



Irish Film Studyguide



Tony Tracy

Contents

SECTION ONE

A brief history of Irish film	3
Recurring Themes	6

SECTION TWO

Inside I'm Dancing

Cast & Synopsis	7
Story and Structure	7
Key Scene Analysis I	7
Themes	8
Key Scene Analysis II	9
Student Worksheet	11

Bloody Sunday

Cast & Synopsis	12
Making & Filming History	12/13
Characters	13/14
Key Scene Analysis	14
Style	15
What happened after?	15
References	16
Student Worksheet	17

Adam & Paul

Interview with Lenny Abrahamson, director	18
---	----

INTRODUCTION

This studyguide has been devised to accompany the Irish film strand of our Transition Year Moving Image Module, the pilot project of the Arts Council Working Group on Film and Young People. In keeping with TY Guidelines which suggest a curriculum that relates to the world outside school, this strand offers students and teachers an opportunity to engage with and question various representations of Ireland on screen. The guide commences with a brief history of the film industry in Ireland, highlighting recurrent themes and stories as well as mentioning key figures. Detailed analyses of two films – *Inside I'm Dancing* and *Bloody Sunday* – follow, along with student worksheets. Finally, Lenny Abrahamson, director of the highly successful *Adam & Paul*, gives an illuminating interview in which he outlines the background to the story, his approach as a filmmaker and his response to the film's achievements. We hope you find this guide a useful and stimulating accompaniment to your teaching of Irish film.

Alicia McGivern

Irish Film Institute

WRITER – TONY TRACY

Tony Tracy was former Senior Education Officer at the Irish Film Institute. During his time at IFI, he wrote the very popular *Introduction to Film Studies* as well as notes for teachers on a range of films including *My Left Foot*, *The Third Man*, and *French Cinema*. Currently lecturer in film studies at the Huston School of Film, National University of Ireland, Galway, he is a director of the Fresh Film Festival (Limerick) and a long-time contributor on film matters, to RTÉ Radio One's arts and culture programmes including 'Rattlebag' and 'The Eleventh Hour'.



A brief history of Irish Film

INTRODUCTION

Ireland today is a country with a relatively recent but nevertheless impressive history of filmmaking. Our internationally renowned directors, such as Jim Sheridan and Neil Jordan, have established themselves among the leading filmmakers of our time. Many younger directors – including Kirsten Sheridan, Damien O'Donnell, Paddy Breathnach and Lenny Abrahamson – are carving out reputations at home and abroad. It is possible to speak of an Irish filmmaking industry with recognisable and celebrated filmmakers and films.

Despite recent successes, however, the history of Irish film is an uneven one. Ireland has had a culture of filmmaking and film attendance and interest in Ireland since the beginnings of the medium in the closing years of the 19th century. We have remained a committed nation of cinema-goers to this day, with amongst the highest *per-capita* attendance in Europe. Irish newspapers, magazines, radio and television all feature film reviews and film-related discussion prominently. We have also produced a number of internationally known film personalities, including actors, cinematographers and directors.

But Irish film history, perhaps to an extent unparalleled in the rest of Europe, has never been about a clear and identifiable body of films made by a constant group of artists and technicians. This difficulty was due in the past to a number of factors, including a lack of state investment (unlike our larger European neighbours), a small domestic audience and the absence of film training and courses. Added to this is the fact that our use of English language and stunning locations has made Ireland an attractive location for foreign productions.

LOOKING BACK

An overview of Irish film history might identify three broad categories:

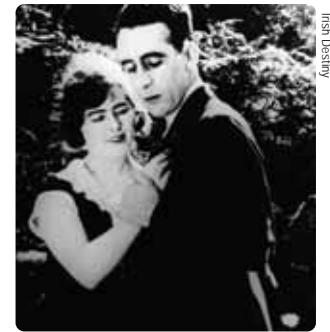
- I Early cinema: the silent and sound films from between 1910-1975 made mostly by foreign (American, British) film-makers but alongside the efforts of Irish producers
- II Indigenous filmmaking: the so-called 'first-wave' from the mid 1970s to 1990
- III 'Contemporary' Irish cinema – beginning with the Oscar successes of *My Left Foot* (1989) and *The Crying Game* (1992) in the early 1990s, through the re-establishment of the Irish Film Board in 1993, up to today

This is a vague and necessarily crude division of production history but it does give context to our understanding of contemporary Irish film.

I Early Cinema

The Star of Erin Theatre of Varieties (now the Olympia Theatre) showed the first publicly exhibited films in Ireland on April 20th, 1896. But it was not until 1909 that Ireland's first dedicated cinema, The Volta, opened on Dublin's Mary Street, the brainchild of one James Joyce. Though the venture would fail under the future famed writer's direction, the cinema itself would continue until the 1940s.

One of the most important film producers in Ireland in those early years was Sidney Olcott and his Kalem film company. Their first film, *The Lad From Old Ireland* (1910), a story about an Irish emigrant, is also credited with being the first American location film shot outside the USA. Among the Kalem productions were a series of historical dramas, obviously conceived with the large Irish immigrant audiences of America's big cities in mind – homesick for their history and landscape.



Irish Destiny

One of the most notable of the few indigenous films from the silent period was *Irish Destiny* (1926), now available on DVD. A simple story, it followed the activities of an IRA volunteer during the war of independence and wove a love interest into a visually dramatic narrative. The war was a recent memory at the time of the film's release in 1926, which marked the tenth anniversary of the Easter Rising. The combination of politics, passion and postcard-views would be frequently repeated in subsequent film productions.

Foreign Productions in Ireland: Ireland as Location

The sound era in Ireland was dominated by American and British film productions, many of which were highly influential in the projection of images of Ireland on international screens.



My Left Foot

One of the first films made in the sound era was Robert Flaherty's visually stunning *Man of Aran* (1935). It combined the story of a family's heroic struggle with nature (fishing, farming) on the Aran Islands with the director's interest in portraying the traditions and habitat of indigenous peoples. This interest also informed one of his earlier films, *Nanook of the North*, which focussed on the Inuit people.

A brief history of Irish Film



The Quiet Man

Perhaps the best known Irish film made by a foreign director is *The Quiet Man*, a love story concerning Mary Kate Danaher (Maureen O'Sullivan) and returned Irish-American Sean Thornton (John Wayne). Directed by John Ford in 1952 it was based on an original story by Maurice Walsh, a popular Kerry writer. Though the film is often seen as the touchstone for 'Oirish' stereotypes in its characterisation and photography (glorious Technicolor which made the colours extremely vivid), it remains one of the most popular films set in Ireland. *Ryan's Daughter* (1970) was a production of MGM studios, the Hollywood studio with a tradition of film-making on a grand visual and emotional scale. Directed by English director David Lean, it cost more than \$10,000,000 and was, at the time, the most expensive film ever made in Ireland and combined nature, landscape and emotion in a situation of violent turmoil.

John Huston, a Hollywood director with a reputation going back to the 1940s (*The Maltese Falcon*, *Asphalt Jungle*), chose to live and work in Ireland from 1952 until the early 1970s. His last film was *The Dead* (1987), adapted from the James Joyce story of the same name. Mostly shot in the US as Huston was too ill to travel, its Dublin street scenes vividly capture a snowy January night.



Poitin

Other films of significance made in Ireland during this period include *Odd Man Out* (Carol Reed, 1947) starring James Mason as an injured IRA man on the run in Belfast, *Captain Lightfoot* (Douglas Sirk, 1955, starring Rock Hudson), *Shake Hands With the Devil* (Michael Anderson, 1959, starring James Cagney), *Images* (Robert Altman, 1972), and Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (1975).

II Indigenous Irish Film Making

In the 1970s a number of Irish writer/directors – Bob Quinn, Pat Murphy, Joe Comerford, Cathal Black and others – came to the fore. These writer/directors constituted the first group of Irish filmmakers who worked to establish a continuity of production dealing with indigenous stories.



Man of Aran

What distinguished their diverse films from the productions that had gone before was a less polished style and an interest in darker, more controversial stories which were the very antithesis of the 'landscape-melodramas' which typified so many of the international productions mentioned above. The films made during this period were often controversial and distinctly 'un-Hollywood'.

