to a utopian conception of suburban domesticity. Within such a reading, Inisfree functions as an enchanted and segregated space of white refuge that is simultaneously rooted in nineteenth century American romanticism (via the Gaelic Revival) and contemporary cultural tensions, providing an imaginary counterpoint to the inability of Barney Nolan, Dix Hanley and Martin Donnelly to achieve similar journeys 'home.' Within such a reading, Thornton's opening question 'Does anyone know the way to Innisfree?' is not only the enquiry of a returned emigrant but a generalized yearning from post-war white masculinity, seeking respite from both the frontier of war[88] and the corruptions of the city.

<center>***</center>

I have referred earlier to Paul Knox's discussion of the American suburb and his contention that, since their emergence, such 'borderlands' and 'bourgeois utopias' have existed in a cycle of 'serial enchantment and disenchantment'[89] in the American imagination. Considered within such a thesis and linking the two phases of the Irish-American return narratives in this chapter (*film noir* and 'flight' to Ireland), *The Quiet Man* offers an enchanted space of whiteness that is separate and secluded from the melting pot of modernity:

> The enchantment of the earliest suburbs can be traced to the utopias devised by Ebenezer Howard, Patrick Geddes, and others, all of whom drew heavily on an intense imaginary of an alternative world, both physical and social: a sanitized arcadia of collective privacy and respectability.[90]

Knox proposes that from its emergence in the late-nineteenth century 'the character of suburbanization was deeply influenced by intellectuals,' architects,' and planners'

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[88] There is an evident parallel here to the opening of John Ford's celebrated western *The Searchers* (1956) and Ethan Edwards' return to the family homestead.

[89] Paul Knox, "Vulgaria: The Re-Enchantment of Suburbia", *Opolis: An International Journal of Suburban and Metropolitan Studies*, Vol 1, Issue 2 (2005)

[90] Knox, 'Vulgaria', 34-35. Knox argues that through successive phases, 'suburbs have been reconceived from intellectual utopias to bourgeois utopias to degenerative utopias to conservative utopias, each with a distinctive physical form and moral landscape . . . The appeal of suburbia under these changing conditions has been dependent, in large measure, on the enchantment of suburbia as an object of (and setting for) consumption.'

visions of a suburban utopia.'[91] Such visions, he argues, drew on the writings of the anti-urban Transcendentalists - particularly New England writers Waldo Emerson and his disciple Henry David Thoreau - and the influential romantic ideal of man living simply amidst nature - best known from *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854). Thoreau famously declared that:

> in industrial cities 'the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation' . . . by the mid nineteenth century Americans had come to think of their relationship with nature and the Great Outdoors as distinctly American.[92]

Some scholars have since read such writers their canonical status in American letters within frameworks of whiteness and privilege. In her *History of White People* for instance, Nell Irvin Painter writes that Emerson –'towers over his age as the philosopher king of American white race theory,'[93] and while Thoreau publically supported the abolition of slavery,[94] his philosophical perspective and universalizing of the nature of 'man' has often been criticised for its insensitivity to the social realities of others[95]and can be read in terms of Richard Dyer's comments on whiteness as 'a vividly corporeal cosmology that most values transcendence of the body; a notion of being at once a sort of race and the human race.'[96] Gendering this perspective is Gretchen Legler's contention that:

> Nature in Thoreau's work is constructed as a place that nurtures [the] white masculine aesthetic and as a place that is not suitable for the nurturance of other

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[91] Paul L. Knox, *Metroburbia USA* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 14
[92] Knox, *Metroburbia*, 14
[93] Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: WW Norton & Co. 2001), 151
[94] Timothy B. Powell, *Ruthless Democracy: A Multicultural Interpretation of the American Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 90
[95] Lucas Fredericks, for instance comments on the "Bakers Farm" episode of Walden, 'in which he encounters the impoverished and "listless" Irishman John Fields and his family. Fields works for ten dollars an acre "bogging" with a spade. Thoreau cheerfully tries to teach him the error of his ways . . . Thoreau seems blissfully unaware of the privilege and social safety net that he enjoys . . . He forgets the pencil-factory job he can always return to and the supportive extended family which feeds him, and his literati friends who, among other things, allow him to live on his land rent-free. Lucas Fredericks, 'Thoreau as proselytizer', Thoreau Harding Project 3.0, November 22, 2013. Accessed 25 January 2014.
http://thoreauharding.wordpress.com/page/3
[96] Dyer, *White*, 39-40

bodies--the bodies of Native Americans, immigrants and white women.[97]

