University of Belgrade
Faculty of Political Sciences

Regional Master's Programme in Peace Studies

Identity politics in Western film: between cultural narrative and cinematic hegemony

Academic Supervisor:
Siniša Atlagić

Student:
Anlan Cheney
Index no. 11/2015

Nebraska, 2018

Contents

Abbreviations……………….……………………………………………….…………………3
Tables and figures…………….…………………………………………..…………………3

Introduction………………………………………………………………………………4

Problem and Purpose

Limitations

Work aims and structure

1. Theoretical Framework………………………………………………………….……8

Literature Review

2. Methodology and Research Design…………………………………………………….19

2.1 — Objectives and Hypothesis

2.2 — Methodology: Formal Film Analysis

2.3 — Research Design: Semiotic Analysis

2.4 — Data Set: Units of Analysis

3. Constructive Analysis……………………………………………………………….……32

3.1 — "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland

3.2 — "Apartheid" in South Africa

3.3 — Summary of Findings: Convention and Identity Politics in Western Film

Conclusion ……………………………………………………………………………….65
Bibliography ……………………….……………………………………………………….67

ABBREVIATIONS

African National Congress (ANC)
British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA)
British Film Institute (BFI)
British Independent Film Association (BIFA)
International Movie Database (IMDB)
Irish Republican Army (IRA)
Member of Parliament (MP)
Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)
Screen Actors Guild (SAG)
South African Broadcasting Association (SABA)
South African Communist Party (SACP)
Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)
United Kingdom (UK)
United States of America (USA)

TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1 — Semiotic indicators…………………………………………….…………..…..Page 24
Figure 2 — Narrative devices and expressive results……………………………………Page 28

INTRODUCTION: **FILM AND SOCIETY**

Cinema walks a fine line between the imaginary and the real, serving as both a source of entertainment and information, a powerful institution of record and commentary with enormous influence in social, cultural, and political spheres. Film can therefore play a significant role in promoting narratives on conflict and peace globally by using visual narrative to communicate meaning and stimulate the reciprocity of community and cultural impressions about sensitive, protracted sectarian conflicts. Indeed, it seems more pertinent now than ever to examine the power of cinematic language as it interprets reality and represents its conflicts while the world's powers continue to vie over influence outside of traditional fields of dominance. Stemming from its historical legacies of imperial expansion, for example, the West's influence in popular culture comprises the role of a cultural hegemon, the artistic implications of which designate the films of industries within as either an extension of the proverbial talking head's political ideologies, proxy wars, and cultural liturgies or a litmus test of narrative nuance withal. Moreover, sophisticated and widely spreading technology and a globalized social justice movement have profoundly impacted both the creation and the consumption of feature films toward certain political ends. Since filmmaking is a subjective undertaking with a rapt and reactive audience, it is worthwhile to identify and analyze particular narratives created in Western cinema across its participating cultures, such as those about modern social realities, particularly that of identity and its politics, and conflicts thereof. While the role of film in Western industries has traditionally been to entertain, it is increasingly leveraged as advocacy or for education. Regardless of purpose, however, filmgoing is problematic if the audience is not well versed in cinematic language, or if it lacks the knowledge or background to sufficiently understand story context in the representation of complex conflict situations. Nor is advocacy — subtle or otherwise — infrequent, and, due to the subjective nature of the creative process, a film will always have something to 'say'. The result of this convoluted inter-cultural, inter-arts exchange across industries with vastly different resources and reach is manifest in tandem with the social infrastructure of globalization in popular culture and the arts. Film's visual narrative as such problematizes the representation of sectarianism and sectarian conflict on screen by revealing attitudes and values about culture and power in an imperialist paradigm in the form of cinematic hegemony. Peace and conflict studies, which attempts to analyze, understand and prescribe ways to prevent or manage such conflicts, stands to benefit from a survey of how film narratives impact relevant social, political, and cultural processes when cinema is considered as a "structural mechanism attending conflict".[1]

---

[1] Maire A. Dugan, "Peace Studies at the Graduate Level" in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science: Peace Studies: Past and Future* 504 (1989): 74.

PROBLEM AND PURPOSE: **THE ROLES AND AGENCY OF FEATURE FILM**

Films were once regarded as "truth machines".[2] While it may have been hard to deny several decades ago that films were trustworthy interpretations of reality, even before special effects and other technologies, audiences today generally understand films are not omniscient. However, this unprecedented advance in filmmaking technologies alongside continued growth in popular reception seems to indicate that film still has greater agency in societal realms than its actual ability to communicate reality may warrant. But while audiences may recognize a film is not a truth machine per say, they are in the majority unaware of how films subtly shape their worldviews, specifically those whose thematic contexts are foreign or otherwise unfamiliar. In "Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies", Mark Carnes gave voice to the odious nature of representation regarding and even beyond the scope of historic depictions:

> What historical filmmakers do is analogous; but they choose simple languages that will be accessible to most viewers. Filmmakers often translate the past into a handful of reiterated "story lines" and themes: X is a hero, and Y a villain. Evil lurks beyond our borders and sometimes even within. Leaders must be strong, the people vigilant. Pride is punished, and humility rewarded. And on and on.[3]

Carnes also speaks to the use of conflict as a narrative convention. Commercialism, spectatorship, and other cultural propensities in mainstream entertainment — violence especially — result in less objective, highly dramatized films about "far-flung", "foreign", and "tragic" conflicts in other parts of the world. The idea of film as education also harbors potentially harmful consequences. Certainly, popular culture is a reflection of the world we live in and film can help us analyze and understand it. But more likely, going to the movies is taken as a substitute for learning in other ways. This is a particular problem in the case of historical or current events wherein the complicated aspects of a sectarian conflict, for example, must be consolidated, given a point of view, and dramatized for their feature film debut. In any case, few viewers would be equipped in personal or educational circumstances to critically evaluate films on complex and highly controversial conflicts. Peter Ettedgui, editor of the "Screencraft Series", leaves us with a telling summary of this concern:

> As a visual medium, film is able to cross international borders and transcend cultural divides…some might claim it's what opens cinema up to a dubious cultural imperialism by the film studios with the most corporate muscle, whose product is determined by the lowest common denominator and driven by the financial bottom line. But one can equally look at our film heritage today and see that the medium has enabled people of

[2] Manon De Reeper, *Film Analysis For Beginners: How To Analyse Movies* (Film Inquiry, 2016), Electronic.
[3] Mark Carnes, *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies* (New York: Holt, 1996), 84.

> different nationalities, cultural or ethnic backgrounds to communicate and empathize with one another.[4]

Insomuch as they are not actually propaganda, feature films may serve as a double-edged sword, one side disseminating basic facts, information, context and etc., and the other manipulating it to fit storyline and better engage its audience. Narrative hegemony, or the dominance of certain film industries in both cultural and market consumption as per globalized imperial powers of the day, also presents concern. Hegemonic bias and industry centralization mean that Hollywood has a greater reach, greater power if you will, than many other industries. Even as supposed growth in various national and independent film industries around the world should warrant expanded viewpoints. Imperialism is therefore reflected in the promulgation of film and, by extension, global popular culture disproportionately. Factors in globalization may have aided the development of smaller film industries amongst the giants, but truly expanded cultural representations have been slow to manifest on the most elite of silver screens despite credible efforts by numerous film festivals, filmmakers, and other relevant actors. To this set of challenges facing the modern role of film we must also add the agency of film. Social discourse in the West has moved toward a doctrine, of sorts, of empathy — clearly seen in the amalgamation of justice, reform, and other progressive movements, usually championing social and political causes and issues. Film has proven to be a popular medium to tell such stories — so *en vogue* as they are — and I want to point out socio-political distinctions of the cultural discourse of identity politics portrayed so compellingly in film. Rooted in what Monaco has called the "new ecology of art", these narratives descend from the avant-garde and reductionistic impulse toward abstraction, the heritage of what we know today as 'critical theory perspective'.[5] But whatever the role film plays, the main point remains that film's subjective nature, story and visual conventions, and ideological influence can produce harmful narratives regarding the complex nature of conflict representation in film. Although that is case-by-case, films are useful indicators of the dialogues between cultures about such necessary conversations of identity, peace and conflict, power and hegemony, and more.

LIMITATIONS

With limited time as foremost, it is essential that I underline necessary limitations in this study. First, the number of films eligible for analysis far exceeded the time and space available; those selected as well as other highly relevant films are listed in the "Constructive Analysis" section. In addition, both the full breadth and distinctions of the Western film industries was too complex to undertake in a survey of the visual language, codes and narratives of the films themselves,

[4] Peter Ettedgui, *Cinematography* (Woburn, MA: Focal Press, 1998), 10.
[5] James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media and Beyond* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). 28-29.

so the economic aspects which such a study would entail wholesale are only accounted for briefly and where necessary (production companies and relationships within and across industries, for example), as is individual attribution of filmmakers. The role of the filmmaker as artist is discussed only as required (as in analysis of Steve McQueen's *Hunger*). The selection of case studies, which first included four sectarian conflicts, was also reduced to two (The Bosnian War in the Breakup of Yugoslavia and Arab-Israeli Relations in Palestine were dropped) in favor of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and Apartheid in South Africa to help focus the study on conflicts whose commonalities included sectarian democracies and the British colonial experience. Accordingly, discussion as to what constitutes 'Western industries' is limited to a general ascription of Anglo-American and/or English-speaking (principally the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada) as well those traditionally western imperial powers of the past four centuries — production companies and films from long-established cinema centers in France, Germany, The Netherlands, and Scandinavia, for example. Finally, it is not my goal to problematize the telling of history itself on screen, but rather to point out large chasms in the method of telling stories by indicating narratives and their devices in filmmaking and film reception.

WORK AIMS AND STRUCTURE

Situated between the fields of peace studies, film studies, and international relations, this paper will analyze and compare narratives in internationally received feature films on sectarian conflicts in two case studies — cinematic representations of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and Apartheid in South Africa — produced by industries centralized in the West and those by Hollywood particularly. By analyzing the visual indicators of narrative messages in key films about sectarian conflict, this thesis will determine what identity politics and related themes are reflected to the Anglo-American audience primarily. In the first section, a comprehensive theoretical framework is articulated through the three key fields within the literature review in which focus will also be given to aesthetics, semiotics, conflict theory and typologies, cultural imperialism, and the critical theory perspective, among others. The second section outlines the study's methodology and research design, including its hypothesis and objectives, the data set, and the research modules. Relying principally on film film analysis and semiotics to outline film's visual language, the methodology and research design ultimately determines visual indicators and cinematic codes which provide tools for analysis of storytelling mechanisms and narrative outcomes per each film. The constructive analysis considers eleven films about two case studies of sectarian conflict and related protracted violence and classifies findings between three themes of identity: memory, innocence, and otherness. The Conclusion articulates answers to the key research question - "how does Western

film narrate sectarian conflict?" according to three main components: convention in visual storytelling, identity politics in narrative discourse, and imperial subtext as "cinematic hegemony".

1 **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**: LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic surveys connecting film's cinematic or visual language directly to conflict narrative is more or less erratic, as such analysis is generally undertaken by film critics and reviewers more so than scholars. While the imperial bias of film is a consistent feature of such analysis, few have situated a discussion of sectarian conflict representations within a concurrent discussion of identity politics in post-modern analysis through the convention of visual signs and codes in cinema. This requires a truly inter-disciplinary collection of literature. Key works include Robert W. Gregg's highly relevant analysis *International Relations on Film* which delineates the societal roles of film and narratives espoused by thematically similar films, Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, and Miroslav Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace*, which reflects inspiration by addressing the ideological components of peace, conflict, and identity within cultural mediums and systems. Through the selected literature I want show that the narratives produced in feature films representing identity conflicts, particularly that about memory, innocence, and otherness, are an extension of the imperialist and post-colonial paradigm, but this all springing from cinematic language. Ultimately, these sources will help articulate whether, aside from its technically subjective nature, narrative feature filmmaking is biased and culture-bound because it draws from identities formed by its own culture's social realities, arrangements, and ideologies exclusively, or whether it is possible to transcend these narratives, and how.

1.1 FORMAL AESTHETICS: **FILM AS A VISUAL LANGUAGE**

In film studies, scholarship on the technical aspects of semiotic and aesthetic values thereof is thorough and, for this thesis, primarily provided by James Monaco in *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media and Beyond* and Ed Sikov in *Film Studies: An Introduction*. Both Monaco and Sikov's outline of formal film analysis will be used to standardize visual codes and signs within those frameworks— a bridge, if you will, between image and meaning. The seminal *Gardner's Art Through the Ages* further describes the ascription of meaning to and from the elements of the image on screen, taking these "cultural "constructs,"" which "encode the thought patterns of a culture, and require, like any code, deciphering".[6] Above all, however, the primary understanding for this study on moving images and their visual language must be that "first, every normal human being can perceive and identify a visual image; second, that even the simplest visual images are interpreted dif-

[6] Richard G. Tansey and Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, (Harcourt, 1996), 8.

ferently in different cultures".[7] Not to be confused with the cross-cultural narrative later discussed in terms of a globalized society projecting political, social, and cultural conceptions and misconceptions of their own onscreen, this primary understanding refers to the most basic of differences in comprehension contextually, like that one could imagine between rural or geographically remote groups from different continents as opposed to like film-going audiences in international cities a plane ride apart. What Monaco means to demonstrate is that "people must be reading these images. There is a process of intellection occurring—not necessarily consciously—when we observe an image, and it follows that we must, at some point, have learned how to do this".[8] If film is ultimately a "quasi-language" as Monaco contends, films are subject to be interpreted by all sorts of audiences — within and without the parameters of the culture in which it was created, which it depicts, or both. Monaco goes on to describe the varying levels to which consumers may comprehend — physiologically, ethnographically, and psychologically — which illustrates a key premise of film production and reception. Films are dynamic artworks as well as machines of communication, and therefore bear narrative with perceived ease — for better or for worse — effectively, if not deceptively. How the visual language of film informs or determines its social and political quotients is the ultimate query. Situated in the spectrum of arts from performance to representational to recording, all of which film belongs to in part, Monaco suggests that a system of aesthetic equations can bridge the concrete and abstract, relying on four determinants between the political, psychological, the technical, and the economic.[9] The analytical and theoretical frameworks guiding this study are then a blend of approaches reflecting these determinants, primarily through dialectic criticism which "studies the art in their economic context…[and] analyzes the direct relationships among the work, the artists, and the observer as they are expressed in terms of economic and political structures".[10]