Bob Quinn's first film *Poitin* (1978), starring Donal McCann, Cyril Cusack and Niall Tobin, tried to offer a different point of view from the visual and character stereotypes created by films like *Man of Aran* and *Ryan's Daughter*, and later, *Far and Away* (1997). In Quinn's film, the west of Ireland is presented as physically hostile and characters are isolated and often unlovable with selfish intentions. Other films showed previously unseen sides of the Irish experience: the hardships of inner-city life in *Pigs* (Cathal Black, 1984), *Withdrawal* (Joe Comerford, 1974) and *Down the Corner* (Cathal Black, 1978); woman's role in Irish history in *Maeve* (1982) and *Anne Devlin* (1984) (both by Pat Murphy); the negative influence of the Catholic church in *Our Boys* (Cathal Black, 1980) – a film commissioned but subsequently banned by RTÉ because of its unflattering portrayal of the Christian Brothers.

III Contemporary Irish Film

The re-forming of the Irish Film Board/Bord Scannán na hÉireann in 1993 (it had previously existed from 1982-1987 but was disbanded by a government keen to make cuts in spending), along with tax incentives known as Section 481 (which encourages foreign film productions to come to Ireland), have had an enormously beneficial impact on the Irish film industry – resulting in more Irish-produced films in the 1990s than in the entire ninety years that went before! The Irish Film Board exists to help with the writing of scripts, production grants and assistance with the distribution and publicity of Irish film. Along with a wide variety of stories and representations of Ireland, a sustained period of production has resulted in the training of world-class film and sound technicians and the emergence of internationally renowned actors and directors.



The Butcher Boy

NOTABLE IRISH DIRECTORS

Jim Sheridan has achieved extraordinary commercial and critical success from a relatively small number of films. His first film, an adaptation of Christy Browne's autobiography *My Left Foot*, won Oscars for actors Daniel Day Lewis in the title role and Brenda Fricker as his mother (from five Oscar nominations!). Most of Sheridan's films have been recognisably Irish in subject matter while attempting to attract a wider, particularly American, audience through their structure and story-telling style. His most commercially successful film, *In the Name of the Father*, combined his ongoing preoccupation



The Magdalene Sisters

with father-son stories with the story of the false imprisonment in Britain of Gerry Conlon of the Guildford Four and his father Giuseppe. Following the success of the semi-autobiographical *In America* (2003), Sheridan took on another biography, this time that of US rapper 50 Cent in *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* (2005), which signalled a move to non-Irish settings.

Neil Jordan has made over fifteen films ranging from celebrated literary adaptations; *The Butcher Boy* (1997), *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005), *The End of the Affair* (1999); historical epic *Michael Collins* (1997); quirky personal films *The Crying Game* (1992), *The Miracle* (1991) and a big-budget, big-star Hollywood horror, *Interview with a Vampire* (1994). An accomplished prose writer as well as filmmaker, Jordan's films are emotionally colder than Sheridan's and often deal with questions of identity and place in conservative societies, frequently exploring marginal characters and transgressive identities such as vampires, transvestites and criminals.

In the wake of Sheridan and Jordan, a group of younger directors have emerged, many of whom are beginning to establish international reputations. Damien O'Donnell made his first feature in England, the social comedy *East is East* (1999), and his second, the popular *Inside I'm Dancing*, is the subject of study in this guide. Paddy Breathnach's debut feature was the moody drama *Ailsa* (1994). He followed his next film, the commercially and critically successful buddy/crime comedy *I Went Down* (2000) with *Blowdry* (2001) – a story set in the UK hairdressing championships – before returning to home-turf with *Man About Dog* (2004) – another comedy which was hugely successful at the Irish box-office. *I Went Down* was written by the talented Irish playwright, Conor McPherson. McPherson also wrote and directed *Saltwater* (2000) and *The Actors* (2003) starring Michael Caine.



Give Up Yer Aul Sins

There have also been many successful Irish short films in recent years arising from a number of grant schemes. The best known of these schemes are run by the Irish Film Board/BSÉ and include Short Cuts (for 'live action' shorts), Frameworks (for animation), Oscailt (for short films in Irish) and Short Shorts. Notable successes in recent years include *Six Shooter* (2005) (which won the 2006 Oscar for



About Adam

Best Short Film), *Yu Ming is Ainm Dom* (2003), *Undressing My Mother* (2004) and *Give Up Yer Aul Sins* (2005). Working in short film provides an important entry point – and learning experience – for many young writers and directors who wish to work in the film industry.

RECURRING THEMES

Irish History

A considerable number of films have used Irish history and our ongoing dialogue with the past as source material. *H3* (2002), *Omagh* (2004) and *Bloody Sunday* (2004) all dealt with the recent history of Northern Ireland. *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002), *Sinners* (2002) and *Song For a Raggy Boy* (2003) all took grim inspiration from recent revelations dealing with Irish religious institutions. *Michael Collins* (1996) and *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006) focus on the Civil War and the War of Independence.

Gangster Stories

Ordinary Decent Criminal (2000), *Veronica Guerin* (2003), *When the Sky Falls* (2000) and *The General* (1998) all rejected traditional bucolic images of Irish landscape and community life in favour of Dublin stories of brutal criminality based on true events of the late 1990s. A number of real characters including the murdered journalist, Veronica Guerin, and Martin 'the General' Cahill were the subjects of these films.

Stories of Masculinity

Notable among the thematic trends of recent films is the recurring portrayal of male characters who exist on the periphery of Irish society or outside the law, *Accelerator* (1999), *Intermission* (2003), *Dead Bodies* (2003), *Headrush* (2002) and *Adam and Paul* (2004) are representative examples. All of these centre on young men who by accident or circumstance engage in illegal activities, with widespread use of alcohol or drugs evident.

Romantic Comedy

Alongside this development we have seen a number of less troubling works in the modern romantic comedy genre. Notable examples include *When Brendan Met Trudy* (2000) from a script by Roddy Doyle, *About Adam* (2000) and lower budget efforts like *Goldfish Memory* (2003), *The Trouble With Sex* (2005) and *The Honeymooners* (2005). These films are testament to the influence of international styles and story-patterns on Irish film-making, as well as the liberalisation of mores and values on a large young population growing up in an Ireland far less influenced by the moral teachings of the Catholic church than in the past.

THE IRISH FILM INDUSTRY TODAY

For the budding Irish filmmaker there has never been a better time to make films in Ireland. Alongside the experience and lessons learned by directors, writers and technicians over the past thirty years and a growing list of films to take inspiration from, there are also an increasing number of funding and training opportunities, third level courses and the availability of cheaper digital technology. For primary and secondary level students, the annual Ireland's Young Filmmaker competition exists as a opportunity to exhibit, compete and meet with fellow cineastes (see www.freshfilmfestival.net).

The success of Irish actors, directors and films, combined with our rich musical and literary traditions, has greatly contributed to Ireland being perceived as a place where filmmaking talent and expertise can successfully participate in a global entertainment and cultural medium.

Over the past 100 years, Irish life and landscape have been captured on film in a multitude of ways. From American 'super-productions' to local, low-budget shorts there now exists a variety of portraits of Ireland and the Irish. Recent films such as *The Front Line* (David Gleeson, 2006) have reflected changing Ireland in their stories. Of all the films made, some successfully attempt to say something of truth and meaning about our people, while others are little more than moving postcards. But all have an important influence in creating interpretations and perceptions of what Ireland means for ourselves and for others. For this reason it is not only important that film continues to reflect changes in Irish society but that we, as viewers, attempt to explore and question the meaning behind these images of Ireland.



When Brendan Met Trudy

Inside I'm Dancing

CREDITS

Director/Producer	Damien O'Donnell
Screenplay	Jeffrey Caine
Story	Christian O'Reilly
Director of Photography	Peter Robertson
Editor	Frances Parker
Production Designer	Tom Conroy
Music	David Julyan

CAST

Stephen Robertson	Michael Connolly
James McAvoy	Rory O'Shea
Alan King	Tommy
Romola Garai	Siobhan
Brenda Fricker	Eileen
Ruth McCabe	Annie
Gerard McSorley	Fergus Connelly
Tom Hickey	Con O'Shea
Anna Healy	Alice
Tagline:	'Live life like you mean it.'



Synopsis

24 year-old Michael Connolly (Stephen Robertson) has cerebral palsy and is a long-term resident of the Carrigmore Residential Home for the Disabled, run by the formidable Eileen (Brenda Fricker). His life is transformed when the maverick Rory O'Shea (James McAvoy) moves in. Michael is stunned to discover that fast talking Rory, who can move only his right hand, can understand his almost unintelligible speech. Rory's dynamic and rebellious nature soon sparks a flame in Michael, introducing him to a whole new world outside of Carrigmore where he experiences the highs and lows of independent living.