Linking such commentaries with the 'enchantment' of early suburban development in the United States is Knox's contention that 'a central aspect of nineteenth century anti-urban ideology rested on a fear of the loss of patriarchal control over women amid the economic and social turbulence of industrializing cities.'[98] Contemporary writers rarely mentioned this gendered dimension of suburban utopia, writes Knox, preferring to emphasize 'the implicit promise of patriarchal control that came with [an] idealized vision of private domesticity of Arcadian settings.'[99]

An association between the spatial ideals of nineteenth 'patriarchal control' and suburbia can be discerned in consistent if consumerist terms in the post WWII era and frames the construction of 'Ireland' in the Hollywood films discussed in this chapter in similar terms to Knox's description of American suburbia as a '"middle landscape' of pastoral and picturesque settings . . . a site of stable and healthy social relations."[100] Within such a parallel *The Quiet Man* can be read as a cultural text also produced at a moment of 'social turbulence' in gender norms and their relationship to space: the post-war crises in masculinity that sought to reconcile the masculine ideals of the (public) 'battlefield' with the contemporary (private) suburban 'backyard' as GIs returned home and were expected to conform to their new roles as breadwinners and family men. This dramatic switch in American masculine ideals led to much reflection on the nature of modern manhood. In the 1958 essay already cited, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. famously wondered 'what has happened to the American male' and argued that the domestic confinement of American manhood was central to the problem:

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[97] Gretchen Legler, "Who May Contest for What the Body of Nature Will Be?: Body Politics in American Nature Writing." in *Writing and the Environment: Ecocriticism & Literature*, edit. Richard Kerridge, (London and New York: ZED Books, 1998), 75
[98] Knox, *Metroburbia USA*, 15
[99] Knox, *Metroburbia USA*, 15
[100] Knox, *Metroburbia USA*, 15

> The roles of male and female are increasingly merged in the American household. The American man is found as never before as a substitute for wife and mother-changing diapers, washing dishes, cooking meals and performing a whole series of what were once considered female duties.[101]

The assumption here – and elsewhere within such discourse - was that the typical 'American male' was white and newly ensconced in suburbia, far from the unrestricted space of nature/the frontier, where men like 'James Fenimore Cooper, for example, never had any concern about masculinity.'[102] Thus while *The Quiet Man* is on a literal level a narrative of flight from the excesses of 1920s America, it is also offers post-war audiences a chronotope that reconciles tensions between nature/frontier and domesticity; articulating a space not only of enchanted whiteness but one in which even the rugged, iconic masculinity of John Wayne feels 'at home.' The intersection of this 'life in the woods' ideal with domestic space is White O'Morn cottage.

Maurice Walsh's source story makes just one notable mention of the cottage in which its protagonist (Shawn Kelvin) settles on his return to Kerry from America:

> He quietly went amongst the old and kindly friends and quietly looked about him for the place and peace he wanted; and when the time came, quietly produced the money for a neat, handy, small farm on the first warm shoulder of Knockanore Hill below the rolling curves of heather . . . There, in a four-roomed, lime-washed, thatched cottage, Shawn made his life, and, though his friends hinted at his needs and obligations, no thought came to him of bringing a wife into the place.[103]

By contrast, 'White O Morn' acquires greater emotional and symbolic status in Ford's film as the fetishized object of Sean Thornton's yearning for Ireland: the focalization of his memory of his mother's memory of home: 'Don't you remember it, Seannie, and how it was . . .' Like Dix Hanley in *Asphalt Jungle,* Thornton remembers this space and environment (or is prompted to) as one of solace that he believes can offer respite and restoration; where – as a 'Thoreau man' - he can return to a 'pure' and simple life. In

[101] Arthur M. Schlesinger, "The Crises of American Masculinity", in *The Politics of Hope and The Bitter Heritage: American liberalism in the 1960s,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 292-304
[102] Schlesinger, *American Masculinity*
[103] Maurice Walsh, "The Quiet Man" in *Green Rushes*, (London: W. & R. Chambers 1950)

common with Dix Hanley and Barney Nolan, it is Sean's experience of the spiritually corrupting forces of American capitalism - 'Steel and pig iron furnaces so hot a man forgets his fear of hell' and the accidental killing of his opponent in a prize-fight – that underlie his desire for return. The thatched cottage is thus a complex expression of domestic retreat and maternal plenitude but also of white masculine independence linking the American and Irish national ideals of Thoreau and Yeats.[104]

The Post-War Cottage as a Space of Enchanted Whiteness

Figure 11 Advert for post-war suburban housing in Levittown NY

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard identifies a tension between past and future as structuring our image of home:

> Sometimes the house of the future is better built, lighter and larger than all the houses of the past, so that the image of the dream house is opposed to that of the childhood home...[105]