1.2 THE NEW ECOLOGY OF ART: **A HERITAGE OF FILM IDEAS**

Monaco also described the "new ecology of art", or the social and political environments films interact within. He recounts how Western cultures' affinity for and "continuing sense of the political dimension of the arts…that is, both their roots in the community, and their power to explain the structure of society to us" has developed alongside "the esthetic impulse toward abstraction". With this concept, I want to describe the cinematic climate of which social justice movements and trends in advocacy and awareness are abundant. Modern modes of abstraction and reductionism were once thought to have faded from influencing development of the arts in the twentieth century, but Monaco points out that the political dimension of such movements did not decrease. Ra-

[7] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 171.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 30-35, 44.
[10] Ibid, 37.

ther, they "settled down into a period of commercial calm". The commercial side of Hollywood is, no doubt, alive and well, and fumbles accordingly to narrate complex and sensitive topics, while, in tandem, the mass appropriation of the modern avant-garde resulted in a milieu of watered-down consumerist messages and theatrics. "There is an evident increase in the political and social quotient of most contemporary arts: you can see it in the mainstream influence of Rap music, the flowing of nonfiction film, dozens of reality-based cable channels, and even the YouTube revolution," continues Monaco, "However, the politics that these arts reflect hasn't progressed much beyond the state it had reached by 1970". Monaco goes on to contend that "the artists have understood and accepted the passing of the avant grade" whereas the politicians "haven't yet freed themselves from dependence on the Left-Right dialectic that fed the logic of the avant grade. So there is more politics in art — it's just unsophisticated politics".[11]

Such a conversation about the avant-garde and cultural engagement naturally demands discussion of the principles of said movement as well as an overview of Marxist aesthetics. Without delving too deep into the origins and development of either, I find it sufficient to note that the progressive and adversarial attitudes of contemporary avant-garde art function, as Monaco wrote, at a level far-removed from its original conception. Indeed, the New York art critic Clement Greenburg used the German word *kitsch* to articulate the product of this bastardized avant-garde in a culture rank with consumerism; the term has entered contemporary vernacular in much the same way kitsch sections and products have appeared in home decor or fashion warehouses and on the shelves and shoulders of the progressive and fashionable elite around the world. This "mass culture", the Marxist Frankfurt school asserted, is a product of the capitalist-informed "culture industry" which is made up of such entities as commercial publishing houses, the record industry, and the movie industry, among others.[12] In "The Society of Spectacle," for example, Guy Debord presented what Tiernan Morgan and Lauren Purje designate a "polemical and prescient indictment of our image-saturated consumer culture…a call to arms against passive spectatorship" through the concept of the "Spectacle" or "everyday manifestation of capitalist-driven phenomena; advertising, television, film, and celebrity".[13] Founder of the Situationalist International, "a group of avant-garde artists and political theorists united by their opposition to advanced capitalism", Debord also pioneered Situationalist cinema, compelled toward development of cinematic and narrative techniques to belie the conviction of "art as illusion".[14] Now, the tendency for the mainstream to use such terms as avant-garde and kitsch to market and publicize its products is a historical irony. Consider the term ascribed to contemporary musicians and filmmakers, the designation of avant-garde having wrought them celebration and acclamation in certain circles, some very affluent, but without the conviction

[11] Ibid., 28-29.
[12] "mass culture". Mass culture - Oxford Reference. June 16, 2017; "Culture industry." Culture industry - Oxford Reference. June 16, 2017.
[13] Morgan, Tiernan, and Lauren Purje. "An Illustrated Guide to Guy Debord's 'The Society of the Spectacle'." *Hyperallergic*. May 13, 2017.
[14] Tom McDonough, "The Practice of Theory: Cinema and Revolution," In *Guy Debord and the Situationalist International* (Boston: MIT Press, 2002), 187-188.

of the movement's early values. Bridging from these critiques and debates, my primary concern is to underline the influence of these ideologies and movements on culture, particularly in the powered arts. How the culture industry narrates itself is an interesting query and, perhaps, a telling one. As the critic Harold Rosenberg observed, such a passing of a once authentically oppositional movement has revealed "avant-garde ghosts on the one side, and a changing mass culture on the other", resulting in the development of a culture with "a profession one of whose aspects is the pretense of overthrowing it".[15] Rather than question and temper the mainstream, these oppositional characteristics became intrinsic to the system they once sought to dismember. The cultural implications are profound.

In "Story and Discourse: Narrative structure in fiction and film", Seymour Chatman outlines how story functions as a communication device between the filmmaker/writer/etc and the audience or viewer, insomuch that "narratives are communications, thus easily envisaged as the movement of arrows from let to right, from author to audience…constructs of the narrative-transaction-as-text".[16] Elizabeth Ellsworth, whose studies in "film as a cultural artefact have produced convincing arguments about how media images contribute to the ways in which our culture constitutes social categories" also posited that "these representations appear in the media in ways that suggest they can be taken for granted as natural or inherently true".[17] Considering the equally unseen cultural ideologies of the moment, audiences are often taken up with domineering narratives they haven't the faculties to critically discern. Even if the cinematic narrative is employed with a light hand, not understanding the context of a story is harmful on the receiving end. For example, if one is not aware of the characteristics of certain idealogical movements, or "the philosophies of history, the grand narratives that attempt to organize this mass of events", they will not realize the true (broader) meaning of the film, much less its influence on themselves. Miroslav Volf payed special attention to such formative ideas in his book *Exclusion and Embrace*. "The thought and action of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are governed by an Idea (in the Kantian sense): the Idea of emancipation," he argued. Referring to the grand narratives above, he outlined those that were significant through the outset of the twentieth century, all pursuing an ultimate "universal freedom, the fulfillment of all humanity":

> The Christian narrative of the redemption of original sin through love; the Aufklarer narrative of emancipation from ignorance and servitude through knowledge and egalitarianism; the speculative narrative of the realization of the universal idea through the dialectic of the concrete; the Marxist narrative of emancipation from exploitation and alienation through the socialization of work; and the capitalist narrative of emancipation from pov-

[15] Harold Rosenberg, *The De-Definition of Art: Action Art to Pop to Earthworks* (1972; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 219.
[16] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 31.
[17] Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Fiction as Proof: Critical Analysis of the Form, Style, and Ideology of Educational Dramatization Films," (1987), 5.

erty through technological development.[18]

These points of view, or worldviews, while only a sample, continue to be influenced within and by broader movements, notably modernism and postmodernism. As discussed regarding the avant-garde, modernism sought to explicate a new set of narratives in the arts by "[supporting] change, the retirement of the old or traditional…[and] adherence to the ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment".[19] But critics, like Zygmunt Bauman, cite modernity as "prominent for the tendency to shift moral responsibilities away from the moral self either toward socially constructed and managed supra-individual agencies, or through floating responsibility inside a bureaucratic 'rule of nobody'".[20] Bernard Henri-Levy observed that "…modernity is predicated on the belief that the fissures of the world can be repaired and that the world can be healed. It expects the creation of paradise at the end of history and denies the expulsion of it at the beginning of history".[21] This is obviously a worldview in direct conflict to those individuals/groups/cultures whose worldview is informed by a present evil, such as the Christian narrative. Naturally, the deconstructive patterns of modernism led to the development of postmodernism. As Volf summarizes, the postmodern option intimates that:

> We should flee both universal values and particular identities and seek refuge from oppression in the radical autonomy of individuals; we should create spaces in which persons can keep creating "larger and freer selves" by acquiring new and losing old identities…[a society] that offers a framework for individual persons to go about freely making and unmaking their own identities.[22]

Volf identified the most significant social realities of the modern era as "rights", "justice", and "ecological well-being", arguing for the inclusion of "identity and otherness" or conflicts and arrangements of various levels of identity (the individual, the group, the nation, etc.). He emphasized identity as the most central, noting that while admission of identify to a discussion of social realities will not suppress the others, the latter's degree of centrality "will always depend in part on the culture of the person reflecting them".[23] My express interest is in how societies developed over and between the fissures of sectarian division articulate identity, culture, and the relationship thereof. The aforementioned social values are those which inform both the increasingly global social justice movement as well as the emergence of identity politics and related policies across a variety of worldviews and cultures but all the while projecting the most powerful's ideas and interpretations of freedom, justice, empathy, and human rights. But I will not argue here the extent or basis of imperialism in international relations per say, only the basis for the latter's representation in the arts,

[18] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: a theological exploration of identity, otherness, and reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 106.
[19] "modernism". Modernism - Oxford Reference. June 16, 2017.
[20] Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 99.
[21] Levy, Bernard-Henri, *Gefährliche Reinheit,* trans. Maribel Königer (Wien: Passagen Verlag, 1995), 91, 199.
[22] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 21.
[23] ,Anindita Niyogi Balslev, *Cultural Otherness: Correspondence with Richard Rorty* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1991), 3.

in film specifically, and the agents to abstraction which narrativise — socially, culturally, and economically and politically — modern social realities and identity politics.

1.3 IDENTITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: **SOCIO-POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS**

According to Henry Nau in "Perspectives on International Relations", three prominent perspectives emphasize, albeit differently, the key causes of international affairs: power, institutions, and ideas. The realist perspective emphasizes "the struggle for power", the liberal perspective that "interactions, interdependence and institutions exert the primary influence", and the identity perspective the primacy of ideas, that is "the causal role of ideas, belief systems, norms, values, speech acts, and social discourse…particularly as these factors affect the identities of actors and thus define their material interests as well as their behavior in interactions and institutions".[24] My primary interest is on the latter's assertions, in tandem with the critical theory perspective which "questions the basic Western, rationalist assumption used by principal perspectives, that we can break up reality, separate specific causes and effects from historical circumstances, and use this knowledge of the past to engineer the future".[25] Although critical theory perspectives deny the separation of ideas, power, and institutions for analysis, I am interested in the comparative tension between identity perspectives and critical theory perspectives, especially as "many constructivists…capture reality as narratives rather than causal sequences".[26] As the critical theory perspective is necessary to the development of such thought schools and movements as Marxism, the avant-garde, and postmodernism, my theoretical framework is hereafter situated to comparatively dissect the identity perspective on screen.

In keeping with the identity perspective, it is perhaps redundant to state that that the importance of exploring the construction process of identities is crucial to defining a socio-political foundation for the exercise of these same identities represented in film. Rather than detail each constructivist theory in detail, a tendency of some of these theories to focus on "ideological distance" between collective and shared identities is emphasized hereafter.[27] After the death of idealism and the failure of the League of Nations leading up to World War II, "constructivism emerged as an approach to international relations that revived the primary causal or constitutive role of ideas" and promoted the analysis of ideas in its various forms: values, norms, and beliefs, among others.[28] This trajectory reflects the rise and commercialization of the avant-garde on the side of culture, and followed the deconstructive patters of modernism. The key concept tying ideological distance to a discussion of conflict is the distribution of identities, that is "the relative relationship of identities among actors in the international system in terms of their similarities and differences"

[24] Henry R. Nau, *Perspectives in International Relations* (Thousand Oakes: CQ Press, 2015), 3, 5-6.
[25] Ibid., 5.
[26] Ibid., 69.
[27] Nau, *Perspectives in International Relations*, 58.
[28] Ibid., 59.

across external, internal, relative and shared identities.[29] According to Alastair Iain Johsnton, "The greater the perceived identity difference, the more the environment is viewed as conflictual…Conversely, the smaller the perceived identity difference, the more the external environment is seen as cooperative".[30] This picture, as Richard Sennett adds, reveals that group identities "do not and cannot make for coherent and complete selves; they arise from fissures in the larger social fabric; they contain its contradictions and its injustices".[31]

Flowing with the currents of the time, so to speak, reliance on such identities to proffer reactions and polices also testifies to the tides of tribalism and cultural heterogeneity. In essence, such identities require allegiance — they do not make room for "the other", for variations in the group makeup. In times of conflict especially, the margin becomes even more stringent, and the projection of purity emphasizes difference to a cacaphony. As Volf explains, "a given group identity can become a terminal identity, subsuming under it and integrating a whole range of other identities; each member of the group must completely identify with the group".[32] How then should these differences be accommodated? There is, of course, no perfect solution. Like Johnson, Volf agrees that "identity is a result of the distinction from the other and the internalization of the relationship to the other", and he continues that "it arises out of the complex history of "differentiation" in which both the self and the other take part by negotiating their identities in interaction with one another".[33] Volf refers to the "politics of difference", which Charles Taylor has distinguished from the "politics of equal dignity". The latter, Taylor writes, endeavors to establish that which is "universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities" whereas the politics of difference requires recognition from the social setting at hand: "With the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group…nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression".[34] This is a pivotal identity process to outline because it illuminates a key cultural orientation, one also articulated by Taylor: "For both dignity and justice are interpreted today in terms of freedom, that most potent social idea of the last three centuries".[35]

Freedom as another social reality is central in informing Western narratives; it is accordingly a motor of hegemonic and globalizing agents. In historic and political context, the American and French revolutions, for example, spurred the emergence of an inalienable idea of freedom "as the pillar of modern liberal democracies. All people are equal and all are free to pursue their interests and develop their personalities in their own way, provided they respect the same freedom in others." With freedom as "the most sacred good", Volf continued, the twin concepts of oppression ("when this inalienable freedom is either denied by a totalitarian state or suppressed by a dominant

---

[29] Ibid., 63.
[30] Alastair Iain Johnston, Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 199.
[31] Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 54.
[32] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 66.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25, 38.
[35] Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2:318.

culture") and liberation ("when the cage that holds people back from doing and being what they prefer is dismantled") are tantamount concepts in the typically modern, Western ("and increasingly non-Western") worldview.[36] Here is where international relations is an especially relevant framework: the more recently developed identity and critical theory perspectives in the field have contributed a variety of telling theories and analysis about conflict. The concept of soft power popularized by Joseph Nye, for example, refers to the "attractiveness of the values or ideas of a country as distinct from its military and economic power or its negotiating behavior".[37] Such a force, which is hardly a force at all (rather a magnetism), is a forerunner to the more systematic natures of colonialism, the "conquest and exploitation by the European states of poorer peoples and lands in Latin America, Africa, and Asia", and imperialism, "the forceful extension of a nation's authority to other peoples by military, economic, and political domination".[38] And so follows postmodernism and its discontents. Mainstream explanations for the rise of Western society and industry and the dominance that followed tend to establish the West as a standard. Critical theory perspective rejects "the hegemonic rule and stability offered by Western powers" as precursor to development and attempts to deconstruct this "single course initially set by Western ideas, power, and institutions".[39] Essentially, writes Nau, "critical theorists argue that the historical dialectic that Marx discovered is still at work, spawning inequalities and tensions that increase the need for a radical restructuring of the future global system".[40] One such expansive system is globalization, a contemporary process argued by critical theory to be the result of "the exploitation of non-Western peoples via systemic, historically specific processes" via oppression of developing-world peoples, marginalization of minorities, and capitalism (which prefaces colonialism according to its need for resources and manifests in its highest form as imperialism) to varied degrees.