EXPLORING THE FILM

Story and Structure

Inside I'm Dancing tells the story of two young men as they embark on a journey of self-discovery through their search for independent living and love. The film is unusual in some respects. It does not feature a central heroic figure who overcomes obstacles to 'get the girl' in the tradition of the Hollywood action film. Instead it is concerned with two disabled characters who are more complex than they at first seem to both the audience and each other. And they don't get 'the girl'. But they do learn a good deal about relationships. Despite its unusual elements, the film bears similarities with well-established patterns of film storytelling.

It has been suggested that many Hollywood films (and films made in the Hollywood model) can be reduced to just two story patterns: 'A Man Goes on a Journey' and 'A Stranger Comes to Town'. A bit reductive, perhaps, but if you try applying it to films you have seen you'll be surprised see how many can be covered by one or a combination of these definitions.

This film combines these plot patterns. Rory is the stranger who comes to the nursing home, bringing with him a different set of values to those of the community. This conflict sets in motion the drama of the story and thus the journey – both literal and metaphorical – that he and Michael embark upon. But before we discuss the details of that journey, let's consider the 'stranger' and the 'town'.

Key Scene Analysis I: 'A Stranger Comes to Town'

The opening scene introduces the audience to the central characters of the story and their location in Carrigmore. It foregrounds two of the central themes: freedom and incarceration. A comical tone is established which is maintained throughout the film and works as a foil of optimism to intermittent feelings of hopelessness and occasional cynicism.

As the film's credits play we become conscious of *setting*: it appears to be an institutional (public) rather than a domestic space which immediately, even sub-consciously, creates a set of associations in the mind of the viewer.

In the first shot, against a melancholy piano soundtrack, we see Michael in profile, in the foreground. He is in a wheelchair as is an unidentified woman in the background. Michael's position in the frame, the way he is lit, his facial expression, and the fact that he is pointing in the opposite direction to the woman all mark him out as in some way isolated in this environment.

The cleaner moves through the day room with the floor polisher and this reveals the inhabitants of the home watching television. The 1970s BBC TV children's classic *Bagpuss* is the object of their

Inside I'm Dancing

attention. Given their age, they are an unlikely audience and this detail creates an impression of infantilisation among the residents. (There is also the association between the sleepy shop where Bagpuss and his motley collection of friends live and Carrigmore). As Eileen (Brenda Fricker) enters asking if anyone wants to go to Mass (an indication of the values and atmosphere of the home), Michael, who is aware of the floor polisher's flex, tries to warn her of the impending danger. However, because of his muffled diction, she has no idea what he is saying and misinterprets his prescient warning as an indication that he wants to go to the toilet. This becomes a second instance of the infantilising instinct of the institution. But the mood has subtly changed, marked by the soundtrack. We are building to a comic climax as the film cuts between Eileen attempting to understand Michael with the aid of his alphabet, the cleaner polishing the TV screen, oblivious and indifferent to those watching it, and now the entrance of Annie (Ruth McCabe) blithely carrying flowers before tripping dramatically and comically on the flex. This is a very definition of slapstick – the audience are complicit with a marginal character, observing the bumbling and physical humiliation of figures of authority. The opening scene puts us definitively on the 'side' of Michael, and suspicious of the abilities, if not the good intentions, of those in charge.

Then the stranger Rory arrives at the home. The first image of him (a medium shot) is behind bars – the bars sharp in the foreground while he is blurred in the background. He peers through a gap in the 'letter-box' frame. Composition is used here to create a set of associations about character. This is a young man under the yoke of authority. The sound of a mechanical lift and his electric wheelchair give him a somewhat mechanised aspect; his dour demeanour extends this sense of a diminished humanity. His punk style – spikey, gelled hair, nose ring and studded jacket – add to the overall impression of a rebellious and marginal figure, likely to be at odds with the sedate, *Bagpuss*-watching, residential community.

This sense of impending conflict is developed with Rory's entry to the day room. His joking about his disability and coarse language are in contrast with the personalities of the other residents, made clear by a short series of static, mostly passive or uncomprehending reaction shots to his self-introduction.

While Rory appears unimpressed with his room, we learn more about typical life in the home, and the physical challenges of cerebral palsy, as Michael is prepared for bed.

In an echo of the final lines of *Bagpuss*, Michael and all his friends go to sleep. But suddenly loud music is heard – a collection of samples from 1950s American TV concerning the prophetic 'expulsion of Dexter'. It visibly disturbs the gentle Michael who presses his alarm bell, as do many other residents. This disruption is an assault on routine and the 'Bagpuss' ethos of the home.

Eileen enters Rory's room, which is decorated with props of rebellion. She removes his stereo. Telling him that 'There are rules here' and that he needs 'to have consideration for the other people', he retorts that 'If they can hear me, at least they know that I'm alive', and invokes the others to shout – if they're alive. They don't. He remains, in his own words, 'the Carrigmore 1' – a reference to the 'Birmingham Six' and 'Guildford Four' cases of the 1990s where Irish citizens had been unjustly jailed in Britain. By the end of this scene, the 'stranger' who has come to the home has totally disturbed the prevailing culture with his own values.

THEMES

Friendship

Now that Rory has been introduced, his relationship with Michael quickly develops across three short scenes: (a) in art class – when Rory makes an amusing reference to Stephen Hawking; (b) Michael's physical therapy which Rory unceremoniously barges in on but reveals that he understands Michael's garbled words; (c) in the 'hair gel' scene where Rory and Michael help each other to look 'cool'. These encounters revolve around Rory reevaluating the opposition between 'outside' and 'inside' for Michael, and by extension for us, the audience. This is made most explicit in the third vignette:

- Rory You should think about sprucing yourself up Mary . . .
 it's all about images these days
- Michael What's out there?
- Rory 'Out There' is out there . . . and I should be out there.
 Don't you want to be like everyone else, get arrested,
 get dressed, get laid . . . How long have you been living
 in places like this?
- Michael All my life.
- Rory What crime did you commit?

This exchange marks the beginning proper of their relationship and sets in motion the drama of the film. In an unconventional exploration of the Odd Couple formula, they become unlikely, but mutually supportive partners in search of freedom and independence.





Family

A lack of family ties and support unites Rory and Michael, even though their circumstances differ. Significantly, they both lack mother-figures and their fathers have proved disappointing.

In the absence of a recognisable family home, the two young men establish their own home. The flat, reluctantly provided by Rory's father, is the goal of 'independent living' – a long held aspiration of Rory and then, under his influence, of Michael. In this case independent not only refers to location but also a desire to become an adult: to 'leave home' and 'leave the home(s)'. It is the 'Out There', they speak of during their first conversation, the place where life happens without curfews, rules or annoying consideration of others. Their first meal of Pot Noodles and champagne sums this up succinctly.

The flat is also, in a very real way, a new kind of experience of home, and offers a new definition of family. The physical independence of Michael and Rory will always be qualified because they require assistance but, unexpectedly, life on their own raises questions about emotional independence. Siobhan's entry into their lives presents both solutions and new questions. She is engaged by them precisely because she is neither a traditional nor even a trained carer. She is also around the same age as they are. Siobhan assumes the role of both an attractive female peer and a tolerant and enabling female carer; she is an ideal feminine presence in the young men's lives. With these qualities she completes the improvised family. But how accurate and therefore sustainable is their picture of her?

Love and Desire

Central to the film's exploration of the young men's freedom is the theme of romantic love. Perhaps surprisingly it is the less worldly Michael who brings this theme to the surface in his feelings for Siobhan. He develops an enormous crush on her; an entirely innocent attraction characterised by one person's identification of another as a romantic ideal. Rory's attitude to Siobhan is different. We are left with a long, motionless shot of Rory after she has placed

her hand on his mouth, to shut him up. This alerts us to the possible ambiguity of her status in the flat. But later, when she returns to help him to bed following his disappearance and arrest, we are reminded, as he is, of his need for assistance – she is restored once again unambiguously to the role of carer.

Key Scene Analysis II: The fancy-dress party

The fancy dress party is an inspired and revealing departure in the story. It is a welcome break from the claustrophobia and growing tensions of the flat and allows us to see the characters in another light. Unlike the earlier pub scene, they are not here as an act of defiance or escape but rather they have been invited and are welcome. The casual manner in which the invitation to the party is received – Siobhan meeting a friend while out walking with Michael – is exactly what they had hoped for in life outside the home. The party scene also has a slightly unreal or dreamlike quality to it making this as much an imagined and 'out of time' moment as a 'real' one.