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[104] It is also redolent of the forced emigration of the nineteenth century Irish peasant now vanquished by the return of the financially independent male who seems to exist outside of an economy of physical labour.
[105] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, (Boston: Beacon Press 1969), 61

On a literal level, Sean's desire to buy back (recuperate) his childhood home seems to reverse this proposal. Reading the film within the wider themes of this chapter however, I would argue that White O'Morn as 'dream house' can be read against the backdrop of white flight and the utopian promise of suburbia as a mono-racial space apart from modernity. Within such a reading, this 'wee humble cottage' (as Micheleen Og describes it) finds a symbolic and architectural corollary in the 'Cape Cod Cottage' - the first and standard design offered at Levittown - as a space of 'enchanted whiteness'. While the 'Cape' – 'America's most popular house design' had its origins as an eighteenth century New England's fisherman's cottage, by mid 1930s it had – in the description of a landmark *Architectural Forum* article - become 'almost a national institution.'[106] The widespread popularity of the style lay in the turn of the century 'colonial revival' that began in the aftermath of the 1876 Centennial, prompting a turn to a national style of construction 'associated with ancestral security and roots . . . One writer observed in *House Beautiful* in 1897 that colonial architecture . . . was still the only distinctively American style – simple, dignified . . . pure and simple, for honest folk.'[107] In Levittown and subsequent post-war suburbs the Cape Cod Cottage offered a vivid contrast to the city dwellings that its young, post-war couples grew up in. In their choice of the design, Abraham Levitt (a second generation Russian immigrant) and his son Alfred[108] settled on a simple form that not only lent itself to cheap, mass production but deployed the visual and cultural symbolism of American colonial origins and their association with 'honest folk'. Peter Bacon Hales writes that:

> Levitt was attentive to historical precedent. He knew what it meant and he believed his clients did too; they were all fellow pupils in the American schools

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106 Unsigned, "The Cape Cod Cottage" in *Architectural Forum*, 1949

107 Eleanor Phillips Brackbill, *An Uncommon Cape*, (Albany: Suny Press 2012), 37

108 Peter Bacon Hales,"Building Levittown: A Rudimentary Primer," Levittown: *Documents of an Ideal Suburb,* n.d, http://tigger.uic.edu/%7epbhales/levittown/building.html (June 19, 2008). Accessed 7 July 2014. Levittown was built by [Abraham] 'Levitt and Sons' - William and Alfred. Although each had a distinct corporate function, with William credited as the 'mastermind,' several scholars indicate that their professional relationship was highly collaborate. Peter Bacon Hales argues that while Alfred was nominally the architect, 'the older Levitt had long experience as a builder of middle class homes and his flair had lain with the use of symbolism drawn from popular American culture to give his homes a clearly readable Americanness to them, a sense of their place within the heritage of domestic building types.'

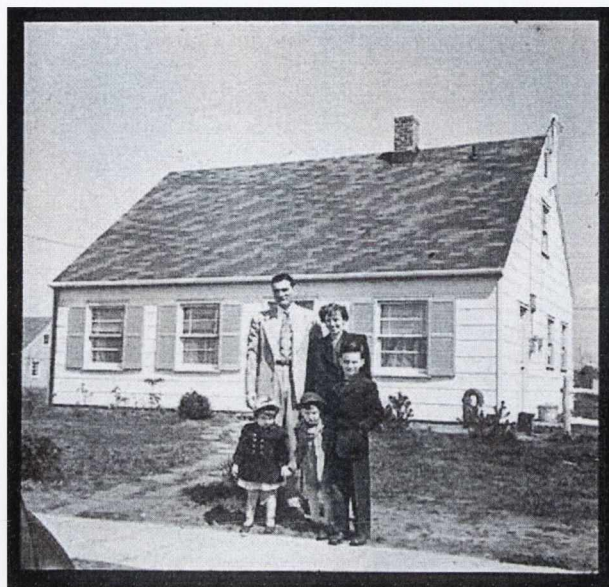where the noble pilgrims and the hardy New England colonials were the basic far of national mythology.[109]

Figure 12 A post-war family outside 'Cap Cod' house in Levitttown NY

Such symbolism linked social aspiration, spaces of domesticity and race,[110] reinforced through federal subsidies[111] and covenants that worked to maintain the 'pure and simple' whiteness of Levittown. Kushner quotes William Levitt's response to allegations of racism by the NCCAP:

> As a Jew I have no room for racial prejudice. But . . . I have come to know that if we sell one house to a Negro family, then ninety-nine percent of our white customers will not buy into this community. That is their attitude, not ours . . . We can solve a housing problem, or we can try to solve a racial problem, but not both.[112]

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[109] Bacon Hales, *Building Levittown*

[110] David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 577-578. Several historians have noted the racial basis of the Levitt's vision. Halberstam recounts that during the 1920s Abraham Levitt lived with his family in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant section but when a black distrinct attorney moved in he decided to move out for fear that the neighbourhood would deteriorate in value and status. 'With that, Levitt sold his brownstone and moved his family to Long Island, a pioneer of the great migrations that were to come . . .'.