In a chapter entitled "New Critical Theory of social inequalities" in his book "Power in the Global Age", sociologist Ulrich Beck details how these theoretical approaches can be harnessed "to reveal and dismantle the wall of methodological nationalism…[and] bring into view the legitimatory role of the nation-state within the system of large inequalities". He puts forth several recommendations to move forward in this process, including "to name and expose the forms and strategies by which cosmopolitan realities are rendered invisible", "to criticize national circularity", to create "alternative concepts and research strategies…to overcome the ahistorical self-perpetuation of social scientific sets of concepts and research routines", and "to establish and bring to bear the difference between the national outlook of political actors and the cosmopolitan outlook of the political and social sciences".[41] Practically speaking, this means that a centralized economy and extended globalized culture have resulted in "things that have contributed to declining situation

---

[36] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 101.
[37] Nau, *Perspectives in International Relations*, 66.
[38] Ibid., 455.
[39] Nau, *Perspectives on International Relations*, 453.
[40] Ibid., 70.
[41] Ulrich Beck. *Power in the Global Age: A new global political economy,* trans. Kathleen Cross (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 24, 34.

in the poorest areas of the world" with the added observance that "perceptions of inequality…are bound with the national outlook" which in turn turns "people's attention exclusively towards domestic issues, thereby banishing global inequalities from the field of vision of the (relatively privileged)".[42] Among the cumulative powers of these globalizing factors is the oft-cited phenomenon of cultural hegemony. Indeed, sociologist and founder of the field of peace and conflict studies Johan Galtung emphasized, like Beck, the presence of inequality in his "A Structural Theory of Imperialism", defining the latter as "a sophisticated type of dominance relation which cuts across nations" while describing the hegemonic division between the powerful Center and the depending and directed Periphery.[43] Edward Said, literary critic and author of "Orientalism", fleshes out the processes and results of imperialism through cultural mediums in his seminal *Culture and Imperialism*. By analyzing the "general patterns of relationships between the modern metropolitan West and its overseas territories", Said prioritizes the narratives of the colonizing and/or imperial powers' greatest cultural artifacts — the novel, for example. As this study will treat film with the same primacy to reflect the times, Said's insights are especially valuable to the forthcoming analysis. "Nations themselves are narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them," writes Said, although he qualifies the statement by pointing out "In our wish to make ourselves heard, we tend very often to forget that he world is a crowded place, and that if everyone were to insist on the radical purity or priority of one's own voice, all we would have would be the awful din of unending strife, and the bloody political mess".[44] Like Said noted, the modern and postmodern influence has done good to point out some of these misaligned and unbalanced structures, but the legacies of the aforementioned idea of freedom (and its oppression-liberation dialectic), the primacy of individual preference to live and be as one chooses together with the forces of cultural imperialism, globalization, and the well-meaning faculties of modern and postmodern frameworks have already manifested in several socio-political battles in and beyond the American culture wars, what Said calls "the cacophony of debates over political correctness and identity politics in the United States".[45] Indeed, writes Amanda Hess for the New York Times in "Earning the 'Woke' Badge", the language used to denote public socio-political sensitivity from both the right and the left has developed around "P.C." [political correctness] and the inside term "Woke" inversely. "If "P.C." is a taunt from the right, a way of calling out hypersensitivity in political discourse," she writes:

> Then "woke" is a back-pat from the left, a way of affirming the sensitive. Heir to the "radical chic" of the 1970s, "wokeness" has a social currency of its own, one "that claps

[42] Ibid., 24-25.
[43] Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Imperialism," *Journal of Peace Research* 8, no. 2 (1971): 81.
[44] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1993), xi, xiii, xxi.
[45] Ibid.

> back at the appropriators. "Woke" now works as a dig against those who claim to be culturally aware and yet are, sadly, lacking in self-awareness.[46]

Maya Binyam elaborated that such "Woke Olympics" might entail whites competing to "name racisms when it appears" or call out "fellow white folk who are lagging behind".[47] While this is certainly not a comprehensive outline of the social results to be expected, it is a small sample of repercussions related to the climate such frameworks may create in terms of a society's greater cultural and ideological development. After the media storm surrounding students' Halloween conduct in 2015 at Yale in which a faculty member encouraged students to follow their own prerogative regarding cultural appropriation and sensitivity when it came to costumes, Conor Friedersdorf commented in *The Atlantic* that the situation at Yale and reactions from outside seemed to indicate modern students are "ill-served by debilitating ideological notions they've acquired about what ought to cause them pain… Who taught them that it is righteous to pillory faculty for failing to validate their feelings, as if disagreement is tantamount to disrespect?"[48] In a reflectively titled article — "The Unfortunate Fallout of Campus Postmodernism" — for the *Scientific American*, Michael Shermer also expressed concern for "students' deep convictions about race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation and their social justice antipathy toward capitalism, imperialism, racism, white privilege, misogyny and "cissexist heteropatriarchy"" which he argued has forced "a shift in Marxist theory from class conflict to identity politics conflict".[49]

Now a thorough analysis of these articles would require the address of critics who caution the authors are harboring sentiments of white fragility or are otherwise detracting from debates in racism and imperialism, among others, but that is not my focus. Rather, I think these examples illuminate a unique, ideologically rooted context for Western culture in a strained political and historical environment which certainly impacts the creation and reception of narratives propagated in one of the society's most beloved, popular, and increasingly socio-politically conscious cultural mediums - the cinema. So while postmodernists seeking "to unmask the rhetorical dominance of Western thought" and exchange "the underlying meanings and hierarchies of power imposed by Enlightenment language and concepts" for "a more socially just form of discourse" or who simply "want to go no further than to demonstrate that all social reality disguises power" may bring a necessary deconstructive perspective to temper the field, I want to explore whether it can be taken too far in the other direction.[50] Accordingly, the following analysis will seek to find a balance between the cultural hegemony of Western imperialism on one hand and the left-dominated culture industry

[46] Amanda Hess, "Earning the 'Woke' Badge," *The New* York Times Magazine, 19 April 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/24/magazine/earning-the-woke-badge.html.
[47] Maya Binyam"Watching the Woke Olympics," *The Awl*, 5 April 2016, https://www.theawl.com/2016/04/watching-the-woke-olympics/.
[48] Conor Friedersdorf, "The New Intolerance of Student Activism," *The* Atlantic, 9 November 2015, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/the-new-intolerance-of-student-activism-at-yale/414810/.
[49] Michael Shermer, "The Unfortunate Fallout of Campus Postmodernism," *Scientific American*, 1 September 2017, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-unfortunate-fallout-of-campus-postmodernism/.
[50] Nau, *Perspectives in International Relations*, 70-71.

on the other while promoting pathways toward the honest creation and actively informed dissemination of narratives on screen.

2 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The research methodology and design relies primarily on film aesthetics and semiotics to outline film's visual language by determining constructed narratives through identification of their visual codes and analysis of their socio-cultural context on screen. The methodology, formal film analysis, and research design, semiotic analysis, ultimately determine visual indicators and cinematic codes as tools for analysis of storytelling mechanisms and narrative outcomes per each case study. Based on the key research question "how does Western film narrate sectarian conflict?", this study's objectives are threefold: to consider identity conflict portrayed on screen in the context of contemporary social realities, to establish visual storytelling as cultural narrative, and to determine aspects of "cinematic hegemony" in narrative outcomes. The first objective — identity conflict and its social realities in Western film — prefaces the study by defining and discussing conflict typologies and sectarian cleavages. It sets the study in context of contemporary social realities and relevant social arrangements according to modern and post-modern ideology. The second objective — visual storytelling as cultural narrative — is established by defining the visual language of film as it relates to identity and otherness in sectarian conflict and violence. It is driven by the questions "What narrative mechanisms drive cinematic language about identity conflict?" or "How do films "speak" about identity conflict visually?". The final objective — "cinematic hegemony" in narrative outcomes — asks "How does film interact with culture in a globalized industry?". As a bridge to discussion of sectarian conflict and visual indicators, the question "What Western worldviews and cultural movements interact with conflict on film? How?" will also be addressed.

Primary Hypothesis

The representation of sectarianism and sectarian conflict on screen reveals or conveys imperialist attitudes and values about culture and power in the form of *cinematic hegemony*.

Secondary Hypotheses

1. Situated in a post-modern space wherein identity—and, by extension, perceptions of social realities—is constantly constructed and deconstructed, representations of conflict thereof are subject to narratives manipulation.

2. The subtle yet compelling narrative power of visual semiotics utilized in cinematography, artistic direction, and montage technique and convention aids the transmission of agendas — narratives and counter-narratives — upon film audiences generally uneducated about and unconscious of both the thematic realities and technical/artistic possibilities of a given conflict situation on screen.

DATA SET: **UNITS OF ANALYSIS**

The data set consists of eleven feature films reflecting sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland and South Africa. The units of analysis are then defined by economic, technical, and semiotic criteria. First, standards in the service of practicality and consistency require each film to be live-action, feature-length, and whose release qualified as recent contemporary, or between 2000-2016. The films must also be produced in or in primary collaboration with Western industries with releases in or access to markets and audiences in North America and Europe. Selection emphasizes films connected in their development stages to Hollywood per a more accurate analysis of American Imperialism within western dominance (hegemony), although the interconnectedness and collaborative nature of modern, globalized film production is inherent. Where applicable, some films which were technically a product of a non-Western or 'periphery' industries may be included to help demonstrate narrative complicity if there were some Western production/financing ties. In any case, ultimate selection and analysis of titles included investigation into and discussion of attribution — who owns intellectual and creative copyrights. Selection of films is also partially dependent on critical reception. This includes, on one hand, those exposed to critic and festival circuits, industry award circuits, and — in some limited cases — recipients of audience choice awards. The other critical reception metric leveraged was recognition for awards and honors emphasizing visual and cinematic achievement, particularly in cinematography, editing, and art direction and production design. Specific awards or honorable mentions recognizing both technical and thematic achievements in social-political categories were also helpful signifiers, such as the Hong Kong International Festival SIGNIS Award for social and humanitarian content, the Political Film Society's Awards for Democracy, Expose, Human Rights, and Peace, or the Cinema for Peace awards, among others.

Genre was also taken into consideration in the determination of films. Based on a consolidated classification system utilized by the International Movie Database (IMDB), films qualifying as Action, Adventure, Biography, Comedy, Crime, Drama, Family, Fantasy, Film-Noir, History, Horror, Music (except for musicals), Mystery, Romance, Sci-Fi, Sport, Thriller, War, and Western were acceptable for analysis. Animation, Documentary, and Musicals were not considered. In addition to its role in determination of data set, genre was also used as an indicator of convention in narrative analysis which is discussed further in the Research Design. However, The primary determining factor of the film data set was thematic relevance to two sectarian conflicts and related protracted violence situations: The Troubles in Northern Ireland and Apartheid in South Africa. The latter case studies were chosen as foremost in the public American consciousness due to international policy and development interests and their therefore prominent reflection in Western news media and cinema alike as well as their commonalities with sectarian democracy and the British colonial expe-

rience. For further discussion of sectarian qualifications and dimensions of these conflicts as case studies, see "Constructive Analysis".

Further, the quality of film as an economic product is a necessary aid to this discussion as well. Attribution is the main concern here, that is who are the lead actors, directors, cinematographers, producers, screenwriters, and perhaps more. Apart from a greater call to self-education on the part of the consumer, the filmmaker (which again refers not only to the director but the great entity aforementioned of which impacts the narrative. Any of those — including the production company — who demand or otherwise necessitate design decisions) must take a constructive role in the development of their narrative. As Gregg wrote, "what we witness on the screen is not intended to be a balanced debate, but rather the perspective of the screenwriter and the director…The result, of course, is a simplification of complex issues".[51] Filmmaking is then an act not only of storytelling but also of taking responsibility. Although there are some who think the importance of filmmakers should be downplayed to this effect or even filmmakers who pursue a greater verissimilitude - regardless either approach to responsibility recognizes the narrative results of films should be carefully handled. Under this guise, the production values of the film product (which are the primary production companies) and its distribution and audiences (which are the distribution companies and which were the film's primary markets) informed both the selection and the holistic analysis of films in this study.

How each film will technically be analyzed is key to delineate as well. Approaching the semiotics of film as a visual language necessitates an examination of its basic parts —or its signs, which will be discussed in more detail in the research design. Monaco anticipates this query, positing that each frame includes a potentially infinite amount of visual information". The same holds for consideration of even larger units than the frame, such as scenes, sequences, etc. This is only technical, but "the fact is that film, unlike written or spoken language, is not composed of units as such, but is rather a continuum of meaning".[52] Drawing from Monaco's synthesis and Sikov's contributions to the same discussion, I will consider the units of shot, scene, and sequence as appropriate analytical units. They will be appropriated to each film, i.e. several key scenes in one film may merit analysis whereas a sequence, shot, and scene may require attention in another, only shots in another, and so on and so forth.

METHODOLOGY: **FORMAL FILM ANALYSIS**

[51] Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, 177.
[52] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 142.

In terms of its role in the declension of shot, scene, and sequence as an analytical framework, film's most important distinction as a visual language is its syntax which "can also include spatial composition" or the equivalent of being able to say or write "several things at the same time"[53]. This is close mimic to how stimuli present themselves in reality, further illustrating both the popularity and attraction of film as a storytelling platform. A formal film analysis framework within a comparative cultural-contextualist approach will accordingly consider "a film as part of some broader context. This can be society at large [or] the particular culture, time, and place that created it".[54] Drawing from a truncated form of Formal Film Analysis, indicators of the visual elements of film (mise-en-scene, cinematography, and editing/montage) will drive the identification of narrative mechanisms. There is extensive work on the expressionism and realism of Mise-en-Scene and Montage, respectively. Indeed, each is equipped technically and semiotically to mimic the other in that "setting up a scene is as much an organizing of time as of space".[55] But whereas Mise-En-Scene is generally "the modification of space", for example, editing i.e. montage is the "modification of time". Monaco dichotomized his visual, artistic, and cinematic "codes" between Mise en Scene (the Framed Shot and Diachronic Shot) and Montage, but I will take a more simplified, industry-centric approach in categorizing my "visual indicators" between Mise-en-Scene, Cinematography, and Editing (Montage) with consideration that Cinematography certainly is still a part of Mise-en-Scene theoretically, but for the structural purpose of analysis can be independently classified. Finally, it is again necessary to emphasize that this is an interdisciplinary process; the chosen methodological synthesis is accomplished through examination of the concept of film as an entertainment, education, and advocacy platform together with the identification of semiotic indicators of such narrative devices and expressive results as metaphor, motif, metonym, and trope.