The scene commences in the flat, when we are introduced to the characters for the evening. Rory is Dr Strangelove, a character played by Peter Sellers in Stanley Kubrick's film of the same name. There is a grim and dark humour in Rory's choice. He knows that he is indeed a strange one to love. He resists it to the point that he often refuses to believe it to be a possibility. This is not dressing up as fantasy but as a kind of truth-telling.

Michael has cast himself as the Officer from Richard Gere's film, *An Officer and a Gentleman* (1982). This tells us something very different about him. His vision is of an ideal, heroic, version of masculinity as displayed in the film. The tagline for that film sums up a very different sensibility from Rory's: 'Life gave him nothing, except the courage to win . . . and a woman to love.'

Finally, Siobhan as a sexy nurse encapsulates her ambiguous status in the life of Rory and Michael. Her costume, unlike those worn by the young men is not an imitation of an actual costume but rather a projection of male fantasy, specifically theirs.

The costumes allow role-playing to take place but it ends badly for Michael. He cannot overcome reality by wishful thinking alone. Following the party comes an unmasking. Michael and Rory come to understand things about themselves that had remained unspoken. They are rejected by Siobhan, who decides to leave, not because of their disabilities but because they both, in different ways, refuse to see and accept the world as it is. She challenges Rory's version of the truth.

It's truth you want – If you want to be equal you have to show people the same respect that you demand of them . . . don't assume that you've an automatic right to love because you're in a wheelchair.

Inside I'm Dancing

The revelations are extremely painful for them both but they also bring them closer together, and in doing so, make them more independent.

Love and Death

Following Siobhan's departure we see Michael attempt to 'go home'. He leaves the apartment in loneliness and despair but is pursued by Rory who implores him to return. The scene on the bridge is extremely important in the growth of the two central characters and in the development of their relationship. It is a symbolic bridge to maturity at which they have arrived through a good deal of emotional suffering.

In the final part of the film we learn that Rory had been likely to die for some time; unknown to us and those around him, including Michael, his search for independence was a final wish before life would be taken away from him.

As a consequence of this revelation, romantic love gives way to fraternal love in Michael's emotions and motivations. He urges the board to change its mind and grant Rory independent living – which they do, in principle. His death now becomes a kind of liberation – not just from his physical limitations, but also for Michael who has finally come to embrace his independence.

Michael's speech to the board has a particularly strong argument. 'How do you learn to live responsibly?' he asks, responding to their earlier refusals. 'You live in the world, you make your own decisions, you make your own mistakes.' Mistakes are an important part of the process of growing up, of self acceptance and learning. The final mood of the film, that Rory touched, inspired and changed those he met has the character of a 'messianic narrative' – a story like that of Jesus – not uncommon in American cinema. Other examples would include *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), *ET* (1982), *Spider-Man* (2002).

Other films with theme of disability

Rear Window (1954)
Rain Man (1988)
My Left Foot (1989)
The Sweet Hereafter (1992)
A Beautiful Mind (2001)



Representing Disability

Inside I'm Dancing is unusual in a number of ways but particularly in the way it foregrounds physically disabled characters. The majority of mainstream films represent mainstream characters: white, middle-class and physically able men and women form the overwhelming majority of characters represented on film.

On the film's release, there was a good deal of discussion around its particular representation of physical disability. While most felt that it was a fresh and at times blackly humorous portrait, there were some who felt it was uninspired and insulting. One of the main points concerned the absence of disabled actors but in contrast to this, disabled groups spoke of the positive aspect of seeing a story relevant to their lives on the screen, that the film would provide some insight into the reality of life for disabled people.

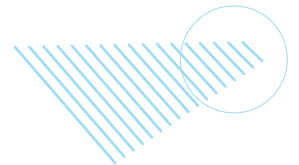
Final Thoughts

A powerful story is one which is both specific and universal. It is a tale in which we recognise and empathise with others and also within which we can place ourselves. Do you think that *Inside I'm Dancing* has the qualities of such a story? If it is then what elements of the characters and their struggles do you identify with?

Damien O'Donnell

Filmography (as director)

Inside I'm Dancing (2004)
aka *Rory O'Shea Was Here* (USA)
Heartlands (2002)
What Where (2000)
East Is East (1999)
Chrono-Perambulator (1999)
35 Aside (1995)
aka *Thirty Five Aside* (USA)



Useful websites

www.pwdi.ie	People with Disabilities in Ireland
www.ncbi.ie	National Council for the Blind of Ireland
www.disability.ie	Resources for people with disabilities in Ireland
www.enableireland.ie	Enable Ireland – services for people with disabilities
www.rehab.ie	Rehab – an independent non-profit organisation which provides training, employment, social care and commercial services for some 60,000 people each year in Ireland and the UK
www.disability-federation.ie	Supporting organisations to enable people with disabilities



EXPLORATION 1

Key Scene Analysis I: 'A Stranger comes to Town'

Review the opening sequence of the film – from the credits to the end of Rory's introduction to the other inmates of Carrigmore.

- How would you describe the atmosphere of the 'town' – the nursing home?
- Make a list of adjectives. What visual information (costumes, characters, camera angles etc) contributes to the creation of atmosphere?
- What is the community in this 'town' like? Are there authority figures? Is the community shown to us as active or passive?
- What are their relationships like with each other? What is the effect of the comic scene in this sequence?
- What does it tell us about the characters of Michael, Eileen and Annie?

RELATIONSHIPS

The Odd Couple

- How is Michael depicted when we first meet him? Make a list of comparisons between him and Rory. How do they differ? What do they share?
- In what sense could Rory be described as a 'stranger'? Why has he 'come to town' (the nursing home) in the first place?
- Why does Rory feel that he doesn't belong in the nursing home? What does his appearance tell us about him?
- What is the attitude of Eileen and Annie to Rory? What is the threat Rory brings to the home?
- The friendship between Rory and Michael develops over the course of the story. A large part of our interest in this friendship arises out of the fact that they are so different to begin with: a classic Odd Couple. Identify the three early encounters between Rory and Michael. How does each mark a development in their relationship?
- What does Michael mean by Rory's 'gift'?
- What is the significance of the hair-gel scene in our understanding of Rory and Michael's relationship?
- What is the revelation which cements their relationship in the first part of the film? In your opinion, why is it of such significance?

Family

- Why does Rory not take his Dad's offer of going home with him?
- How does knowledge of Rory's family background help us understand his ambition for independent living?
- What is Michael's reason for wanting to leave Carrigmore?
- How true is it to describe the three young people in the flat as a new family?
- In your opinion is Rory blinded by his own needs or does he take Michael's interests into account? Is it likely that a man in Michael's father's position would abandon his son?
- Do you find this part of the story credible? Why is it necessary to the story?

Love and Desire

This theme is introduced on the flag-day. Led by Rory, the pair escape to a pub and proceed to spend the money collected on alcohol.

- Is our reaction to the characters altered by seeing them 'outside' the home? What is the reaction of the two girls they attempt to chat-up?
- Contrast the very different personalities of Rory and Michael in this environment. When Rory tells Michael 'I'll show you romance', what does he mean?

Meeting Siobhan

- What kind of person is Siobhan when we first meet her? Does she respond in a typical or surprising way to the two drunken boys in wheelchairs? From whose point of view do we see her?
- What do we learn about the two male characters from their adventure? How does it prepare us for what is to follow? Would you describe the sequence as 'romantic'?

Siobhan as Carer

- Why do they choose Siobhan as a carer? Compare Siobhan with the staff of Carrigmore.
- How is Siobhan depicted in the film? Why do you think this is? What is the nature of Michael's feelings for Siobhan? Do you think that she is aware of these feelings?

Key Scene Analysis II: The fancy dress party

- What is the importance of the party in the film? Compare the party scene with the opening in the day room at Carrigmore.
- How do Rory and Michael differ in their expectations of the party?
- Try to suggest (from the film titles) what the costumes from *Dr. Strangelove* and *An Officer and a Gentleman* tell us about the characters wearing them? What does Siobhan's costume tell us about her?
- What happens to the relationships between the three characters as a result of the party?
- Explain the meaning of Siobhan's speech to Rory as she leaves.

Love and Death

- How does the knowledge that Rory was expecting to die affect your understanding of his character?
- Do you respect him more or do you see his actions as selfish?