[111] David M.P. Freund, "Marketing the Free Market" in *The New Suburban History*, edits. Kevin Michael Kruse, Thomas J. Sugrue, 16. Freund has shown that the Federal Housing Association (FHA) 'revived and dramatically expanded the markets for home improvement and privately owned homes . . .[and systematically discriminated by race' through race restrictive covenants. Freund identifies 'guidelines outlined in the FHA Underwriting Manuel which prohibited realtors from introducing "incompatible" racial groups into white residential enclaves. "If a neighbourhood is to retain stability . . . it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes..."

[112] David Kushner, *Levittown: Two Families, One Tycoon, and the Fight for Civil Rights in America's Legendary Suburb* (Palo Alto: Walker & Company, 2009), 44

The archtectural spaces of the Cape Cod and White O'Morn cottages are linked therefore by their roots in traditional values of authentitcity – work, nature, the homestead – that whiteness claims as its own. Both structures are 'white houses' that simultaneously echo, and eclipse, the earlier assimilationist ambitions of *Yankee Doodle Dandy* and *The Long Gray Line* which both end with historical Irish-American protagonists 'coming home' to the White House of national manhood. In place of assimilation however, such spaces mobilize a nostalgic whiteness, 'enchanted' by links to nature and 'traditional' family values to legitimize normative and conservative constructions of gender and race on the 'crabgrass frontier.'

While – as Ruth Barton notes – Maureen O Hara's feisty performance as the uncompromising Mary Kate Danaher has led several critics to read the film 'as a triumph of feminine will over patriarchal authority,'[113] the ideological conservatism of the film's racial/gender politics simultaneously 'liberate' a feminine voice while ultimately containing it within *whitewashed* walls. Within such a schema, Mary Kate replaces the barren and undomesticated femininity of current owner, the Widow Tillane (there is no such complication in Walsh's story)[114] and functions as a psychological replacement for Thornton's mother as the film's 'home-maker.' Thus Sean's masculine independence and recovery from trauma coincide with the restoration of traditional gender roles in a 'recovered' domestic space of whiteness.

This coming home to White O'Morn structures the dramatic arc of the film – from the first enquiry at the train station to the image of Sean and Mary Kate running hand in hand up the path at the film's conclusion. The cottage exists in a tension between memory and reality; a tension reflected within the film's gender politics:

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113 Barton, *Irish National Cinema*, 73
114 Walsh's story names this character Kathy Carey. Although she is a rich, recent widow pursued by Big Liam O'Grady she does now own Shaun Kelvin's cottage.

Don't you *remember* Seannie and how it was? The road led up past the chapel and it wound and it wound . . . It was a lovely little house, Seaneen. And the roses! Well, your father used to tease me about them. But he was that proud of them too.

The 'lovely little house' represents psychic continuity and narrative; an antidote to the traumatic ruptures of war/emigration/modernity[115] 'All the Thorntons were born there. Seven generations of them,' he tells the widow as he tries to convince her to sell it to him. Tillane is hesitant and cynical. She asks if the returned American wants it as 'a national shrine, perhaps charge tuppence a visit for a guided tour through the little thatched cottage where all the Thorntons were born. Are you a man of such eminence then?' He replies that 'Innisfree has become another word for heaven to me. When I quit the...when I decided to come here, it was with one thought in mind.' Sean's fantasy of escape from the hell and 'slag heaps' of Pittsburg to an idealized space of home set apart from modernity is legitimized by birthright. (The move also parallels the social mobility represented by the post-war suburbs). This right to own and occupy his 'lovely little house' by proving that he is not 'foreign', parallels the racial covenants of Levittown and other white suburbs while echoing frontier settlement. Reinforcing this analogy of settlement is Thornton's pursuit of Mary Kate as his bride who unexpectedly refuses to consummate the marriage until Sean is provided with her dowry from her boorish brother Red Will Danagher. He must, in short, prove his manhood within the terms of the society within which he finds himself. While many scholars have largely read this – often comic but finally physical – conflict in terms of Fordian community (and reflecting the influence of JM Synge), within this discussion it could also be read as an expression of contemporary anxieties around 'Momism'[116] and the post-war emasculation of white

[115] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (New York, London: Routledge, 2013), 80-81. 'Trauma can be defined in opposition to narrative . . . a blockage, 'a bit monstrous, unformed, confusing, confounding' and the traumatic memory persists in a half life, rather like a ghost, a haunting presence of another time in our time.'