RESEARCH DESIGN: **SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS**

As semiotics is "the study of systems of signs" wrote Monaco, and "the system of an art can generally be described in semiotic terms as a collection of codes," then it seems an apt approach to take — indeed, an increasingly utilized one — "to study the arts and media as languages or language systems—technical structures with inherent laws governing not only what is "said" but also how it is "said." The process is a type of deconstruction, appropriate in the context of modern and postmodern reductionism discussed in this study's theoretical analysis, that which "attempts to describe the codes and structural systems that operate in cultural phenomena".[56] He continues: "The power of language system is that there is a very great difference between the signifier and the signified; the power of film is that there is not…Film does not suggest, in this context: it states. And

[53] Ibid., 191-192.
[54] Christopher P. Jacobs, "Film Theory and Analysis, or, What did that movie mean?" *UND: University of North Dakota,* 2013. Accessed January 15, 2016.
[55] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 196.
[56] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 175, 73, and 37 respectively.

therein lies its power and the danger it poses to the observer."[57] The signifier and signifier make up the system of signs related to the linguistic terms code and encode. "These cultural "constructs,"" as *Gardner's Art Through the Ages* describes, "are believed by many scholars today to encode the thought patterns of culture and require, like any code, deciphering. All constructs…are reducible to signs that communicate significance or meaning." The sign, or signifier, is reciprocal in meaning with its signified and serves as a window to analyzing and articulating multiple points of view in a post-colonial, globalizing contemporary media-scape:

> Deconstruction proceeds by "re-reading" the received art-historical picture [or image] and showing where and how it is false to the realities of the cultures it attempts to explain and to the meanings of particular works of art. Thus, in our postmodern world reconstruction and deconstruction of context and its meaning go on together as a kind of dialogue, the outcome of which is uncertain.[58]

The basic units of analysis in semiotics are signs and codes. The sign acts as "the denotation, which is the literal meaning" of the signified and the code is a sign that "occurs in a group, or a particular context…[and] can suggest or connote extra meaning".[59] This study relied on two systems to further define these units. The first, proposed by critic Manon de Reeper, names the components of "filmic code" as Indexical Signs, Symbolic Code, Iconic Signs and Codes, Enigma Code, and Convention. De Reeper's Indexical sign is the "most basic of signs of film…[acting] as cues to existing knowledge, her Symbolic code denotes something that requires some basis of previous knowledge or cultural understanding to decipher, her Iconic signs and codes are "literal…meant to appear like the thing itself" but also include association of cultural ideas, her Enigma Code is the "most important type of code used in film: it creates the question which the film will then go on to answer", and her Convention "indicates..the established way of [doing, understanding, or presenting] something…the generally accepted norms".[60] Similarly, the "trichotomy" proposed by the Peirce/Wollen System (C.S. Peirce and Peter Wollen) in the book *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* suggests a delineation between the Icon ("the signifier represents the signified…by its similarity…its likeness", the Index ("an inherent relationship to [the signifier]" such as a metaphor), and the Symbol ("an arbitrary sign in which the signifier has neither a direct nor an indexical relationship to the signified, but rather represents it though convention"), none of which are mutually exclusive.[61] The system utilized in this study is a synthesis of the aforementioned elements, and depicted in the arrangement below wherein the key semiotic indicators are Sign, Icon, Code, and Convention:

FIG 1 — Semiotic Indicators

---

[57] Ibid., 176-177.
[58] Richard G. Tansey and Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 8-9.
[59] Manon De Reeper, *Film Analysis For Beginners*, electronic.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Monaco, *How to Read a Film,* 184-186.

Sign (literal)	**Icon** (likeness)	**Code** (contextual)	**Convention** (cultural norm)
	Iconic sign / code	Index	Symbol
		Indexical sign	Symbolic code

Naturally, the inclusion of icons and symbols will demand the similar methods of iconography, which is "literally, the "writing of" images, both the significance and study of them". Iconic analysis, which contends reflexively that "function of image and symbols can merge", and is appropriate for discerning representative values of signs, icons, codes, and symbols alike.[62] In this synthesized framework, a Sign is the literal denotation of the signified, an Icon represents the signified by is similarity or likeness (often culturally informed), Code is a sign or signs that occur in a group and therefore ascribe a contextual value, suggestion or connotation of extra meaning, or are otherwise indicative of an inherent relationship to the signifier, and Convention is defined by arbitrary symbols indicating the established or generally accepted/cultural norms of doing, understanding, or presenting. Accordingly, the three foci of the research design — visual indicators, cinematic codes, and narrative structure — aim to reflect the inter-disciplinary nature of the topic and its eventual conclusions within the methodologies of film aesthetics and semiotics and guided by the analytical faculties of dialectical criticism.

2.3.1 VISUAL INDICATORS AS SIGNS AND ICONS

The visual language of formal film analysis or formal aesthetics is surveyed within three roles pertinent to the creation of visual narrative: Aesthetic choice in Mise-en-Scene, Mobile Framing in Cinematography, and temporal-graphic and spatial relations in Editing (Montage). These interpretations of the role of film crafts thereof (mainly direction, production design, cinematography, and editing/montage) speak to the views held by Western practitioners in the industry in particular, and they fit the general model dictated by Hollywood from its development in the studio system through the early 2000s. The recent emergence of "indie" (independent) film industries in and outside of the West has not shaken these design conventions up as of yet, aside from the relative limitations independently-financed budgets dictate.[63] On the other hand, one might determine that the limitations imposed in this regard have resulted in a more simplified albeit more dynamic and symbolic visual language in contemporary film as a result of the "indie revolution" and modern reductionism. Nevertheless, it is clear that choices filmmakers make are design choices regardless of their transparence; they are lent toward a certain narrative end in support of the story context. Lest forgotten, filmmaking is a subjective enterprise. Indeed, Sikov referred to film's visual ele-

[62] Richard G. Tansey and Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 6-7.
[63] Consider the emergence of the "indie" (independent) industry from its origins to salient global presence today through its decidedly different, counter-mainstream and even, in some cases, experimental approach to subject matter — particularly visually.

ments as "stylistic conventions" for these reasons.[64] In order to determine the extent of narrative complicity in visual storytelling, I will first outline the formal aesthetic indicators which act as semiotic signs.

My first set of visual indicators is clustered under Aesthetic Choice, which refers to conventional elements that the filmmakers is explicit in contributing: composition of the scene or shot, the setting and set dressing, lighting, color and tone, texture, and grain of the image. Aesthetic choice is significant for its required collaboration between the director, cinematographer, and art directors and therefore represents the highest variability in consciously attributive narrative elements. Traditionally, the analytical unit of Mise-en-scene is the composition of elements in a scene: the set design and dressing (decorations), the frame/s, and the lights and colors. In a theoretical sense, however, it is much more dynamic. Sikov writes that Mise-en-scene "is the relation of everything in the shot to everything else in the shot over the course of the shot…[in] individual spaces represented in the film and even over the course of the entire film"; the elements of set design, dressing, color, etc. are all necessitated by the ultimate goal of composition, or "the precise arrangements of objects and characters within the frame….relatively static".[65] Mise-en-scene includes cinematography and therefore aspects of composition in the sense that it dictates the end result of all filmcrafts; set design and dressing, camera angles and distances, editing transitions, etc. which all contribute to "everything—literally everything—in the filmed image…it's the expressive totally of what you see in a single film image" and, one could posit, the totality of how you see the single film image as well.[66] Hailing from its original French which "means that which has been put into the scene or put onstage"including "the camera's actions and angles and the cinematography", Mise-en-scene "is the first step in understanding how films produce and reflect meaning…and every detail has a meaningful consequence".[67]

Mobile framing refers to elements of cinematography (yet still encompassed by mise-en-scene) which are camera movement, camera distance, camera angle, lens and focus, frame and aspect ratio, space and depth. Cinematography, which many refer to as "painting with light", is perhaps a more under-appreciated aspect of the filmmaking process as its effects are subtle and could be deemed invisible by the casual observer.[68] Traditionally, cinematography is a general reference to photography — "lighting devices and their effects, film stocks and the colors or tones they produce, the lenses used to record images on celluloid, the shape of the image", etc. — or the "manipulation of light and shadow, colour and tone, space and movement".[69] Cinematography is more an act of interpretative than an act of origination, but still a direct tool of narrative creation in that what might actually seem realistic regardless of style is actually a deceptively compelling sort of "roman-

[64] Ed Sikov, *Film studies: an introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 27.
[65] Ibid., 19.
[66] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 205.
[67] Sikov, *Film Analysis for Beginners*, 5-6, 8.
[68] Peter Ettedgui, *Cinematography* (Woburn, MA: Focal Press, 1998), 8. Or "sculpting it".
[69] Sikov, *Film Studies*, 38; Ettedgui, *Cinematography*, 9.

tic reality".[70] The camera is, of course, the main tool of cinematography and lends technical, interdependent variables of camera distance, camera angle, camera movement, and lens and focus to this ultimately interpretive medium — focal length, linear distortion, distortion of depth perspective, angle of view, focus, aperture, depth of field, and exposure time among them. Of its remaining elements — frame and aspect ratio and space and depth— there are key qualities. Frame and aspect ratio reinforce the construction of composition in tandem. The aspect ratio, or ratio of the image's borders, determines frame or the limits of the image, which "brings with it a set of aesthetic, expressive consequences". If "the codes of Mise-en-Scene are the tools with which the filmmaker alters and modifies our reading of the shot" then the indicators of mobile framing serve to define composition as well. Indeed, follows Monaco, "“two aspects of the framed image are the most important: the limitations that the frame imposes, and the composition of the image within the frame (and without necessary regard to it)".[71] As for space and depth — which also reflect technical and interpretive qualities toward an apex arrangement — they function together in a three-dimensional space within and without of the story's diegesis (on and offscreen, for example). Indeed, even the absence of space or emptiness (negative space) is an indicator of mobile framing.

Finally, Editorial technique (montage) refers to the elements used to organize the final version of the story on film, that is the techniques of montage (of the synthesizing sort, more on the definitions and distinction of montage later), transition methods, and continuity versus other ways of editing. The way editorial techniques contribute to the presentation of temporal, graphic, and spatial relations on screen is the final say on visual narrative within, and even as it is perceived to be more apparent or oblique it is nonetheless one of the most manipulative aspects of filmmaking. Editing grapples with the question "how to present the shot?" and is "regarded as the fulcrum of film art".[72] It is perhaps the most narrative of the visual elements. More than simply "the methods by which filmmakers link individual shots to one another", Sikov cautions this narrative quality of editing, echoing the overarching aesthetic dilemma: "Bear in mind that editing is a human activity. Unlike the camera's mechanical recording of images, editing is quite specifically a matter of active decision-making—the product of human choice".[73] Editing is also astute in its associative qualities, compelling audiences to make emotional and dramatic connections. Another illuminating way to approach montage is through comparison of the development of modern art. "One of the important elements of Cubism, for example," wrote Monaco, "was the attempt to achieve on canvas a sense of interrelationships among perspectives…Both Cubism and montage eschew the unique point of view and explore the possibilities of multiple perspective".[74] Temporal, graphic, and spatial relations are the product of editing which Sikov summarized "compounds information and creates evocative as-

---

[70] Ettedgui, *Cinematography*, 9, 119.
[71] Sikov, *Film Studies*, 42-44; Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 205-206.
[72] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 205, 141.
[73] Sikov, *Film Studies*, 57.
[74] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 49.

sociations that form a cornerstone of any films' expressive meaning".[75] Editing matches, transitions, or cuts were also considered for their capacity to achieve "atmosphere and impact". Gregg called all such editing "liberties with timing".[76]

2.3.2 CINEMATIC CODES AS NARRATIVE DEVICE

Indicators and Icons manifest as cinematic Codes and, ultimately, narrative devices, through techniques employed by filmmakers. There are four central devices, or visual figures of speech, this study discerns as vital to the encoding process: Metaphor, Metonym, Trope, and Motif. In "Metaphor and Metonymy: Not just ornaments of language, ways of thinking", Keith Oatley distinguishes the slight difference between the latter narrative tools. Regarding metaphor, he writes, "one can select one thing to stand for another" whereas in an instance of metonym or juxtaposition, "associated de tails invoke an abstract idea".[77] Metonymic synecdoche, wherein a "part implies the whole", functions as a sort of "cinematic shorthand" — close shots of marching feet to represent an army, for example.[78] Representing the abstract on film, comparably easy in literature with the same set of devices, is a truism of filmic metaphor, writes Monaco ("How can we convey the idea of hotness cinematically, for instance?"), but metaphor and its variants prove an oft-revisited choice for cinematic appropriation of many themes.[79] Trope and motif also function in a complimentary arrangement. Whereas a motif is a recurring visual element with symbolic significance, a trope is a figurative device commonly or over-used—a cliche. Monaco defines trope as having a "bending" effect on language "so that it reveals more than literal meanings…the concept of trope is necessary to describe the often very unusual and illogical way those codes and signs are used to produce new, unexpected meanings".[80] Ultimately films "speak" in the visual equivalent of neologism, "the name for a relatively recent or isolated term, work, or phrase that may be in the process of entering common use, but that has not yet been fully accepted into mainstream language".[81]

FIG 2 - Narrative device and expressive results

Sign (literal)	**Icon** (likeness)	**Code** (contextual)	**Convention** (cultural norm)
Metaphor	**Motif**	**Metonym**	**Trope**
Verisimilitude	Symbolism	Emphasis / Contrast	Characterization

[75] Sikov, *Film Studies*, 60.
[76] Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, 191.
[77] Keith Oatley, "Metaphor and Metonymy: Not just ornaments of language, ways of thinking," *Psychology Today*, 25 January 2013; Monaco, How to Read a Film, 188, https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-psychology-fiction/201301/metaphor-and-metonymy.
[78] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 188.
[79] Ibid., 186.
[80] Ibid., 73.
[81] James M. Anderson, *The Linguistics encyclopedia*, ed. Kirsten Malmkjær (London: Routledge, 1991), 601.