Representing Disability

- Considering issues of race, gender, class and nationality, ask yourself what kind of characters dominate cinematic representations?
- What kind of characters are usually excluded from most mainstream cinema? Why do you think there is such imbalance in representation?
- Why, in particular, have there been so few films featuring disabled characters as central characters?
- Can you recall any films which include physically or mentally disabled characters? List some titles. How are the disabled characters portrayed?

Bloody Sunday

CREDITS

Director:	Paul Greengrass
Screenplay	Paul Greengrass
Director of Photography	Ivan Strasburg
Editor	Clare Douglas
Production Designer	John Paul Kelly
Music	Dominic Muldoon

CAST

James Nesbitt	Ivan Cooper
Tim Pigott Smith	Major General Robert Ford
Nicholas Farrell	Bridadeer MacLellan
Christopher Villiers	Major Steele
Gerard McSorley	Chief Supt Lagan
Allan Gildea	Kevin McCorry
Gerard Crossan	Eamonn McCann
Mary Moulds	Bernadette Devlin
Carmel McCallion	Bridget Bond
James Hewitt	Colonel Tugwell
Declan Duddy	Gerry Donaghy
Edel Frazer	Gerry's girl
Joanne Lindsay	Mary Donaghy

Synopsis

The film deals with events which took place in Derry (Londonderry) on 30 January 1972. It focuses on a central group of characters who were involved in a civil rights march on that day, for different reasons.

MP Ivan Cooper (James Nesbitt) is at the head of a march which has been organised by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) to protest against internment (see References page 16). The march will take place through the city's Catholic Bogside area. Intercut with his preparations are those of the British Army preparing to contain the route of the protest and arrest any 'hooligans' who may push the march towards violence. Finally we see teenager Gerry Donaghy (Declan Duddy) – with whom the film opens – assuring his family that he will avoid trouble. Donaghy is associated with a group of young men, some of whom are members of the IRA, though the film does not suggest that he is.

The main action of the film concerns the growing tension and eventual conflict between the forces of law – the British Army – and the marchers, and the disintegration of the peaceful protest into a violent conflict which results in the deaths of thirteen civilians.

Making History

Bloody Sunday is one of the most contested events in modern Irish and British history. The reasons for this are complex but important when attempting to understand the film *Bloody Sunday*, which itself is an act of narrating an interpretation of what happened in Derry on 30 January 1972.

The particular interpretation of the film is based on several facts pertaining to the day, of which there is irrefutable evidence and broad agreement: a march, organised by NICRA to demonstrate against the British policy of internment, took place in Derry, with around 20,000 members of the public taking part. Members of the British Army prevented the march from entering the city centre, and the main body moved to Free Derry Corner to attend a rally. However, some young men began throwing stones at soldiers in William Street. Soldiers of the Parachute Regiment, an elite regiment of the British Army, moved into the Bogside in an arrest operation. During the next thirty minutes these soldiers shot dead 13 men (another 14 people were wounded, one of whom later died in hospital) mainly with single shots to the head and body.



The official British Army response to this carnage was to claim that the Paratroopers (an elite soldier unit normally reserved for special fighting situations) had reacted to the threat of guns and nail-bombs from IRA elements in the crowd (referred to as 'hooligans' and 'yobs' in the film).

However, many eyewitnesses, including marchers and independent journalists, heavily disputed this account. In newspaper articles, books, interviews and contributions to public debate, a wide variety of testimonies offered a completely opposite version of events, claiming that the protesters had been shot at without provocation. In this view the British Army had acted in a deliberate and premeditated manner, intentionally killing members of the protesting public in a brutal and cynical fashion.

In the aftermath of Bloody Sunday, the British government, under the instructions of Prime Minister Edward Heath, established an enquiry into what had happened. The Widgery Report supported the army analysis of the events of the day, but it was quickly and widely labelled a cover-up. This led, in January 1998, to the establishment of a second investigation, known as the Saville enquiry – an exhaustive seven-year process of testimony that concluded in 2004. Its findings have not yet been published.



Filming History

Bloody Sunday differs from a typical feature film in that it has been developed from the actual events of Bloody Sunday. This presents particular challenges and responsibilities for the filmmaker.

The events depicted in the film are within living memory of many people (who have recollections and interpretations of their own) and involve the brutal death of lost family members and friends. But the truth of these events has been unacknowledged by state authorities for many years. For *Bloody Sunday* to have force as a film and as a contributor to the audience's knowledge and understanding of the event, it must be recognised as accurate, balanced and fair.

It is important to remember that *Bloody Sunday* is *not* a documentary – though it uses a style associated with news reportage. As a re-telling of events for a film, it must leave out what the filmmakers consider irrelevant, while concentrating on creating a story we can understand and become involved in. The film shapes historical facts (the march, the shootings etc) into a coherent narrative with a beginning, middle and end. Thus it combines documentary imagery (and historical fact) with a dramatic structure in order to create a complete film.

THE WORLD OF THE FILM

Opening Credits

Opening credits do more than simply communicate information about the name and stars of the film they precede. Filmmakers use these opening moments to introduce the mood and themes of the film. Sometimes we learn important information about characters and setting; other times it may be as simple as music and titles, which establish the world of the film.

The Characters – Real and Symbolic

The opening credit sequence of *Bloody Sunday* establishes clearly that there is in fact not just one, but two 'worlds' in the film: civilian

(working-class Derry) and military (the British Army). These worlds co-exist in physical proximity, that is, in the same place (Derry), but they differ radically in values, ambitions and point of view. They are, quite literally, worlds apart. The drama of *Bloody Sunday* arises from the clash between these two worlds.

In order to build audience involvement and identification, the filmmaker must clearly identify characters from each side, who personify this conflict. Obviously, there are also historical reasons for placing the real 'characters' of Major General Robert Ford as head of the British Army operation and Ivan Cooper as a central figure on the Human Rights march. In addition to these two perspectives, there is a third, less clearly defined story belonging to the young ex-prisoner Gerry, his fiancé Marie and their baby.

Major General Ford (Tim Pigott Smith) – the State, Law and Force

Robert Ford was commander of land forces for Northern Ireland. In the film he arrives on the eve of the march by helicopter; this introduction lends him a quality of authority and superiority which will be built upon as the film progresses. It also reinforces the idea of an identifiable armed force that comes from outside the community.

Ford is presented as a classic soldier. He is a man with a clear sense of purpose, which cannot be clouded by incidental and complicated realities. His sense of clarity marks him out from the other figures of state authority and control in the film, particularly Brigadier Patrick MacLellan, who seems conflicted about the use of force.

Ford's prognosis and ambition for the Army's role on the day of the march is articulated early on . . . 'Our job is to catch these hooligans . . . using maximum aggression . . . plenty of arrests . . . and if the shooting starts we're going to shoot back.' He makes no differentiation between 'jobs' and the civil rights marchers.

If Ford's ambitions on Bloody Sunday seem clear and unambiguous his position remains shadowy. He presents himself as an observer and yet of all the characters depicted in the film, only Ford seems to be fully aware of what is unfolding. Examining his role is key to understanding the film's interpretation of events.

Ivan Cooper (James Nesbitt) – Civil Rights

Ivan Cooper was one of the major figures of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and a founder member of the nationalist SDLP¹. He believed that the working classes of both communities could put religious prejudice behind them through human rights and reform. In the film, Cooper is placed as a counterpoint to Maj. Gen. Ford: one is a democratically elected representative to the state's legislature; the other is the face of state authority intent on quelling threats and dissent among the civilian population.

¹ Social Democratic and Labour Party

Bloody Sunday

We gain an insight into the times and thinking of Ivan Cooper when he names those who have inspired this march in his speech from the truck. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King were inspirational figures for civil rights protesters the world over during and after the 1960s. Both figures recognised that force and violence as a form of protest would simply confirm the view that their people were a threat to the majority, so they advocated peaceful protest.

Gerry Donaghy – Youth

Between the competing ideologies of Cooper (peaceful protest) and Ford (the use of force to keep order) is the figure of Gerry Donaghy. We learn little about him except that he's been 'lifted' (arrested) before and spent time in prison for rioting. His friends, like him, are nationalist in sympathy. We see a conflict of idealism and reality during a brief argument with his brother about the fact that the latter works 'for the Brits' in some capacity. His brother retorts that this 'puts bread on the table.'

Gerry is representative of the 13 men shot dead on Bloody Sunday. As a film requires a certain economy of narrative, Gerry's story allows us to move behind the better known figures of the event to the ordinary young men of the Bogside.

Gerry's death is not only representative but also symbolic. His girlfriend waits in vain for his return before silently retuning home. Gerry's friends will be those described by Ivan Cooper at the end of the film who will join the IRA and respond to violence with violence. His death brings with it the death of the civil rights movement.