[116] 'Momism' originates in Philip Wylie's non-fiction collection *Generation of Vipers* (1955) to ridicule the unmanliness of the post war American male: 'Mom is an American creation. Her elaboration was necessary because she was launched as Cinderella. Past generations of men have accorded to their mothers, as a rule, only such honors as they earned by meritorious action in their individual daily lives. Filial duty was recognized by many sorts of civilizations and loyalty to it has been highly regarded among most peoples.

masculinity within the domestic sphere expressed by Schlesinger Jr. and others. Thornton's intial refusal to fight Danaher and maintain a vision of home located in pre-Oedipul memory results in a lack of sexual relations in his marriage (symbolized by the 'broken' bed discovered by Michaleen). Conversely their epic brawl results in the restoration of traditional gender roles (and one assumes sexual relations) between Sean and Mary Kate and her evident pleasure in declaring 'I'll be going on home . . . I'll have the supper ready for you.' Thornton's nostalgic desire for the home of his childhood is thus paradoxically achieved through an assertion of 'uncivlized' manliness in which virility and domesticity are co-terminus. As a 'magic space' that reconciles such tensions within a framework of white, hetero-normative romance, 'White O'Morn' can be read as an allegory and reinforcement of the post-war suburban ideal.

Conclusion

In her discussion of 'diasporic' images of Ireland in American cinema, Stephanie Rains has argued that such:

> representations of Ireland have not only been a constant feature of Hollywood films from the silent era onwards; these representations have been structured in ways, which have reflected the demands and imaginative positioning of that Irish diasporic audience. In particular, this has led to a noticeable filmic positioning of Ireland as "home" with all the connotations of the familiar, the hospitable and the specific, which that implies.[117]

While this recognition of the positioning of Ireland as 'home' concurs with and substantiates the themes explored in this chapter, I have argued that such treatments have functioned as a means of negotiating contemporary anxieties surrounding white manhood and its relationship to domestic space in the aftermath of WWII. Drawing on Vivian Sobchack's discussion of *film noir* and the 'lounge-time chronotope' to describe the transient and unsettled quality of cinema in this period, I have explored how Irish-

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But I cannot think, offhand, of any civilization except ours in which an entire division of living men has been used, during wartime, or at any time, to spell out the word "mom" on a drill field, or to perform any equivalent act.'

117 Stephanie Rains, 'Home from Home: Diasporic Images of Ireland in Film and Tourism', *Irish Tourism: Image, Culture, and Identity* in Michael Cronin, Barbara O'Connor (Ed) 196–214. 196

American manhood functions - first as symptom of dejection and nostalgia and subsequently across three 'home-time' film narratives - as a means of re-imagining white masculinity as simultaneouly free to roam *and* fulfilled within conservative norms of gender and race. In making this argument I have deployed a conception of 'enchanted whiteness' as a means of expressing a perceived link between the settings of these 'Green World' romances and the spatial politics and symbolism of the post-war suburb as a space of racial exclusion. Drawing on histories of the American suburb I have argued that these 'home-time' narratives offer parallels to the socio-spatial phenomenon of white flight and post-war ideal of suburban domestic space, that links whiteness, nature and home to America's colonial origins. In vivid contrast to cinematic representations of early cinema where immigrants left the impoverished 'ould sod' in search of opportunity and fortune, Hollywood offers a construction of Ireland as a utopian space apart from the multi-racial metropolis; to which white manhood can escape the pressures and stresses of modernity while maintinaining cultural and economic privilege. A home from home.

The Irish-American directors of the two films that bookend this representative tradition - *The Lad from Old Ireland* and *The Quiet Man* – insisted on shooting large portions of their narratives on location in rural (western) Ireland at considerable effort and expense. Such fidelity to setting reassured contemporary audiences that what they were seeing was 'real' and both films became financial and critical successes and have proven enormously influential in subsequent cinematic constructions of Ireland. What is equally clear is that both films have appealed far beyond Irish-American audiences; that their narratives offer something more general and relevant to wider American values. Both are structured by similar tensions - the Old World and the New, descent and consent masculinities - that seek independence and self determination while retaining strong emotional ties to home expressed in terms of space and heteronormative relations. This

desire to have it both ways is at the heart of Hollywood's deployment of Irish-American

protagonists and functions as a successor myth to the frontier hero.