These connotations comprise codes, and together these narrative tools are responsible for encoding the semiotic indicators identified previously into the following narrative or expressive results. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it aims to capture the essence of a variety of filmmaking styles within four general categories reflecting film narratives, conscious or otherwise: Verisimilitude, Symbolism, Emphasis and Contrast, and Characterization. The latter, characterization, is perhaps most easily recognized from its literary counterpart and despite its markedly different role in film still helps develop mood, emotional values and dynamics, and audience participation. Emphasis and Contrast work in tandem to guide the viewer's attention and sympathies for desired narrative outcomes through focus and highlighting, repetition and pattern, elimination and simplification, essentialism, relativity, polarisation, juxtaposition, and counterpoint. For example, cinematographer Richard Sylbert notes that "a theme may be repeated in a number of different ways, each time adding a different resonance…certain scenes are designed to echo others".[82] Symbolism is the device most closely related to a narrative tool and semiotic indicator and also acts as narrative metaphor through parallel. Many of these devices and results overlap; for example, the color palette may be adjusted between locations to emphasize or contrast moods, a cinematographer may light a subject to as to characterize it one way or another, the room withal may be decorated with assorted motifs, etc. Indeed, a filmmaker may "select a point of focus and leave out all the irrelevant details" or, in the case of *A Clockwork Orange* and *Star Wars* designer John Barry, look for "contrast in the drama…polorisation".[83] Of course, each of these techniques is subject to express its core narrative themes differently depending on how heavy-handed the filmmakers are. But for many, the goal is Verisimilitude, however intrinsically unattainable. Pursuing such narrative transparency is subject still to its own unique devices, among them sublimity, simultaneity, and realism. Indeed, even "confusion may be a legitimate goal of the filmmaker".[84] Simulated verisimilitude can try to avoid devices of more controlled approaches — foreshadowing via anticipatory framing, for example. Cinematographer Robby Muller explained, "I always avoid anticipating the action with the faming. I prefer the audience to discover something for themselves, as if by accident".[85]

2.3.3. NOTES ON NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Before progressing to a constructive analysis of the outlined visual indicators, codes, and narrative devices, I find it pertinent to describe structural components of narrative structure in brief. Recognizing Monaco's caveat that "the structure of cinema is defined by codes" or "systems of logical relationship", it is necessary to consider that these codes are "derived after the fact of film.

[82] Peter Ettedgui, *Production Design and Art Direction* (Woburn, MA: Focal Press, 1999), 40, 43, 47.
[83] Ettedgui, *Production Design and Art Direction*, 51, 75. Interviews with production designers Dante Feretti and Stuart Craig.
[84] Sikov, *Film Studies*, 65.
[85] Ettedgui, *Cinematography*, 113.

They are not preexisting laws that the filmmaker consciously observes". The latter point is contentious, of course, but indicative of a variety of codes that are culturally derived, artistic (shared with other arts), and cinematic (mostly unique to the medium of film). "The codes are the medium through which the "message" of the scene is transmitted," he writes, "because they have meaning for us outside the narrow limits of that particular scene…[together making] up the syntax of film".[86] As with visual indicators, this study utilizes three main categories of narrative persuasion: Convention, Segmentation, and Dramatic Unities. Extremely inter-dependent, their contained narrative codes serve to illuminate the intent and message of cinema's visual language.

Convention is a transcendent quality in storytelling. Standing alone as a narrative element or informing a camera placement for a desired effect, convention is "a widely used and accepted device in any art form…an artistic practice or process or device that is commonly accepted and understood within a given culture".[87] As a cinematic device, conventions in genre and character development are abundant; they are cliches in one form or another. A genre is a type or group of film with its own set of distinguishable conventions. As Sikov points out, "we sometimes assume that art is about pure creativity—that great films (or novels, or paintings, or musical works) are a matter of complete originality. But genres belie that idea. Genres rely on repetition and variation rather than uniqueness—familiar recognizable conventions rather than raw, pure inventions".[88] While genre-bending or fusions thereof have become common, the basic premise of conventional structure remains the same. Filmmakers also use technical conventions in lighting, color use, and camera movement to communicate with audiences visually. Tellingly, writes Manon de Reeper, "[Conventions] don't always represent reality, and can even be harmful to how audiences perceive the world." This is commonly perceived in abundant representations of Muslims as terrorists, Indians always speaking with thick accents, etc. Together, she continues, "genre and narrative can add to the sense of convention, like action film or romance, or film noir and superhero as discussed, but a film's editing or certain shot types too can reinforce conventions (e.g. a close-up of the poor damsel in distress)".[89]

Segmentation, or the "formal analysis of a film's story and plot", divides the story narrative into its main parts: locations, main characters, secondary characters, desires, and conflicts. It is a straightforward way to understand a given plot — "the ordering and structuring of narrative events as they are presented in the film" — and to manage an otherwise overwhelming amount of stimulus a wholesale analysis could entail.[90] Whereas the concept of character and its conventional uses has been discussed, it is critical to note the place of desire and conflict in the plot of film. Sikov defines

[86] Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 197, 204.
[87] Sikov, *Film Studies*, 143.
[88] Sikov, *Film Studies*, 143.
[89] Manon De Reeper, *Film Analysis For Beginners*, electronic.
[90] Sikov, *Film Studies*, 91, 105-106. Syuzhet is an alternate term — " the specific ordering of narrative events within the film".

desire as a “central character’s pursuit of a goals” and conflict as this "desire thwarted by something”.[91] The concept of dramatic (or classical) unities, Aristotelian in its origins, encompasses all of these semiotic and narrative elements and indicators by showcasing three unities in a given scene: action (“the main character or characters pursue only one goal”), place (“action occurs in a single general location”, and time “the action takes place during a single time period”).[92] Narrative concepts of story — “the events of the narrative as they occur…including not only those that we see and hear, but those we infer”— and diegesis — “the world of the story…all the story elements presented by the narrative no matter whether they are actually seen or heard onscreen or not”— help to illuminate these unities. Narratives are powerfully employed through these structures via fabula and denotative versus connotative meaning. Fabula refers to “the story that each of constructs as we watch and hear the syuzhet [plot] unfold…associations we bring to the film as individuals—the stories we tell ourselves based on the stories we are being told” which Monaco outlines as connotations developed with the paradigmatic and syntagmatic, “cultural connotations” made comparing devices such as synechdoche and metonymy: “Cinema is an art and a medium of extensions and indexes. Much of its meaning comes not from what we see (or hear) but from what we don’t see or, more accurately, from an ongoing process of comparison of what we see with what we don’t see.”[93] Theme, subtext, and Enigma Code also fall under this inter-dependent network of narrative elements. Visually representing themes in film is an abstractive process, like that of the Richard Sylbert’s work in *Chinatown* in which a less conventional juxtaposition of all-white Spanish colonial facades against a “cloudless blue sky intimidating drought” represented the theme of pervasive heat and drought.[94] Not to mention, a once common subtext in colonial themed plot lines was sexual, such as perceptions of “virginity and libidiousness” of the colonized land (represented conventionally in the romance of the Westerner and the local) or in conflict situations, such as the Romeo and Juliet romance in a divided society plot.[95] Enigma Code, or hermeneutic code, is the semiotic answer to convention. It generally appears at a film’s beginning and urges continued viewing by creating a question it then proceeds to answer through “actions—plot events that simply lead to the reactions”. A clear intimation of enigma code is, as Sikov writes, a story narrative in which “the individual character in search of pursuit of a goal. This is “a convention so basic to Americans’ expressions of motion pictures,” he writes, “that we often take it completely for granted…We also assume that something will get in the way of the central character’s pursuit of his or her goal.”[96] These varieties of convention all ultimately contribute to the simplification and manipulation of history and conflict narrative on screen in some of the West's most potent of films about Northern Ireland and South Africa.

---

91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., 106-107.
93 Sikov, *Film Studies*, 91; Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, 178, 189.
94 Ettedgui, *Production Design and Art Direction*, 41.
95 Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, 15.
96 Sikov, *Film Studies*, 97.

> "Three of the boys were Prods, and the rest of us were Catholics. It's a cross-community event. I suppose the good people in the south think this is great stuff, and let's get this wee team over from Belfast and all that patronising shit."

ANALYSIS**: VISUAL STORYTELLING AS CULTURAL NARRATIVE**

The dialogue above, extracted from a critically acclaimed 22-minute, uncut scene directed by Steve McQueen in his first feature film of three that ended with the Oscar-winning *12 Years a Slave* (2012), dramatized the last days of the IRA's Bobby Sands during the 1981 hunger strike at Maze prison in Northern Ireland. Of the many feature films about conflict, *Hunger* (2008) is only one in thousands but it is especially compelling in representation of controversial aspects of sectarianism by highlighting important contextual themes in an innovative, visually rich style lauded for its "outstanding powerful cinematic language" and "cinematographic maturity".[97] Other thematically related films populate the milieu of conflict-driven storylines which illustrate, to varying degrees of success, how to screen sectarian conflict with narrative integrity, the presumption of which may not resonate in the big-budget, box-office scored, drama-hungry world of modern cinema. The filmic representations of the following sectarian conflicts — The Troubles in Northern Ireland and Apartheid in South Africa — illuminate the discourse of identity politics in the Western World. As sectarian democracies with divided communities, Northern Ireland and South Africa were characterized by fissures in group identities with oppressive elements between them. In Northern Ireland, a colonial legacy of conquest culminated in the Protestant majority's discrimination against the Catholic minority, and these tensions escalated into 30 years of violence called The Troubles. In South Africa, the Afrikaner minority — later joined by English speaking whites — institutionalized a system of racial segregation, sometimes violently, called Apartheid, which created a massive, disadvantaged majority of black Africans and Coloured and Asian minorities who yet resisted, sometimes violently, for over 40 years before the system was abolished. Examining sectarian identity through the elements of memory, innocence, and otherness and its relation to state wellbeing and social security in these contexts illuminates the current discourse of identity politics in two of the strongest imperial democracies of the day — the United States of America and the United Kingdom — whose histories and interests in both Northern Ireland and South Africa are well-vested. The highly developed and hegemonic nature of either powers' film industries (and frequent collaboration thereof) is also key to the articulation of these themes on both domestic and international screens to an ever broadening audience.

[97] selected jury statements from 2008 Tallinn Black Nights Grand Prize and 2008 Torino Film Festival Special Mention, respectively.

Analysis is hereafter divided between films about The Troubles in Northern Ireland and films about the Apartheid era in South Africa. Only films released after 1999 were reviewed with the justification that post-Good Friday Agreement and post-Apartheid productions would more accurately reflect the contemporary nuances of identity politics as well as more original storylines, not to mention the improvements in storytelling the rapidly improving technology of the industry would warrant. The selected films about The Troubles in Northern Ireland focus on key events therein — *Bloody Sunday* (2002), *Five Minutes of Heaven* (2009), *Hunger* (2008), *'71* (2014), and *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005). The selected films about Apartheid in South Africa do not include films about the Truth and Reconciliation commission, focusing rather on the end of, life during, or resistance to Apartheid principally — *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013), *Winnie Mandela* (2011), *Invictus* (2009), *Color of Freedom* (2007), *Catch a Fire* (2006), and *District 9* (2009). After an introduction to each case study and a review of each film's visual elements for semiotic significance, the identity elements of each film are analyzed together toward meaning within the categories of memory, innocence, and otherness.

3.1 **THE TROUBLES IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

The Troubles refers to thirty years of violence in Northern Ireland between nationalist republicans wishing to unite with the Republic of Ireland and a unionist majority who wished to remain part of the United Kingdom. The republican minority was made up mostly of Catholics and the unionist majority of Protestants, a sectarian divide rooted in a brutal colonial conquest by the Oliver Cromwell-led English Parliament in the mid-1600s. Beginning with the Anglo-Norman forays into Ireland in the 12th century, England consolidated its control of the island (along with other Gaelic parts of the United Kingdom, such as Wales and Scotland) over the next seven centuries. Particularly since Henry VIII, a Protestant, declared himself king of the colony in 1541, "the Catholic church in Ireland had been a nationalist bulwark against English Protestant rule". Extending from policies established during Henry's's daughter Elizabeth's reign, when such identities flared violently, "the new Protestant ingredient in English identity (God's 'elect nation')…undermined acceptance as Englishmen of Ireland's Catholic Old English", prefacing centuries of division to follow.[98] Accordingly, as Steven Ellis noted for the BBC, "English captains and colonists like Humphrey Gilbert and Walter Raleigh were less interested in teaching the natives the benefits of English civility than in making their fortunes by goading them into hopeless rebellion and then grabbing their land."[99] Having established a plantation system in Ulster (modern day Northern Ireland), uneasy rule of the native populations from England via local surrogates (both the "Old" and

---

[98] Reynolds, David, *One World Divisible: A Global History Since 1945* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2009), 231.
[99] Steven Ellis, "Turning Ireland English." *BBC History*. 17 February 2011.

"New English"), tempered over the centuries by inter-generational violence and atrocities, continued through the early 1900s. The final bouts of these tensions took place in the early 1920s as the culmination of "indigenous struggle against occupation [resulting] in a history of penury, famine, mass migration and the IRA's [Irish Republican Army] guerrilla war against the British".[100] The six protestant-majority counties comprising Northern Ireland were partitioned in 1922 when the Irish parliament accepted the United Kingdom's terms of independence for an Irish Free State, although the Republic of Ireland was not established until 1949. The IRA launched a campaign for Northern Ireland thereafter and by the 1960s bucked up against the new Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). In a volume of contemporary history, David Reynolds wrote how for "fear of being subsumed in a reactionary "papist state"", Northern Ireland's unionist majority "reduced the Catholics in Northern Ireland, though one-third of the population, to the status of second-class citizens by discrimination in politics, jobs, and housing".[101] By 1969, serious clashes between those loyalists and republicans resulted in deployment of British troops to the province and, as the situation continued to deteriorate, the UK disbanded Northern Ireland's parliament in 1972 to rule directly from London.

The Troubles are generally defined as beginning in the late 1960s, although "Bloody Sunday", a banned rally protesting mass internment which became a massacre when British soldiers shot 13 civilians, on January 30, 1972, serves as the symbolic beginning. Imprisonment without trial in political cases had been introduced in 1971, and, among the tensions of ongoing discriminations and retributive violence, prison protests among IRA prisoners sought political recognition from an unwavering British government. A final resort hunger strike was led by republican Bobby Sands, which resulted in his and nine others' deaths, in 1981. Bombings during this period and the next two decades (such as in 1987 in Inniskillen and in 1998 in Omagh) came from both sides, and on-again, off-again peace talks eventually resulted in the symbolic end of the Troubles via the signing of the Good Friday Agreement on April 10, 1998. Far from ending the Troubles, the Good Friday Agreement did represent a peaceful step toward non-violent negotiation even as direct rule from the UK was reinstated in 2002 before the original Agreement, which had intended to implement a power-sharing, cross-community consent system to govern Northern Ireland, was amended by the St Andrew's Agreement in 2006. The legacy of violence, murders, and other atrocities committed in Northern Ireland and Ireland both before and during the Troubles continues to impact its affairs, not to mention the individual lives and communities effected by the 3,600 killed and 50,000 injured or maimed during the Troubles alone.[102]

[100] Francis Frascina, "White Cube, White Culture, White Riot," *Third Text* 25, no. 5 (September 2011), 526.
[101] Reynolds, *One World Divisible*, 231.
[102] "The Troubles," BBC, accessed 1 November 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/troubles.