Key Scene: 'They're firing real bullets . . .'

This scene is illustrative of the central conflicts of the film and represents the tipping moment of the drama from one of peaceful protest to one of state-sanctioned violence against unarmed citizens. We begin with a moment of reprieve from the tension that has been building since the beginning of the film. The threat of violence from the army seems to have passed or, rather, is confined to a small-scale skirmish on barricade number fourteen. The march has avoided any confrontation with the army by turning away from the barricades (which block entry to the city centre) and moving instead to the now iconic Free Derry Corner – a painted gable wall in an area outside of the city walls claimed as free (that is, of British rule) by its Catholic population.

Ivan Cooper has managed to bring the vast majority of the marchers along with him – his vision of a peaceful civil rights movement is still just about intact. Meanwhile, in the background we hear the shots of the British Army directed over the heads of a small group of young men who are shouting and throwing bricks. Cooper is introduced with other activists Bernadette Devlin and Eamonn McCann. He preaches a gospel of non-violence and peaceful resistance. 'Civil rights is not a soft option,' he says to the assembled marchers, adding that 'We have to show them that non-violence works,' unaware of how ironic these remarks will become in light of what is to follow.

The action cuts to Para One company, pent-up with anticipation and aggression in their claustrophobic personnel vehicles. Colonel Tugwell, desperate to take on the rioters, radios command base with a plea to engage: 'If we don't go now, we're going to miss them'.



At base command we see Brigadier MacLellan in the company of Derry's RUC police Chief Superintendent Lagan. Lagan has attempted on several occasions in the film to avoid violent conflict. Lagan now pleads for calm, 'You've stopped the march, you've won. MacLellan, under pressure, seems to attempt a compromise, giving the order for the soldiers to engage with the rioters but on foot. Army vehicles surge forward, cheered by Ford: 'Go One Para, go and get them, and good luck'. Once out of the 'Pigs' (personnel carriers), shooting breaks out, though it is unclear where it is coming from. We see one of the civilians brandish a pistol. There is more shooting. Civilians begin to fall. A priest is seen running to one fallen man. A soldier, later identified as Private Lomez, is heard shouting 'There's no targets . . . what are we shooting at?' Mayhem ensues as civilians run in panic. A ceasefire order has been issued but none of the British soldiers seems to be aware or are ignoring it as machine gun fire continues to be aimed at the hysterical, retreating crowd. A man waving a handkerchief is shot in front of Ivan Cooper. The shooting finally abates as the soldiers withdraw. A dead male is covered with the white civil rights banner, soaked in his blood.

Back at command base, Lagan sarcastically asks of MacLellan, 'You call that minimum force?'

FILM STYLE

Film style refers to the use of technical elements of filmmaking (sound, lighting, camera) and their relationship to the story. The style of the film is the way in which we experience the story. It combines visual elements of painting and photography with uniquely cinematic qualities of movement and duration.

In *Bloody Sunday*, the director Paul Greengrass (who made many TV documentaries prior to this, his first, feature film) uses a combination of effects to create a style more associated with news reportage than film. This style is often referred to as *cinema-verité* or *cinema direct* emphasising its immediate, urgent quality in place of the omniscient, objective narration favoured by traditional film aesthetics. Key to its effect is camera position and shot duration:

- In *cinema-verité* the camera is most often hand-held, on the shoulder of the operator, rather than placed on a tripod. This communicates a strong sense of movement and intimacy and facilitates an impression of 'being there' for the viewer. It is used effectively in *Bloody Sunday* to communicate danger, confusion and in the final scenes, a kind of numb shock at the sight of what has happened. The camera becomes a character and not simply a recorder.
- Along with camera technique, editing is crucial to the effect of this style. Frequently in the film, shot-duration is noticeably short – sometimes no more than a second or two. This is disorientating, adding a sense of threat and unpredictability for the viewer.

Additionally, the editor sometimes makes unexpected cuts away from the action or joins incidents after they have begun, reinforcing a sense of a wandering and vulnerable point of view trying to make sense of it all. Even the film's opening scenes are fragmentary and disorientating. This technique becomes particularly intense during the sequences where the soldiers fire on the marchers.

What happened after Bloody Sunday?

Bloody Sunday was a turning point in the history of Northern Ireland and in the history of NICRA. For Northern Ireland it meant the end of the regional parliament at Stormont. For NICRA it meant the end of the period of mass marches and street rallies. On the Sunday following the massacre at Derry, an estimated 100,000 people turned up in Newry in another NICRA march.

At the end of the film Ivan Cooper speaks these words:

'I just want to say this to the British Government . . . You know what you've just done, don't you? You've destroyed the civil rights movement, and you've given the IRA the biggest victory it will ever have. All over this city tonight, young men... boys will be joining the IRA, and you will reap a whirlwind.'

Or as Thomas Kinsella put it in his celebrated poem on Bloody Sunday, *Butcher's Dozen*,

Persuasion, protest, arguments

The milder forms of violence

Earn nothing but polite neglect.

England, the way to your respect

Is via murderous force, it seems;

You push us to your own extremes,

You condescend to hear us speak

Only when we slap your cheek.

For many this abandonment of peaceful protest for violence was the great tragedy of Northern Ireland for over thirty years.



Paul Greengrass

REFERENCES

Websites

The CAIN website is based at the University of Ulster and contains much visual and documentary material relating to Bloody Sunday as part of its wider resources. Particularly useful is its inclusion of extracts from relevant books, some of which have been quoted here. <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/bsunday/bs.htm>.

The official Bloody Sunday ('Saville') enquiry site: www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org.uk

Books

Civil Rights Movement. (1972), *Massacre at Derry*. Derry: Civil Rights Movement.

Grimaldi, Fulvio. (1972, 1998), *Blood in the Street*. Derry: Guildhall Press. [First published in March 1972 by Peoples' Democracy and Lotta Continua. Republished in 1998 by Guildhall Press.]

McCann, Eamonn., and Shiels, Maureen. (eds.) (1992),

Bloody Sunday in Derry: What Really Happened. Dingle: Brandon Books.

Mullan, Don. (1997), *Eyewitness Bloody Sunday*. Dublin: Wolfhound.

APPENDIX

Internment

The march on Bloody Sunday was protesting against a number of issues, principally internment (which we hear mentioned by Ivan Cooper on the morning of the march). In August 1971, Unionist prime minister Brian Faulkner, with the support of Edward Heath's Tory government in London, began to lock up 'trouble-makers' and suspected members of the IRA without charge or trial. More than 340 men (all Catholics) were taken to internment camps (prisons) in the initial swoop. In fact, few of these men belonged to the IRA.



Furthermore, internment was accompanied by a ban on protesting against it. But protests were carried out nonetheless in the Catholic area of the Bogside, which erected barricades to keep the British Army out. This is the background to the action of the film. Internment ended in 1975 but by then had resulted in widespread violence

We Shall Overcome

The march begins with the song 'We Shall Overcome', the hymn of the international civil rights movement. It articulates a faith that those with right, not might, will prevail.

The Selma to Montgomery marches in the southern state of Alabama were three marches that marked the political and emotional peak of the American Civil Rights movement. They were the culmination of the movement in Selma for voting rights for blacks. The first march occurred on Bloody Sunday, 7 March 1965, when 600 civil rights marchers were attacked by state and local police with billy clubs and tear gas. Only the third, and last, march successfully made it into the state capital, Montgomery.

In response to the terror and violence of the police, marchers sang *We Shall Overcome*, adapted from a hymn (which in turn came from a spiritual) composed in 1900 (*I Shall Overcome*). The song had been in circulation before Bloody Sunday (1965) but following the brutality it became an anthem for black non-violent protest, taken up by Dr King and others. Within five months of the third march, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

This historical context is reflected in the collective singing of the song in the march and the ideological vision of Ivan Cooper.

Paul Greengrass

Filmography (as director)

The Bourne Ultimatum (2007)

United 93 (2006)

The Bourne Supremacy (2004)

Bloody Sunday (2002)

The Murder of Stephen Lawrence (1999) (TV)

The Theory of Flight (1998)

The Fix (1997) (TV)

The One That Got Away (1996) (TV)

The Late Show (1 episode, 1995)

– *Sophie's World* (1995) TV Episode

Kavanagh QC (1 episode, 1995)

– *The Sweetest Thing* (1995)

Open Fire (1994) (TV)

When the Lies Run Out (1993) (TV)

Cutting Edge (1 episode, 1992)

– *Coppers* (1992)

Resurrected (1989)

Bloody Sunday Student Worksheet

Student Explorations

- When and where did Bloody Sunday take place?
- What was the purpose of the march?
- What is meant by the term civil rights?
- Name the main characters in the film
- Name the main organisations depicted in the film and explain the purpose and ambitions of each one.