Conclusion: Hollywood Irish and the Production of Domestic Whiteness

In the summer of 1927, the year in which Hollywood produced more Irish-American themed films than any other (in a decade filled with Irish subjects),[1] MGM released *The Callahans and the Murphys*, a broad ethnic comedy starring Marie Dressler and Polly Moran, adapted by Francis Marion from the novel by Kathleen Norris. The vaudeville-era comediennes – in the first of several pairings - played larger than life Irish-American maternal figures: rambunctious, salty and often inebriated: 'In one scene, while downing bottle after bottle of beer ("This stuff makes me see double and feel single!"), Marie and Polly begin pouring the brew down each other's blouses.'[2] While the film was warmly reviewed as 'slapstick'[3], there were some within the Irish-American community who took offence. Tired of such stereotypes and sensing that it possessed a hertofore absent cultural influence, 'The Catholic Church launched its first organized public crusade to excise from the popular screen those elements which constituted, in the words of one of its spokesmen, 'a hideous defamation of Catholic belief practices.'[4] The tone – and clearly orchestrated nature - of a growing swell of objection to the film can be seen in a letter from one 'George K. Moran' to *Motion Picture Magazine*:

> It is my belief that those Jewish and Irish-Jewish comedies turned me against the movies. They were simply disgusting. Each time I saw one the Irish in me was simply riled . . . "The Callahans and the Murphys" was an insult to the Irish race . . . It seems to me that Hollywood producers never know when to stop. Why not use those types occasionally and cut out pictures that involve any certain race."[5]

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[1] Irish Film & Television Index, Accessed 20 March 20 2015. https://www.tcd.ie/irishfilm/
[2] Hal Ericson, *All Movie Guide*, Accessed 20 March 2015.
http://www.nytimes.com/movies/movie/86485/The-Callahans-and-the-Murphys/overview
[3] 'Polly Moran and Marie Dressler are a panic in this slapstick story of life as its is supposed to be led among the Irish.' Photoplay Magazine, Vol XXXIII, March 1928, 9
[4] Francis Walsh, Walsh, Francis R. 'The Callahans and the Murphys, (MGM, 1927): a case study of Irish-American Catholic Church censorship', in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol 10, Issue 1. 1990. 33-45. 34
[5] George K Moran, 'Enough is Enough,' Letters to the Editor, *Motion Picture Magazine*, Aug-Jan 1928, Vol 36. 114

Supported by the network of Catholic parishes across urban America, such protests eventually had the effect of forcing ' . . . MGM to withdraw a major motion picture against its will. Modifications were subsequently made in a number of other films dealing with the Irish or the Catholic Church.'[6]

The consequences of *The Callaghans and the Murphys* affair were far-reaching, consolidating a twenty year history of film censorship by a variety of church and social groups at a national level and forging a link between the Catholic church and Hollywood production that that would shape American film for decades.[7] More immediately, it resulted in a dramatic reorientation of Hollywood's representation of ethnic minorities. As cultural understandings of whiteness expanded, the comic stereotypes of Jews and other immigrant groups that had been a mainstay of silent-era film comedy quickly disappeared although constructions of African-Americans and American-Indians retained much of their 'othered' status. Within this context Irish-American male protagonists assumed a prominence that was unmatched by other ethnic masculinities and while these representations often drew on earlier tropes - gender stereotypes and close family relations for example - the nature of such constructions were fundamentally positive and progressive. However, while the *The Callahans and the Murphys* case and the increasing power of the Irish-American Catholic church were undoubtedly important factors in this shift, it would be over-simplistic to attribute the differences in representational politics between the silent and sound era solely to attempts to placate a single immigrant group. Instead – as George K Moran's letter above indirectly reveals – such changes might also be located within wider developments around the meaning and construction of race in the United States during this period. As cultural historians such

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[6] Francis Walsh, 'The Callahans and the Murphys', 35
[7] While *The Callahans and the Murphys* incident stands as an important milestone in Hollywood censorship, it was just one of many. Indeed Will Hayes, the so-called 'Czar of American morality', had been president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America for five years (since 1922) when the controversy broke.

as Matthew Fyre Jacobson, David Roediger and Werner Sollors have argued, by the 1930s existing conceptualizations of race were inadequate to the realities of a nation undergoing significant demographic and social changes. As thirty million 'New Americans'[8] impacted on all levels of American society and the Great Depression redefined existing social and political structures, a hierarchy of race predicated on a binary of 'white' and 'non-native' began to be replaced with more porous categories of 'ethnicity'. Within this evolving dynamic, 'whiteness' began to relinquish a strict biological determinism and become a framework of normative social values and mobility capable of including such ethnic categories. Nevertheless, this apparent 'universality' – as critical whiteness studies has sought to demonstrate – has remained anchored in the exclusion of people of colour. This tension – between an awareness of whiteness as social construction and its embodied privileges - is described by George Lipsitz as America's long-standing 'possessive investment in whiteness':