Represented by a religious divide — Protestant and Catholic — and informed by both historical facts and myths about where those divisions come from, the Troubles and Northern Ireland are generally considered a classic example of sectarian conflict. How films narrate these sectarian fissures for the present is a particular focus hereafter. *Bloody Sunday* (2002) introduces the analysis through its compelling documentary-style dramatization of the Troubles' symbolic beginning, a civil rights march against mass internment which goes horribly wrong when British paramilitaries open fire and kill thirteen men, while the fictional drama *'71* (2014) takes place in 1971 and accounts for the mounting tensions of the time through the story of a young, inexperienced British soldier lost in divided and hostile Belfast. *Five Minutes of Heaven* (2009) addresses the role of reconciliation in the peace process by recreating the assassination of a young Catholic man and then hypothesizing what a meeting between his murderer, former UVF volunteer Alistair Little, and brother of the victim, Joe Griffen (who witnessed the crime at eights years of age), would look like 33 years later. The latter film alludes to the style of the BBC's 2006 television program "Facing the Truth" with Desmund Tutu, which brought individuals from Northern Ireland together in a similar way that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did in South Africa after Apartheid. The critically acclaimed *Hunger* (2008) tells Bobby Sand's story in a unique cinematic style, while *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005) is an unorthodox examination of the sectarian context through the fictional coming-of-age story of a transvestite from rural Ireland whose journey to self-discovery is punctuated by the violence of The Troubles. These films represent the more easily accessed, better known of films about The Troubles. Constraints of space also limited the selection which does not include tv movies *Sunday* (2002), which premiered the week marking Bloody Sunday's 30th anniversary along with *Bloody Sunday* (above), *Omagh* (2004), the spy thrillers *Fifty Dead Men Walking* (2008) and *Shadow Dancer* (2012), the fictionalized 2006 car-ride between infamous politicians Ian Paisley (Democratic Unionist Party) and Martin McGuinness (IRA) in *The Journey* (2016), a vibrant look into the punk rock scene of Belfast during the 1970s in *Good Vibrations* (2012), nor the sensitive *Mickybo and Me* (2004) which depicts a friendship between boys on either side of the sectarian divide in Belfast in 1970.

Bloody Sunday (2002) is a documentary-style historical drama which recreates the infamous confrontation of Irish civil rights protestors by British paramilitaries on January 30, 1972, now referred to as "Bloody Sunday". Meant to contest the implementation of a British government policy to allow indefinite internment of political cases without trial, the march escalated into what is now dubbed a massacre for the thirteen civilian lives taken — and fourteen wounded — by British soldiers. Golden-Globe nominated actor James Nesbitt, a member of the Northern Ireland Protestant community who was nominated for a BAFTA and won a BIFA for this role, led the cast of *Bloody*

Sunday under British, Oscar-nominated director Paul Greengrass, the BFI-fellow behind the *Bourne Ultimatum* (Matt Damon) series. Set on the streets of divided Londonderry (also known as Derry), *Bloody Sunday* sets pace between Republican MP Ivan Cooper (James Nesbitt) and young Catholic Gerry Donahue (Declan Duddy). As Cooper, who despite his Protestant background is evidently determined to make good on his leadership role in a prominently Catholic district, idealistically tarries about from speaking engagements to strained conversations with his burdened wife to advising march logistics, Donahue schemes to spend time with his girlfriend and is ultimately caught up with hooligan friends in the escalating violence. As footage alternates between Cooper and Donahue, viewers also witness the activities of British paramilitaries assigned to monitor the march.

The most memorable of the film's visuals is by far the cinematography, the shaky framing of which gives cinematographer Ivan Strasbourg's handheld filming a gritty, realistic veneer. Indeed, the handheld camera is a hallmark of Greengrass' style, perhaps due to his background in documentary making. Because it is reminiscent of eyewitness news reports, war correspondence and even home videos, the style appears more realistic than the conventional cinematic camera. The technique is especially effective in the film's march and crowd scenes; the freewheeling nature of the handheld camera allows for a greater freedom to focus, zoom, and take less formal-looking close-ups which guide the viewer's gaze more subtly. After victims are brought to the hospital, for example, the camera follows Cooper through the crowd, glimpsing close-ups of the angry, shocked, and grieving constituents he had just reassured hours before. These sorts of characterizations feature throughout the film. The style of editing also seemed to mimic conventional handheld or homemade footage, relying on black screen dividers between scenes which juxtaposition themselves between the various actors — close-ups of the British general's tense, set jaw, another of Cooper's lined face.

Through these techniques, *Bloody Sunday* exhibits characteristics of symbolism, characterization, and attempted verisimilitude. First, it incorporates firearms as a sign (literal) which act as both a metaphor and a motif symbolic of the debates at time of filming. Eddie Cockrell called the placements "ambiguous balance" on the part of a generous director which allows for "a provocative experience".[103] In other words, the filmmakers use props and design the composition to play devils advocate with the murky truth, a clever way to sidestep the controversial terrain of whether or not British troops were goaded without glossing it over completely. One of the film's most visible of motifs regards the narrative's references to ongoing debates of whether the soldiers' aggression was warranted or not. This is achieved by placing guns in the composition. At least two firearms are seen in possession of the citizens without dialogue or other narrative device to explain their pres-

[103] Eddie Cockrell, "Berlin 2002 Review: Tragedy Revisited; Paul Greengrass' "Bloody Sunday"," *IndieWire*, 8 February 2002, http://www.indiewire.com/2002/02/berlin-2002-review-tragedy-revisited-paul-greengrass-bloody-sunday-80540/.

ence (the soldiers' are generally shown with their guns). Then there is the portrayal of the "hooligans" — Donahue's friends among them — they are a raucous bunch of long-haired, graphic-tee wearing punks, subtle codes of the aesthetic fashioned by the cultural elite of the day whose commitment to challenging the status quo was not lost on the young and impassioned of a conflicted community in a historically broken Northern Ireland Above all, however, the handheld camera is a trope which attempts at verisimilitude by imitating amateur footage but actually characterizes the narrative by creating an emotional atmosphere which elicits a particular reaction from the audience. Alan Morrison noted that the cumulative effect of the cinematographic style and actors' performance "set the tone" and helped "the audience understand that this is a human tragedy that goes beyond the sectarian divide…[provoking] an emotional rather than intellectual response".[104]

Bloody Sunday's lead, James Nesbitt, also starred in *Five Minutes of Heaven* (2009) opposite Liam Neeson. *Five Minutes of Heaven* depicts the killing of a Catholic man by UVF volunteer Alistair Little in 1975. The man's eight year-old brother, Joe Griffen, witnesses the murder, and his mother blames him for not intervening. The film, based on real events to this point, then extraordinarily departs to consider what a meeting between Little (Neeson) and Griffen (Nesbitt) would look like thirty-three years later for a televised reconciliation project. British screenwriter Guy Hibbert (*Omagh, A United Kingdom*), who was asked to write a script for the BBC on the legacy of the Troubles, imagined their hypothetical confrontation based on three years of separate conversations with the real-life Little and Griffen. Both Neeson and Nesbitt grew up in Northern Ireland, albeit on opposite sides of the conflict — Nesbitt a Protestant, Neeson a Catholic — identities which, naturally, lend themselves to constant commentary when the film is critically considered. The director Oliver Hirschbiegel, recently Oscar-nominated for the Hitler drama *Downfall,* was German, however. Aside from his comparably advantageous cultural distance, producer Eoin O'Callaghan said Hirschbiegel "is minimalist. Little fuss, little lighting, little tricksiness."[105] Hirschbiegel's straightforward approach reflected in a similarly plain-sailing visual experience. In several instances, however, symbolism and motif present a more heavy-handed version of the storyline, even as they serve as structural organizers. During scenes recreative of the murder, for example, the British and Irish flag appear as identification motifs - while Little and a fellow UVF volunteer walk to meet two other conspirators, the British union jack hovers overhead, hangs over a doorway around the corner, and so on and so forth. When the sequence jumps to the parallel imaging of the Griffen household, viewers see an Irish flag tucked in this window or on the neighboring business front and so on and so forth. This was perhaps a way to prevent the potentially confusing narrative and historical context of divided communities from inhibiting viewers' full appreciation of the story. Other icons and

[104] Alan Morrison, "Bloody Sunday Review," *Empire Online*, 3 May 2016. https://www.empireonline.com/movies/bloody-sunday/review/.
[105] Gerard Gilbert, "Five Minutes of Heaven," *The Independent*, 2 April 2009. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/five-minutes-of-heaven-1660787.html.

symbols of identity feature heavily throughout. *Five Minutes of Heaven* introduces Little's family during dinner time via a closeup of boiled potatoes, carrots, and gravy—a true meal of the isle, Irish or Protestant notwithstanding — and the subsequent tour of the home shows a portrait of Queen Elizabeth on the mantel (viewers will also notice both families are watching the same BBC program on television) from which viewers infer the family must be Ulster-sympathizing. Several shots also hover on clock faces before finally showing the young Alastair—his absence has already been alluded to by the empty plate an seat at the dinner table, an empty bed and unoccupied desk during the Little home tour — as he hurriedly towels off in the bathroom. All of the later elements seems to act together as an enigmatic code indicative of an impending action or confrontation. Then there is an interesting series of characterizing elements. First, Alastair tends to a pimple in the bathroom mirror, an iconic reference to youth, even representative of angst, puberty and self-discovery, and perhaps the conflicted and impressionable times thereof. He goes to his bed and pulls out from under it a box of colorful childhood toys. After sorting through trucks and action figures, blocks and the like, he pulls out a two bulky, wrapped items — a gun and bullets. Such a shot depicting a young man holding a gun in his childhood room strikes a sharp contrast — a universal symbol of violence, crime, and death, a gun, next to one of youth, innocence, and gentleness — a teddy bear. As this scene follows a voiceover introduction by an older Little ("I was young…"), is a clear narration through juxtaposition of Alastair's sense of guilt and a debate of his complicity through characterization as an impressionable, misguided teenager responding to the political tides of the time.

Hunger (2008) is a historical drama about the real-life 1981 hunger strike led by IRA volunteer Bobby Sands at Maze prison in Northern Ireland. Nearly ten years after Bloody Sunday protests against internment, the film opens during the no wash protests following five years of republican prisoners' struggle with the British government when the latter withdrew special category (or political) status for Troubles-related convictions. In his debut lead role for a feature film, Michael Fassbinder starred as Bobby Sands alongside Liam Cunningham (*Game of Thrones*) and Stuart Graham (*Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*). *Hunger's* writer-director Steve McQueen, who went on to win an Oscar for *12 Years a Slave* (2013), is a British artist who rejects the title of filmmaker[106] but whose unconventional, outsider approach was well received and touted as a modern art house classic. The UK-Ireland production premiered at Cannes, winning its highest honor, the camera d'or, and, according to IMDB, later secured another 44 wins and 33 nominations. A provocative film, Franci Frascina noted in "White Cube, White Culture, White Riot", that "McQueen, black and British, revives the recent past of brutal internment in the 1980s and its murderous rituals of possession and self-possession in order to project a contemporary fable" including a commentary which paral-

[106] David Calhoun, "Director Interview: Steve McQueen," *Timeout London* (blog). Accessed 10 November 2017, https://www.timeout.com/london/film/director-interview-steve-mcqueen.

lels the modern American-led and British-supported policies of invasion, internment, abuse and torture.[107]

The film relies on a paradigmatic arrangement of contrasting images and montages which the amateur critic James Smith suggested could be broken into four themes — "comfort and discomfort, beauty and ugliness, innocence and violence and nature and artificiality" — the juxtapositions of which guide the film's narrative.[108] Toward the film's beginning, a montage of the prison warden, Raymond, at home and at work contrasts the comfort of family and domestic life with the discomfort of the prison's starkness and violence: "the images of the pink nailbrush and ceramic sink, freshly laundered and ironed clothes and neatly presented hot breakfast give a syntagm (meaning signified) of domestic comfort." Even the use of pink at home, a traditionally feminine color, compares strikingly with the masculine environment at the prison. Also of note is the warden's Union Jack key ring, a symbol he sympathizes as an Ulsterman. Later, in a scene at the prison after an altercation with an inmate which mirrors the prison warden's home bathroom routine, the blood - an iconic sign for violence — in the otherwise pristine sink bowl reinforces these associations and polarizations. In addition, a memorable set of scenes wherein inmates spread excrement over cell walls and collect and pour urine into the corridor as acts of rebellion comprise what Smith interpreted as a juxtaposition between the themes of beauty and ugliness, "an attempt by McQueen to present familiar signs in an unorthodox fashion. The use of the sign of excrement in this artistic way is ironic." It requires a deeper participation from the viewer, particularly as the spread of feces is made in a circular motion (a technically beautiful shape) and the cleaning up of the urine is filmed in an "aesthetically pleasing" way.[109] More symbolic and indexical signs abound in one of the most emotionally powerful scenes in the film which takes place during a search of inmates and ensuing beating by riot police. A young officer, apparently overcome, steps behind the wall to cry. The scene continues as a split frame, a wall between the signs of violence on the left — batons, police armor, etc. — and signs of despair on the right — tears, downcast face, youth, etc. Smith drew thematic similarities between this scene and the film's closing sequence which depicts a hallucination by the dying Sands of his younger, more innocent self.[110] Ultimately, *Hunger* deliberates justice with images, juxtaposing the unnatural condition of inmates with an even more provocative indictment of human suffering through a quiet yet complex discussion of violence and martyrdom.