Filming History

- Why is it important that the film *Bloody Sunday* be recognised as balanced and fair?
- Make a list of historical films. Is *Bloody Sunday* similar or different to other such films? How?
- Can a historical film be made from a neutral point of view, simply telling the 'facts'? Or to think about this in another way, must the filmmaker have a point of view?
- Is film a more or less convincing way of exploring history than history books? Explain.
- Why has it taken so long for a film to be made about Bloody Sunday?
- What is the central story that the filmmaker wants to tell in the film?
- What is meant by 'irrelevant' elements left out by the filmmakers? List the kind of information that is not included in the film.

THE WORLD OF BLOODY SUNDAY

The Opening Credits

- Who are we introduced to in this sequence?
- What do we learn about the characters and what is to come in the film?
- How do the motivations and attitudes of these two characters compare?
- What is the mood or tone of this sequence? How is the mood or tone established through (a) visual (camera) elements; (b) aural (sound) elements?
- Do you think that this is an effective opening sequence? Why?

THE CHARACTERS

Major General Robert Ford (Tim Pigott Smith)

- How are we introduced to Maj. Gen. Ford?
- How is he viewed by the members of the British Army already present in Northern Ireland?
- What kind of person is he? Why has he come to Derry?
- When Ford leaves Derry after the shooting he congratulates the Brigadier MacLellan and says that his role was, 'only observational'. Is this an accurate description of his participation on the day?
- Why does Maj. Gen. Ford believe the day to be a success?
- Contrast the views and values of Maj. Gen. Ford with those of Ivan Cooper.

Ivan Cooper (James Nesbitt)

- What kind of man is he? What do we learn about him? What is his status in the community? How do others view him?
- What personal circumstances have given urgency to Cooper's views and ambitions? How does he explain them to his girlfriend?
- Find out what Internment was. How relevant was this to the atmosphere of the march?
- The marchers sing a hymn-like song, 'We Shall Overcome'. What do the words express? Find out the origins of the song.
- What historical figures have inspired Cooper? How are such inspirations appropriate to Derry in 1973?

Gerry Donaghy

- Who is Gerry Donaghy?
- We see Gerry in two different contexts. How does knowledge about Gerry in both these contexts influence our understanding and judgement of him?
- Why is he included in the film, when so many others are not?
- How would you describe his social position and how relevant to the story is it?
- Why has Gerry spent time in prison already?
- What are his political views? How do you know?
- Why are nail bombs 'planted' on Gerry after he dies?

FILM STYLE

- Choose what you consider to be the dominant style of *Bloody Sunday* (even though you may not understand all these terms): magical; musical; realist; documentary; film noir; surrealist; western; sci-fi; expressionist; painterly . . .
- Define the style you have chosen. Can you give examples of other television shows or films where this style has been used? What are its strengths? Does it have weaknesses?
- *Bloody Sunday* is often referred to as a 'docu-drama'. What do you think this means?
- How might this term help us understand the relationship between style and story in the film?
- Do you think the style of the film is appropriate to the subject matter of *Bloody Sunday*? In what ways? Could it have been told in any other way?

AFTERMATH

- What is meant by the last words spoken by Ivan Cooper in the film? Did they turn out to be prophetic? Why?
- How is the destruction of the Civil Rights Movement represented in a symbolic way in the film?



Thanks for agreeing to talk to us about your first film. How did you come up with the idea for *Adam and Paul*?

The initial idea for *Adam & Paul* came from Mark O'Halloran, the film's screenwriter. He's also the actor who plays the taller of the two main characters. While living in a flat on Parnell Street in Dublin, an area where a lot of heroin addicts used to hang out, he became fascinated by the people he saw shuffling along the street, often in pairs, looking miserable, dirty and desperate. Some were strung-out, sweating and begging, or on the lookout for something to steal, while others were slumped on the ground or standing, frozen like statues in a half-sleep. He also noticed their way of talking, which has its own patterns of sound and vocabulary. Conversations often go round in circles in a repetitive, almost childlike way, with nothing much being communicated. Mark started to make notes of the things he heard and saw.

The first, and longest part of the process was getting a script with which we were happy. Mark and I had developed a sense of what the tone of the finished film should be; how the plot should be structured, how the film should be paced, how the comedy should work, whether the scenes should be dramatic and in your face or quiet and observational – things that give a flavour to a film. Jonny Speers, the producer, was part of this process too. Between the three of us

we would test the drafts (there were over 15 by the time we finished) against this core idea of tone as well as trying to make the script as expressive and truthful as possible. As director, it was my responsibility to guide this process to its conclusion, as a fully articulate script, with a coherent vision, ready to be made into a film. For me, in many ways, this was the most exhilarating part of the whole business of making *Adam & Paul*.

Did you do a lot of research on drug addiction?

One thing that surprises people is that we didn't base the script on any research. By this I mean that we didn't interview addicts or people who work with them or read lots of books about heroin addiction prior to writing the script. It came, primarily, from Mark's imagination, from things that he saw and heard and from his ability to think himself into somebody else's head. Later, before we actually shot the film, we did talk to users and ex-users of heroin, including people who had been in very similar situations to *Adam and Paul*. We even did readings of the script with them. This was important; we needed to be sure that we weren't making any really stupid mistakes in the script. It was also really useful for the actors to meet and talk to people who had lived the life they would be portraying. As it turned out, apart from a few small things, which we quickly changed, the ex-addicts we spoke to (who were incredibly generous

with their time and who contributed a lot to the film) felt that the script was accurate and truthful. This was really reassuring.

In the publicity for the film a comparison is made between Adam and Paul and Laurel and Hardy. This is very surprising, but maybe not as mad as it first seems.

The main characters in *Adam & Paul* were written and acted with Laurel and Hardy firmly in mind. For example, the bit where Tom Murphy's character tries to open the milk carton is pure Stan Laurel. I felt that there was something about Stan and Ollie's innocence and optimism (no matter how big a mess they're in) that reminded me of Adam and Paul. If you watch Laurel and Hardy carefully you'll see that they are really played as if they were overgrown, bold children. Although Adam and Paul are more real and much tougher characters than Laurel and Hardy I wanted to give them this same quality of childlike innocence. It's a way of saying to the audience that, no matter how bad they seem to be, or what awful things they do, deep down they are still people who are struggling against a world that they don't really understand.

Very little happens in the film except a series of meetings as the pair go through the day. What's the idea with these encounters and how did you stop the story becoming repetitive or boring?

The way the story works – a linear sequence of encounters – reflects what life is like for homeless addicts. Typically, people in this situation will spend all day trying to scrounge or steal to get money so they can score heroin. We wanted to give the audience a feeling of the relentless repetition and grinding misery of our character's lives, their desperate need for drugs and how that need underlies every encounter they have.

On one level it's true that nothing much happens – the film doesn't have a big *plot* in the way that more traditional Hollywood films do – but on another level, lots is happening all the time – there is always a story. Because of this the film never gets boring. In every

encounter we learn new things about Adam and Paul, about their history, their situation, their relationship to each other and to the people they meet. Gradually and subtly we get the flavour of their world.

It is true that the film is repetitive. For example, lots of scenes start with Adam and Paul being greeted by other people in the same way each time, 'Alright Adam and Paul...'. But this kind of repetition is deliberate. It gives the film its rhythm and also underpins a lot of the humour. In the absence of a classical plot, it's another way of stitching things together.

Why do we never learn which of them is Adam and which is Paul?