> White Americans are encouraged to invest in whiteness, to remain true to an identity that provides them with resources, power, and opportunity. This whiteness is, of course, a delusion, a scientific and cultural fiction that like all racial identities has no valid foundation in biology or anthropology. Whiteness is, however, a social fact, an identity created and continued with all-too-real consequences for the distribution of wealth, prestige, and opportunity.[9]

This thesis has argued that in the three decades following the introduction of sound, Irish-American male protagonists have played a key role in Hollywood's construction of whiteness as simultaneously 'natural' and 'achieved.' Offering a chronologically structured analysis of five major representational themes – James Cagney, Catholic priests, sports, cops, narratives of return - I have linked figurations of Irish-American characters to the social construction of hegemonic white masculinity at given historical moments. While such 'modes' parallel and reflect – sometimes quite literally - the Irish-

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[8] Louis Adamic, "Thirty Million New Americans," My America (New York, 1938)
[9] George Lipsitz, The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 3

American experience, I content that they are not reducible to it. Rather, 'Irishness' for a variety of cultural and historical reasons (including colonialism, racial 'ambiguity', and a complex history of immigration, marginalisation *and* social mobility), serves as an especially adaptable locus for both testing and reinforcing the hegemony of white manhood during periods of social anxiety and transformation.

In my historical survey of Irish-American masculinities in classical Hollywood cinema, I have examined characters from a variety of genres that are invariably positioned between their immigrant, 'ethnic' roots and encounters with 'white' America, and have proposed that Werner Sollors' analysis of the American immigrant experience (in literature, and, in general) as structured by a tension between *descent* and *consent* identities[10] offers a productive schema for this analysis. Frequently this tension is expressed dramatically as a conflict between communal loyalties and individual ambition, often within a fraternal context. Such tensions are not, however, constructed by Hollywood as either/or choices; on the contrary, descent ties are more often positioned as contributing a crucial human and collective dimension to masculinities that overstress individual ambition or success. Thus, in contrast to the model of 'Americanization' which encouraged the abandoning Old World identities, films as different as *Yankee Doodle Dandy, Boys Town, The Long Gray Line* and *Rogue Cop*, for example, all underscore the importance of maintaining 'home' values and their significance to wider American society. This has fundamental consequences in constructing whiteness as a dynamic, adaptive and recuperative social identity rather than a static or immutably racial one. However (as evidenced in the few films in which African American characters appear [e.g. *Yankee Doodle Dandy, Gentleman Jim*]) this inclusive understanding of whiteness elides, rather than eclipses, questions of race.

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[10] Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)

A key methodological and theoretical contribution of this study has been to read the dynamic relationship between descent and consent identities in Hollywood constructions of Irish-American masculinities in light of ideas in spatial theory. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's foundational interventions, I understand classical Hollywood cinema as participating in the 'production of space' on both formal and social levels. Within classical Hollywood *mise-en-scene*, space operates on mimetic and symbolic levels, situating characters in settings that are naturalistic as well as selected/constructed for their dramatic function. But space is also 'produced' by cinema in the sense that – according to Lefebvre - social relations are inherently spatial and the cinema is a key cultural agent in the structuring of such relations.[11] Thus throughout this thesis I have argued that Irish-American characters function to 'produce' whiteness through the expressive use of space.

The intersection between cultural and spatial frameworks occurs, I contend, through a socio-spatial motif of home. Developing silent era conventions of *mise-en-scene*, spaces of home initially function as the spatial expression of family ties and Old World values and thus as potential sites of conflict between competing (often fraternal) Irish-American masculinities. Such spaces are notably gendered and draw a link between private space, descent values and the feminine. But home also functions to express social relations, particularly in the long 1930s, where a series of narratives dealing with delinquent or deviant masculinities – *Boys Town*, *Angels With Dirty Faces* - are called 'home' into communities of New Deal manhood. Here, spaces of 'home' express a wider ideological set of shared, 'national' values, embodied and enforced by Irish-American

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[11] A useful overview of ideas pertaining to this conjunction is: theories exploring the interrelatedness of the social and spatial relations is Christian Kesteloot, Maarten Loopmans and Pascal De Decker, 'Space in Sociology, An Exploration of a Difficult Conception', in Katrien De Boyser, Caroline Dewilde et al. *Between the social and the spatial: exploring the multiple dimensions of poverty and social exclusion.* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 113-132

male figures of religious and military authority. The link between this sense of home and the President as a figure of 'national manhood' is made explicit in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* and *The Long Gray Line* where once rebellious and disruptive Irish American protagonists are welcomed into the White House; the physical and symbolic site of white patriarchal legitimacy and authority.