'71 (2014), one of the more recent in the post-Good Friday spate of films about the Troubles, stars Jack O'Connell as British army private Gary Hook who is accidentally separated from his regiment during a riot in Belfast in 1971. The film follows Hook's dangerous journey back to safety after an impassioned IRA volunteer shoots his fellow British soldier, whereafter Hook fleas

[107] Frascina, "White Cube, White Culture, White Riot," 526-527.
[108] James Smith, "The Film-Semiotics of 'Hunger' (Dir. Steve McQueen): A Movie Analysis Essay." *HubPages Movies and Movie Reviews* (blog), 27 June 2016.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

for his life through hostile neighborhoods, pursued by the IRA, encountering street battles, bombings, and double agents along the way. *'71* was director Yann Demange's debut in the role (for which he won a BIFA for Best Director). Like Bloody Sunday, *'71* also utilizes the handheld camera technique and similarly juxtaposes long shots, following shots, and wide-angles for perceived verisimilitude. During Hook's first outing with the regiment in Belfast, the camera jostles excitedly between the tense house raid beating and the screaming, increasingly unruly crowd growing outside which confronts the privates and culminates in Hook's separation. The handheld is especially riveting during Hook's flight scene, slipping with him through alleyways and abandoned or bombed out homes and businesses, ducking both doorways and bullets. The technique is also completely effective in portraying Hook's shellshock after the bar bombing; the camera reels and spins with and around Hook, in and out of focus. In addition, the lighting is aesthetically pleasing. It often makes use of what appears to be natural light — creating soft, muted hues throughout that seem appropriate for a '70s palette. Silhouettes also feature prominently, perhaps as a way to emphasize the context of dark figures in various activities — the backyard play of Hook and his younger brother against an open, green, and peaceful English hillside versus the eery walk of Hook and the unionist boy on the narrow, scarcely lit streets of Belfast. This lighting also creates sets of shadowing which define the composition in most scenes; regardless of the time of day, the shadows focus the viewer's gaze on either a character or piece of set either by highlighting or framing. In the scene where a British officer confronts the double-agent (unrealized yet by the officers) about Hook's whereabouts, the double-officer's show of anger and demands of respect are delivered as the camera pans from a low angle. A telling effect is then created where the double-agents face is completely obscured by shadow — viewers see only the light bouncing off of his hair, his facial features completely hidden in a black silhouette. While viewers should be aware of the officer's subterfuge by virtue of earlier events, this effect seems to reinforce the ambiguous areas occupied by truth, identity, and the trust and allegiance thereof in Belfast at the time. Overall, most of the visual elements in *'71* conspire to characterize Hook as an innocent yet disposable victim of a military system and empire which does not face up to its darker corners. Even the handheld cinematography, which lends itself to the creation of a more immersive viewing experience, limits itself to Hook's experiences. Viewers imbibe a strong sense of noble humanity in the young soldier despite his and placement in several violent and chaotic situations. Indeed, these contexts achieve this effect by juxtaposing the destruction with his gentle nature and relative innocence. The moments shown wherein he spends time with his brother before the dispatch to Belfast —playing soccer, out on the town, etc. — as well as the comparative tenderness he shows toward the Ulster boy who appears to be about the brothers same age by entering a bombed building to rescue his dismembered body characterize an innocent persona at odds with a manic conflict.

Finally, *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005) is a coming-of-age drama set against the backdrop of 1970s Ireland and London. Its focus is the self-discovery journey of Patrick "Kitten" Braden, a young transvestite woman who runs away from a conservative village in conflict-ridden Ireland for London in order to search for her mother who abandoned her at birth. With elements of dark humor and actor Cillian Murphy (*The Dark Knight*, *Inception*) carrying the film as Braden, *Breakfast on Pluto* tells "the familiar story of outcast child".[111] Its novelty springs rather from its subtext — an identity struggle (gender and sexuality) within an identity struggle (Irish politics) and the imperial pressures thereof. Writing for *The Nation*, Stuart Klawans pointed out that the film "flirts at times with auteurist self-reflection, while at other moments it threatens to become a social-issues report," noting it refrains from too heavy-handed of messaging by orienting its narrative around the themes of Innocence and Experience.[112] At the outset, viewers are introduced and reminded via voiceover that Braden is only retelling her story to a baby (Innocence) she pushes in stroller later in life (Experience). Visual elements reinforce this dialectic and its social and political themes throughout Braden's journey by mirroring the identity conflict of a transvestite from rural, conflict-torn Irish community across several planes: First, Braden's internal identity struggle through her desire to find herself, assert personal freedom and achieve liberation by finding her mother — which eventually leads to reconciliation with her father —and second, the background identity conflict at home, The Troubles, which follows her wherever she goes, claiming the lives of friends and lovers along the way.

Early on, Kitten and her friends (one of whom appears to mixed-race, unusual we are meant to infer at the time in rural Ireland) call themselves outcasts, and at one point they rendezvous with a marijuana-smoking, nomadic group named "The Border Knights" — perhaps a reference to the figurative as well as literal borders of identity between Ireland and Ulster at the time. As her sexual confidence grows, she manages to become romantically involved with several IRA volunteers, one who daytimes as frontman for the glam rock band Billy Hatchett and the Mohawks. In a scene where the band performs for the Republican Prisoner's Welfare Association, the band members (Kitten has since become a part of the act) don costumes reminiscent of Native American costume, albeit commercialized— braided wigs, moccasins, beaded clothing, etc. The premise of the band acts as a metaphor for the borders of identity, Braden's transvestitism as overstepping such a border as well as the broad sectarian cleavages the band's appropriation of Native American culture seem to compare with the Irish experience. *Breakfast on Pluto* manages these heavy, controversial areas by telling its story through an interesting, vibrant character who doesn't take herself too seriously ("If I volunteer, can I have pink glasses" she asks an irate IRA volunteer, poking fun). As a witness

111 Stuart Klawans, "About a Girl," *Nation* 281, no. 17 (November 21, 2005): 42.
112 Ibid.

to the Ulster-Ireland divide Braden herself embodies in allegory, Braden's story succeeds in appropriately backgrounding the Northern Ireland conflict by bringing to the forefront the imperial subtext.

3.2 **APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Apartheid was the system of racial segregation in South Africa which was institutionalized by the Afrikaner Nationalist Party in 1948 and remained until 1991. Sometimes referred to as an all-white democracy, Apartheid required registration according to white, coloured, black, or Asian categories while promising separate but equal development of the races. These categories resulted in three de facto communities or nations, with exceptions: Whites were of mostly British or Dutch-Boer descent (Afrikaners), blacks descended from San hunter-gathers and/or major Bantu ethnic groups, and mixed-race "Coloureds" and ethnic Asians (significant populations of Indians, Malays, Filipinos, and Chinese).[113] The Apartheid system favored the minority whites, however, who exploited labor from the other races — overwhelmingly of black Africans — and dominated the nation in more or less all political, economic, and social areas. Having declared independence from the United Kingdom in 1934, the mid-century South Africa was previously the self-governing Union of South Africa, an official designation of the British empire in 1910 after taking over the Dutch Cape Colony (founded in the 17th century) and later defeating the descendants of Dutch, German, and Huguenot settlers, known collectively as Boers, in the Anglo-Boer wars in the late 1800s. Extending from these colonial circumstances and spurred by the related discovery of exceptional wealth in natural resources, South Africa's Apartheid was a successive legislative project.

Non-white resistance to Apartheid began to shift from elite to mass movements in the mid-1900s, including a silent demonstration by 20,000 black women in Pretoria in 1956 as well as ongoing bus boycotts, strikes, and rural revolts across the country. The African National Congress (ANC), which was founded in 1912, advocated that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white…all national groups", while other, more radical groups pressed a more exclusively black African agenda.[114] One such group, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), instigated a pass book protest in 1960 (non-whites were required to carry pass books allowing them only in certain areas) which led to the infamous confrontation with police in the Johannesburg township of Sharpeville. Sixty-nine black Africans were shot by police in the Sharpeville Massacre which is credited to have mobilized both domestic and international resistance to Apartheid, the former exploding into riots and the latter eventually enacting crippling sanctions. The National Party government initially responded by banning both the ANC and PAC and imprisoning their leaders (Nel-

[113] Randolph Vigne, Alan S. Mabin and Others, "South Africa," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2 November 2017.
[114] Reynolds, David. "One World Divisible". 92.

son Mandela, co-founder of the ANC’s Youth League and armed branch, Umkhonto we Sizwe or “Spear of the Nation”, was imprisoned for life in 1964). In 1990, responding to international pressure and the decreasing threat of Communism at the end of the Cold War, the new state president, F. W. De Klerk, released most of the banned ANC (including Mandela) and took steps toward dismantling Apartheid. Although not a smooth transition by any means, multi-party talks began and international sanctions were lifted in 1991 amidst growing violence between the ANC and Zulu Inkatha. By 1994, South Africa resumed membership in the British Commonwealth and United Nations General Assembly, and a new interim constitution guaranteed the first non-racial elections in South Africa which the ANC won, their Nelson Mandela assuming the presidency. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, began hearings for human rights violations during the apartheid era in 1996, and after two years the Commission report “[branded] apartheid a crime against humanity and finds the ANC accountable for human rights abuses”. The nation had previously decided not to prosecute the individual architects of apartheid's racist policies.[115]

Writing in the late 1990s, professor Robert Gregg reflected how “[Apartheid] is a subject that inevitably found its way to the screen, both because this indisputably evil system stirred the conscience of filmmakers and because it spawned violent conflicts and personal dramas of the kind the film industry is drawn to”.[116] As with the films about Northern Ireland, films about Apartheid in South Africa illuminate how contemporary identity and conflicts thereof are articulated to a broader audience than ever before, paying special attention to the concentration of films on apartheid and the life of Nelson Mandela. It is necessary to begin analysis with Nelson Mandela’s biopic, *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013) as each production fits into the timeline encompassed by it, including the biopic of Mandela’s wife, *Winnie Mandela* (2011). The Hollywood blockbuster *Invictus* (2009) examines a smaller section of Mandela’s life in the first years of his presidency and the use of sport to unify the new South Africa at the 1995 Rugby World Cup, while *Color of Freedom* (2006) tells the alleged and contentious story of a white prison guard who claimed to have befriended Mandela during his final years as a political prisoner. *Catch A Fire* (2006) follows the politicization of the ANC’s Patrick Chamusso, portraying a lesser known story within the armed anti-Apartheid movement, and *District 9* (2009) is a science fiction thriller which presents a potent social commentary through the story of aliens stranded over Johannesburg and exploited by humans in the present day. These films represent the more easily accessed, better known of films about Apartheid in South Africa. Constraints of space also limited the selection which does not include *The Bang Bang Club* (2010), a dramatization of the so-named group of journalists who covered vio-

[115] “South Africa profile — Timeline,” *BBC News*, 9 August 2017; Nau, *Perspectives on International Relations*, 269.
[116] Gregg, *International Relations on Film*, 247.

lence between the ANC and Zulu Inkatha leading up to the 1994 election, *Endgame* (2002), a compelling and complicated dramatization of talks between F.W. De Klerk's government and Mandela's ANC in the late 1980s, *Colors of Heaven* (2011), the recent Netflix addition and real-life story of two childhood actors, white and black, whose friendship is tested over the Apartheid era, and the crime thrillers *Stander* (2003) and *Zulu* (2013). As a further limitation, films about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were generally not reviewed, such as *Red Dust* (2004) wherein an expatriate lawyer returns to South Africa to defend a tortured political prisoner and *In My Country* (2004), the story of an American journalist and an Afrikaans radio reporter who must confront their own identities while covering the hearings.

Based on Mandela's autobiography of the same name, *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013) begins with Mandela's birth and childhood at his family kraal in the Transkei (now the Eastern Cape), picking up again during his lawyering days in Johannesburg. From here, viewers witness his first marriage, his early political development and service with the ANC, his courtship and marriage to Winnie Madikizela, and his eventual incarceration and release through to his first day as president of South Africa in 1994. *Winnie Mandela* (2011) is a nearly identically-structured dramatization of Winnie's life from birth, also in the Transkei, through to her marriage and Mandela's imprisonment with special emphasis on her political development and militarization. From the beginning, Scenic pictures tend to dominate the frame in both *Long Walk to Freedom* and *Winnie Mandela*. This could be a way of communicating a longstanding connection with the land, emphasizing the black African in his rural village — the sweeping vistas and wild, virgin land unsoiled — versus the oppressive atmosphere of colonial architecture and townships designed and dominated by the white African. Other semiotic messages are conventional; there are few nuances to identify. For example, when Nelson dreams of Winnie in prison in *Long Walk to Freedom*, the image is pink-washed. He longs for a wife, for domesticity, for the comforts of home and love which use of the feminine-associated color implies. As the film ends following an emotionally charged sequence culminating in Nelson announcing his and Winnie's separation on television, she is shown sitting in a pink robe on her bed listening to the broadcast, framed in her doorway between two walls of the same hue. The next scene shows Nelson also sitting on his bed, dejectedly. The dream (and the marriage) has ended. Editing is also used to create perspective. During the recreation of Nelson's famous speech on South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) in *Long Walk to Freedom*, the camera (or editor) alternates between four scenes — Nelson speaking, De Klerk and his cabinet, Winnie home alone, and black Africans in a bar — illustrating the main points of view at that time on whether or not to use violence, whether or not to share power, whether or not to forgive. The following scene shows Mandela at home, eating in a well-appointed dining room at a large dining

room — symbolic of hospitality, of home, of family, of sustenance — and yet completely alone. In the closing sequence, the camera tours Nelson and Winnie's first home together. Through voiceover, Mandela says he "dreams again" — but is soon pulled back to the present as he greets his first day as President of South Africa from a balcony. Then the camera returns to a cinematic finale — its approaches Mandela's home kraal at dusk, juxtaposing again the architecture of a Western style government building with the kraal and untilled grassland. As the sun rises, the crane shot glides with Mandela and some children as they walk through the grass toward the ridge. The camera envelops them in a flourish of aesthetic figure eights and sun flares, back at the site where it — and where Mandela — began.