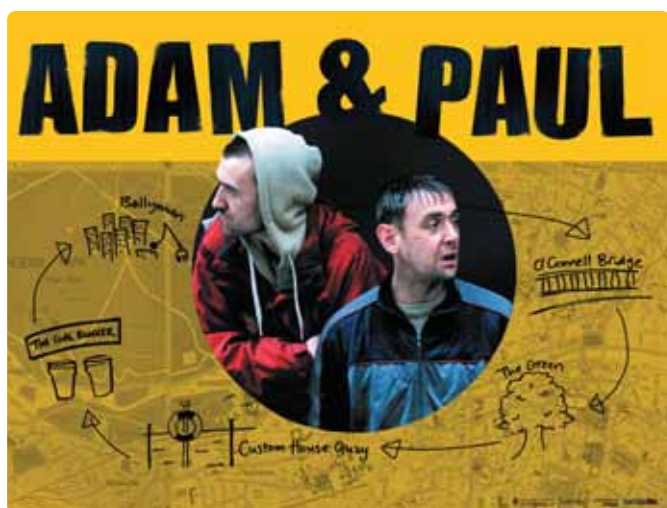
The reason we never let the audience know who is Adam and who is Paul is that we wanted to make the point that in a way these guys have become one person: 'Adam&Paul'. They rely completely on each other. They are never seen apart and everyone they meet thinks of them as one organism. It's sad because when they were kids, along with Matthew, this would have been a positive thing, the sign of a vital relationship. But now they are like the fossil of a real, living friendship. We also wanted to get the idea over that street addicts are anonymous in this society – to the rest of us it's as if they were not individuals at all; they're just junkies. It was Mark's idea only ever to hear them called 'Adam and Paul'. In this way they can be spoken about by other characters, but, in a certain sense, we never learn their names. [By the way, if you really want to know which character is Adam and which is Paul, just look at the credits – you can work it out.]

How did you find the actors?

It was quite a long process. Originally Mark O'Halloran was going to play the small guy's part, but when we saw Tom Murphy playing it we knew that he was absolutely perfect for the role. So, in the end, Mark swapped to the other part. Once we had decided on the casting we started to work together. We watched some films, we talked about the script and the characters and we began to rehearse the scenes. In rehearsal we worked hard on the key scenes, making sure that the rhythm was really precise and that we all understood what was happening in the scene.

Is it OK to look at these two drug addicts and find them funny? Did it occur to you that we might be having an easy laugh at these two helpless guys? We're not even sure why we find it funny.

Yes, it is definitely OK to find them funny. The film is made with that intention – it's a comedy. Maybe some people think that it's somehow in bad taste to make a comedy about people who are suffering, but I completely disagree. I believe we treat our characters with dignity and tenderness and never sneer at them. The comedy of *Adam & Paul* is a way of focussing on ideas of helplessness,





haplessness and the absurd hope of small people in the face of a large, uncaring world – and these are true aspects of the lives of people in Adam and Paul's situation. It might sound a strange thing to say, but I don't believe that drama or tragedy are somehow more serious than comedy.

How did you come up with the ending?

We considered various possibilities for how things would work at the end of the film. In the early drafts of the script neither character died. They woke and moved off the beach leaving the audience with the impression that the pair were about to go through the same kind of awful day all over again. Eventually, we decided that it was important to show viewers how lives like Adam and Paul's are likely to end – however painful it might be to watch.

As for what happens next, I don't think there is much hope for the one who is left behind. I think he will end up dead like his friend within a few days. He is alone, cold and sick and he will not have the strength to resist the pull of the large amount of heroin he has in his pocket. Overall, there is logic to the way the film runs. Before the story begins, Matthew dies – he is the first of the trio to go. At the end of the film the tall one dies. And the suggestion is that, after the film is over, the last of them will go the same way.

Has anyone from the type of Dublin you depict seen the film and told you what they thought of it?

Yes, we showed the film to the people that we worked with at the beginning of the process: users and ex-users of heroin. I'm really proud to say that their reaction was extremely positive. They felt that the film was an honest account of things that they had experienced. I also know from talking to people from the cinemas in Dublin's inner city that a lot of street users went to see the film. One addict who

was in a pretty bad state when I spoke to him said, 'You got it right, that's the way it is'. That kind of response means a lot to me and the other people involved in making the film.

What do you think is the main difference between your film and other 'drugs' films like *Trainspotting*?

The comparison with *Trainspotting* is often made. For me the difference is that *Trainspotting*, at its heart, tries to be a cool film. It's slick, glossy and very hip (at least it was when it was released).

Adam & Paul was never intended to have a social message that could be captured in a few lines. It's not a campaigning film; it's not even about drugs particularly. It's a film about people on the edge of this society and the struggle that they have to survive, to find love and a sense of worth. Having said that, we were determined to be completely honest about heroin and I think we succeeded in showing the basic truth about the drug, which is that it will probably kill you and will certainly make your life into a miserable hell. It would be great to think that the film might make someone think twice about messing with heroin. It's one of the reasons why I'm really happy that the film is going to be shown to school groups.

Finally, we're not surprised that the film has won loads of awards in Ireland and abroad. Are you?!

When we were standing on Marlborough Street shooting a scene on a cold, grey Dublin day, the extent of our expectation was that the film would have a short run in the IFI and then do a few small festivals. When we'd finished editing the film and before we'd shown it to anyone else I knew we had made something really good. But the response to the film has exceeded all our expectations. It's been an incredibly exciting time since we released it and we are all intensely proud of what the film has achieved.

Well Lenny, that's it. Thanks for taking the time to answer our questions. Anything you'd like to add?

Just to say thank you for giving me this opportunity to talk about the film. I think it's great that film is finally being discussed in schools and I'm proud to have been asked to make a contribution. I'll end by wishing you all good luck for the future in whatever you decide to do.

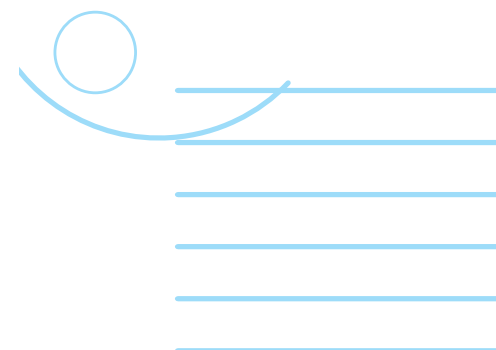
Lenny Abrahamson

Filmography

Garage (2006)

Adam and Paul (2004)

3 Joes (1991)



Bibliography

Irish National Cinema

Ruth Barton (Routledge 2004)

A Wallflower Critical Guide – Contemporary British and Irish Film Directors. Yoram Allon, Del Cullen and Hannah Patterson. (Wallflower Press, 2000)

Ten Years After; The Irish Film Board 1993-2003

Kevin Rockett

Irish Cinema: An Illustrated History

Brian Mclroy. (Anna Livia Press, 1988)

Cinema and Ireland

Kevin Rockett, John Hill, Luke Gibbons. (Routledge, 1987)

Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation

Lance Pettit (Manchester University Press, 2000)

Jim Sheridan: Framing the Nation

Ruth Barton (The Liffey Press, 2002)

Acting Irish in Hollywood: From Fitzgerald to Farrell

Ruth Barton (Irish Academic Press, 2006)

Cinema and Northern Ireland

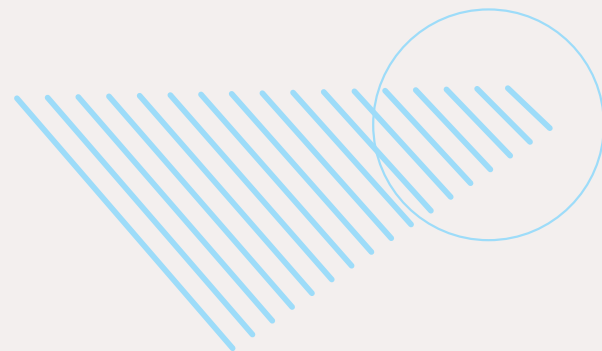
John Hill (BFI Publishing, 2006)



Six Shooter



In America



Credits

Irish Film Studyguide was written by Tony Tracy
Devised and edited by Alicia McGivern

**We would like to thank the following for their cooperation
in securing images for this studyguide:**

Venus Productions; Speers Films; Element Films; BBC; 20th Century
Fox; BVI (Ireland); Irish Film Board/Bord Scannán na hÉireann;
20th Century Fox; Hells Kitchen; Momentum Pictures; Ferndale Films;
The Connacht Tribune, Element Films, Pathe Films.

Arts Council Working group on Film and Young People

Arts Council (www.artscouncil.ie)	Jane Doolan
Irish Film Board (www.filmboard.ie)	Victoria Pope
Irish Film Censor's Office (www.ifco.ie)	John Kelleher, Chair
Irish Film Institute (www.irishfilm.ie)	Alicia McGivern
Second Level Support Service (www.slss.ie)	Kevin McDermott

© Irish Film Institute 2007. Irish Film Institute, 6 Eustace Street, Dublin 2
T 01 6795744 E education@irishfilm.ie W www.irishfilm.ie