In the aftermath of WWII a motif of home continues but becomes more complex in its deployment as well as more expressly linked to contemporary intersections of space and race. In the two chapters dealing with this period I argue that this motif can be read in relation to anxieties around what Edward Dimendberg has described as 'the decentralizing dynamic of centrifugal space and the emergence of abstract space of the postwar American metropolis,'[12] and the spatialisation of race – or 'white flight' - during this period. On the one hand this is expressed through the disorientated Irish American masculinities of *film noir* and a nostalgic desire to 'go home'; explicit in a film like *Asphalt Jungle* but muted and more misunderstood by the rogue cops of William P McGivern. On the other hand I read the escapist 'white cottage' fantasies of films like *Top o' the Morning* and *The Quiet Man* as allegories of white domesticity which recuperate ethnic decent to reconfigure and reinforce the conservative racial and gender politics of the post war suburb. In these films the motif of home has come full circle – the white cottage and the White House are superimposed in a construction of whiteness that is simultaneously innocent and reactionary. When John Wayne runs hand in hand into White o' Morn with Mary Kate Danaher he not celebrates a final 'coming home' to a space free of anxieties about money (the immigrant's original complaint) and 'racial' Others (the immigrant's original condition). It is, in only slightly disguised form, what Lori Rotskoff describes as the post war 'ideal of masculine domesticity':

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[12] Edward Dimendberg, From Berlin to Bunker Hill: Urban Space, Late Modernity, and Film Noir in Fritz Lang's and Joseph Losey's *M, Wide Angle* 19.4 (1997) 62-93, 79

a new mode of [white] manhood which stressed men's roles as fathers and husbands, was part of a more general redefinition of domestic life that entailed the rise of 'companionate marriage' . . . and the expansion of the suburbs, which created a spatial context for a more intense form of family life.'[13]

Thirty years after *The Callahans and the Murphys,* Hollywood thus universalizes the particular and offers audiences a 'natural' vision of home which through 'slight of hand'[14] conflates the Irish American immigrant past with contemporary norms of hegemonic whiteness.

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[13] Lori Rotskoff, *Love on the Rocks: Men, Women, and Alcohol in Post-World War II America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 32
[14] The term is from Hamilton Carroll, *Affirmative Reaction,* 10

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Angels with Dirty Faces. Directed by Michael Curtiz, 1938.

Asphalt Jungle. Directed by John Huston, 1950.

Boys Town. Directed by Norman Taurog, 1938.

City for Conquest. Directed by Anatole Litvak, 1940.

Drill Ye Tarriers Drill. Biograph, 1900.

Ella Cinders, Directed by Alfred Green, 1926.

Fighting Father Dunne. Directed by Ted Tetzlaff, 1948.

Gentleman Jim. Directed by Raoul Walsh, 1942.

Going My Way. Directed by Leo McCarey, 1944.

Guadalcanal Diary. Directed by Lewis Seiler, 1943.

Kitty Foyle. Directed by Sam Wood, 1940.

Lady Killer. Directed by Roy Del Ruth, 1935.

M. Directed by Fritz Lang, 1931.

Mildred Pierce. Directed by Michael Curtiz, 1945.

Mysterious Disappearance of a Policeman, American Mutoscope. 1899.

Nora's Fourth of July. Biograph, 1901.

Now Voyager. Directed by Irving Rapper, 1942.

Off His Beat. Biograph, 1903.

Our Deaf Friend Fogarty. Biograph, 1904.

Regeneration. Directed by Raoul Walsh, 1915.

Riley the Cop. Directed by John Ford, 1928.

Rogue Cop. Directed by Roy Rowland, 1954.

San Francisco. Directed by WS Van Dyke, 1936.

Sergeant Madden. Directed by Josef Von Sternberg, 1939.

Shield for Murder. Directed by Howard W Koch, *1954.*

Stella Dallas. Directed by King Vidor, 1937.

The Bells of St Marys. Directed by Leo McCarey, 1945.

The Fighting 69th. Directed by William Keighley, 1940.

The Great John L. Directed by Frank Tuttle, 1945.

The Irish in Us. Directed by Lloyd Bacon, 1935.

The Jazz Singer. Directed by Alan Crosland, 1927

The Lad from Old Ireland. Directed by Sidney Olcott, 1910

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The Naked City. Directed by Jules Dassin, 1948.

The Phantom President. Directed by Norman Taurog, 1932.

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The Quiet Man. Directed by John Ford, 1952.

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Written on the Wind. Directed by Douglas Sirk, 1956

Yankee Doodle Dandy. Directed by Michael Curtiz, 1942.