The timeline and structure of the biopics are nearly identical. While the cinematography is stunning in both, it is far more lingering in *Long Walk to Freedom* which out-times *Winnie Mandela* by 37 minutes (the IMDB also estimates that *Long Walk to Freedom's* budget dwarfs *Winnie Mandela's* by $20 million). Both depict Winnie's first glimpse of Mandela as he speaks for the ANC at a rally, their courtship, and their traditional wedding at Winnie's home. Both also take especial care in developing the political departure of Winnie from her husband, comparing her raw, visceral exposure (including a violent incarceration) to the anti-apartheid struggle with Mandela's more isolated, intellectual experience as a political prisoner. This juxtaposition of their separate lives is used as a plot device. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, screenwriter William Nicholson, who wrote thirty-three drafts of the film, said, "Winnie represents one response to the struggle, which is to go violent; Mandela represents the other, which is to go towards forgiveness and reconciliation." While neither film backs away from Mandela and Winnie's flaws (Mandela is shown to do a bit of partying and woman-chasing as a young man, even after marrying his first wife through which *Long Walk to Freedom* shows him to be an absent husband and father), *Winnie Mandela* includes the 1989 killing in which Winnie was implicated as well as her participation in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission whereas the makers of *Long Walk to Freedom* opted to omit this crime (and Truth and Reconciliation took place after the film's timeline): "you couldn't do it in less than ten minutes".[117]

Long Walk to Freedom's filmmakers elected to film the biopic in a more traditional manner despite what they called "the vogue for new historical biopics" to be "more micro than macro, isolating a crucial chapter in the subject's life", but Hollywood's *Invictus* (2009) follows that very formula.[118] *Invictus* is a historical drama in the new style that picks up right where *Long Walk to Freedom* ended. A newly elected Nelson Mandela is introduced as he enters his office for the first time, managing the microcosm of racial and tribal conflicts within. But the film centers on Man-

[117] Steve Yates, "The 18-year trek to Madiba's biopic," *New Statesman* 142, no. 5189 (2013), 13.
[118] Ibid., 14.

dela's relationship with the South African rugby captain Francois Pienaar, an Afrikaner, whom he recruits to lead the underdog team toward victory in the 1995 Rugby World Cup. Considering the Springboks' historical association with the apartheid era, Mandela champions sport as a unifying language for all South Africans which sees them through to a championship win over the infamous All-Blacks of New Zealand. *Invictus*, based on the book "Playing the Enemy: Nelson Mandela and the Game that Made a Nation" by John Carlin, was directed by Clint Eastwood. Two other Hollywood heavyweights, Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon, play Mandela and Pienaar, respectively, and both were nominated for best actor in leading and supportive roles at the Oscars, the Golden Globes, and the SAG awards. A blockbuster in its own right, *Invictus*' budget was $60 million and was released worldwide to an overwhelmingly positive reception. A deeper reading of *Invictus*, however, as more than an inspirational, universal sports story reveals subtle, potentially misrepresentative aspects.

In semiotic terms, *Invictus* is a conventional film. The makers' Hollywood touch is best seen in the key scenes and sequences which articulate the narrative's three interrelated contextual situations or assumptions: white and black, soccer versus rugby, and South Africa in the world. The first context, white and black, belies the first uber-simplicity of the blockbuster type. Aside from Mandela himself referencing that his father was Xhosa and later musing on "the gift of afternoon tea" by the British, the film does not articulate at how complex were the conflicts even within black and white communities (not to mention other significant identities, such as the Indians) which permeated the end of the Apartheid struggle and transitional justice period. Mandela's new security squad is half-black, half-white (we must apparently assume they are Xhosa and Afrikaans, respectively) and their appearance and conversations in scenes throughout *Invictus* develop this theme. Additionally, the representation of Chester Williams as the only black on the Springboks team was not reflective of his real-life identity (and government classification) as an Afrikaans-speaking Coloured man, another South African complexity, nor of the challenges he encountered in this role.[119] *Invictus* uses Chester's character to bridge a racial divide throughout the film, early on as the Springboks conduct a rugby clinic for disadvantaged boys in a black township and later as the crowd — including a growing number of enthusiastic blacks — chant "Chester" during a match. This black and white tension is also articulated by the theme of soccer versus rugby. Early in the film, this is achieved by emphasizing the black African preference for soccer versus the white Afrikaner nationalist penchant for rugby, although it does explain why soccer was the overwhelming preference of black Africans due to the rugby's association with white rule. One scene compares this tension by showing these two camps in microcosm. An opening sequence juxtaposes two

[119] Brendan Gallagher, "Williams lifts lid on racism,". *The Telegraph*. 28 October 2002, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/rugbyunion/international/southafrica/3036911/Williams-lifts-lid-on-racism.html.

fields which sit across each other on either side of a road Nelson Mandela's prison release police escort travels in 1990. On one side, uniformed and clean cut white students practice rugby on well-manicured, fenced turf while on the other, black children play soccer on an unkempt dirt lot. The white boys, under the watch of an embittered coach, look on, quietly and perplexed, while the black boys are overcome with excitement. A young, black boy in a township is also introduced and developed throughout *Invictus* to emphasize the role of rugby in national unification. He is first shown rejecting the gift of a Springbok jersey so as not to be embarrassed by friends. At the final championship, however, he is transformed into a cheering fan which a series of cutaways from the match depict as he slowly manages to befriend and join local white police who are listening at a car radio. As Derek Catsam writes in "Go Amabokoboko!: Rugby, Race, Madiba and the *Invictus* Creation Myth of a New South Africa": "The boy's earlier animosity to rugby is replaced with joyous investment; the white police officers' animosity to black South Africans is replaced with sport-induced camaraderie".[120]

Ultimately, however, the emphasis that both the movie and book give to rugby as a catalyst in unifying South Africa is overdone. Rugby certainly occupies a healthy place in the realm of South African sport, but it would be simple to conclude it was as significant and straightforward in post-Apartheid South Africa as the film implies. Indeed, South Africans still overwhelmingly prefer soccer, and the transition to democracy was well-on track without the Springbok victory and public relations prefacing it. Above all, South Africa is still divided in many ways which is something most American representations of Apartheid and South Africa (as they usually must be about the prior when discussing the latter) avoid. But these simplifications are not indefensible. While *Invictus* does run longer than usual for a feature film (134 minutes), it simply cannot be expected of any representative work — particularly film — to be able to fully articulate all of the complexities party to a given conflict. Certainly, it would take more than two hours for anyone to understand the roots and government sanction of black-on-black violence, for example (even *The Bang Bang Club* whose subject is that expressly overly backgrounds these important aspects in favor of Hollywood glamorization), or the distinctions and histories of English and Afrikaner communities at another juncture. In any case, *Invictus* certainly could have spent less time dwelling on highly enhanced slow-motion rugby sequences and conjured dramatic filler (a jet plane flyover wishing the Sprinkboks good luck; a suspiciously timed interruption into a clandestine political meeting by Mandela) in favor of a deeper examination of root issues and national history. Perhaps the greater issue is that filmmaking has become authoritative in the interpretation of history and international relations. In "Framing Africa", Catsam cautions "as with most films depicting historical events,

[120] Charles Catsam, "Go Amabokoboko!: Rugby, Race, Madiba and the *Invictus* Creation Myth of a New South Africa," In *Framing Africa: Portrayals of a Continent in Contemporary mainstream Cinema*, ed. Nigel Eltringham (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 166-167.

people probably should not learn their history from *Invictus*, but huge numbers of people will." Still, there is an important concession to be made: 'It would be easy to dismiss such efforts from the perch of academia, but in this case surely half a loaf is better than none at all".[121] While the film's budget, its director and actors, and even its subject matter — the world-recognized example of apartheid, the American discourse of which is discussed later — does not foster a narrative style best suited to highly dramatized and notoriously appropriated historical context, *Invictus* does make an important story available to a wider audience. But does this conventional approach — the cliche symbolism of watered-down politics — obscure a deeper, more constructive story which thereby disservices a new generation in South Africa, in the USA, and elsewhere where race and identity have and continue to define political development and social debates?

A fourth film, *The Color of Freedom* (2007), attempts to tell the alleged story of a prison officer who guarded Nelson Mandela during his incarceration until his release in 1990, depicting a growing friendship between the once white racist guard and censor officer who is softened by Mandela's forgiving spirit. Indeed, the film coincides with the latter half of *Long Walk to Freedom* in strikingly similar scenes, although *Long Walk to Freedom* takes a far more restrained (and apparently more truthful) depiction of Mandela and the guard's relationship. The film was based on a controversial account by the real-life guard, James Gregory, titled "Goodbye Bofana: Nelson Mandela, My Prisoner, My Friend" disputed in parts by other guards, other prisoners, and Mandela himself. In a review for *The Guardian*, critic-historian Alex von Tulzelmann gave the film a failed history grade, writing "according to Mandela's friend and authorised biographer, Anthony Sampson, Mandela himself said privately that Gregory must have "hallucinated" in some of his memories. Sampson interviewed Gregory, and quoted him as admitting he used "author's license".[122] Considering these and many other objections, one might wonder why the film was made in the first place on such contended grounds. Despite beautiful cinematography and period set-design, it tries too hard to uphold — even reinterpret — a white minority's place on a historical stage that cannot be verified. An audience without the desire or knowledge to look deeper might take the story at face value, missing important aspects of the anti-apartheid struggle about which the film may distract. Others might simply deem the film to be insulting outright.

Another problem these films point out is the issue of attribution and exposure provided by well-known faces and personalities of which the film business apparently dependent. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, *Winnie Mandela*, *Invictus*, and *The Color of Freedom*, Nelson Mandela is played by a recognizable, Hollywood-connected personality (Morgan Freeman, Terrence Howard, Idris Elba, Dennis Haysbert), as is Winnie (Naomie Harris, Jennifer Hudson), and as are James Gregory and

[121] Ibid., 13.
[122] Alex von Tunzelmann, "Reel history: Goodbye Bafana," *The Guardian*, 10 May 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2012/may/10/goodbye-bafana-nelson-mandela.

his wife (Joseph Fiennes and Diane Kruger), not to mention the role of Matt Damon in *Invictus*. Even some of the directors — Justin Chadwick (of *Long Walk to Freedom*, from the UK) and Clint Eastwood (*Invictus,* from the USA) — overwhelmingly helm from the Hollywood and British industry, and that's without consideration of the business connections forged by producers, the artistic and technical expertise provided by the cinematographers and production designers and more. *Winnie Mandela*, however, was directed by South African-born and Oscar-nominated Daniel Roodt whose work focuses mostly on South Africa and related stories, including *Treurgrond* (2015) which attempted to portray the plight of communities impacted by farm murders but was perhaps too focused on attracting funding and portraying the spectacle of killing to inspire a larger conversation.

Catch a Fire (2006) is a biographical drama which tells a particular anti-apartheid story though Patrick Chamusso's transformation from apolitical oil refinery foreman to ANC freedom fighter. Despite resisting polarization in his younger years as an attentive soccer coach and family man (albeit with a secret son with another woman, a secret which complicates his alibi), Chamusso is compelled to fight for freedom in South Africa after he is mistakenly arrested and he and his wife tortured for an attack at the oil refinery. Thus ensues his long pursuit by police Colonel Nic Vos, head of a terrorism task force, while training with the Umkhonto we Sizwe (military arm of the ANC) in Mozambique and Angola. In this way the film presents a lesser known version of Apartheid resistance, a non-Mandelacized one about the armed ANC. The film follows Chamusso through to his sentencing as a political prisoner at Robben Island for 24 years (he served ten) and adjustment to civilian life where he learns to forgive. *Catch a Fire* was directed by Australian Phillip Noyce (*The Saint*; *The Quiet American*) based on a screenplay by Shawn Slovo, daughter of Joe Slovo — the SACP, ANC, and Umkhonto we Sizwe leader — upon his own suggestion she use Chamusso's experience to share the armed apartheid resistance story. It was afforded a wider audience via the enlistment of two well-known American actors, Tim Robbins (*The Shawshank Redemptio*n) as Nic Vos and Derek Luke (*Glory Road*; *Empire*) as Patrick Chamusso; Bonnie Henna, who plays Chamusso's wife Precious, also portrayed Nelson Mandela's daughter Zindzi in *Invictus*.

Catch a Fire goes further than *Invictus* in explaining political context leading up to the end of Apartheid as well as the stakes the anti- and pro-apartheid camps had in the conflict. Through Chamusso's transformation, viewers infer how fragile the state of freedom was even for a high achieving, compliant black person. The montage of Patrick's torture features interesting cutaways to the canter of a sort of lune-bird whose gentle, graceful profile contrasts sharply with the scenes of violent torture. Perhaps it is a narration of futility. There is also at least some development of point of view from either side. While *Catch a Fire* doesn't go deeply into the divisions within the white and black worlds of South Africa, it does use family as a device to compare their different stakes in an increasingly fragile nation. During Chamusso's ongoing interrogations, Vos takes him to dine

with Vos's family. Following earlier scenes where Vos insists his family — a wife and two daughters, like Chamusso's — learn how to shoot a gun, the attempt at civility seems to send a clear message that Vos is working to protect his family and way of life, too. Although the film's sympathies clearly lie with the mission of ending Apartheid and building a free South Africa for all, the time taken to compare the differing points of view these foot soldiers of the Apartheid system, its victims, and its armed opposition is important. The scenes depicting Vos' promotion and ANC commander Obadi's funeral which are edited to play out in tandem, for example, function as a paradigm using the flag of either side (Apartheid South Africa and the ANC) as symbols, the colors thereof spread throughhout the crowds variously; even the relative speeches given mirror each other in content and style. Because of its unique vantage point in the filmography of South Africa, *Catch a Fire* is valuable in this analysis for its illumination of several lesser discussed subtexts of the anti-Apartheid struggle: the Communist perspective and a concurrent evaluation of privilege amongst yet oppressed black men, the struggle within the resistance movement between violence and nonviolence, and, accordingly, accounting for terrorism as well as the fears of conservative, Apartheid supporting whites.

District 9 (2009) is a sci-fi thriller about a munitions corporation official contracted to oversee the forced relocation of an extraterrestrial refugee population in modern-day South Africa. Initially stranded over Johannesburg in 1982, the sick and starved aliens were rescued by humans and placed in a temporary camp on the outskirts of the city. The film examines the situation 28 years later with the aliens still encamped and now exploited by gangsters and the government alike, their community having devolved into a militarized ghetto. The official, a bumbling Wikus van der Merwe played by South African Sharlto Copley (*Maleficent*; *Elysium*), is promoted by his father-in-law at Multi-National United (MNU) to lead the collection of eviction notice signatures from alien inhabitants. During eviction rounds in District 9, Wikus is infected by an alien chemical and undergoes a genetic transformation which scandalizes the corporation and the nation. Wikus is demonized and bounty hunted — his genetic profile now highly valued biotechnology — and he must entrust himself to an alien, Christopher, in hopes the effects of the encounter can be reversed. *District 9* performed exceptionally in both critical and commercial venues, garnering nominations for four Oscars, one Golden Globe, and seven BAFTAs and grossing over $210 million to-date worldwide. Peter Jackson (*Lord of the Rings*) produced the film, the first feature of South African born writer-director and visual effects pioneer Neill Blomkamp. Indeed, Blomkamp's background in computer-generated imaging and penchant for social commentary through science fiction resulted in a wide-reaching, though-provoking allegory of the new South Africa.

Apart from sophisticated special effects, *District 9* was also notable for its documentary style. From its start, both the film's cinematography and editing developed a rough plot through

conventional-style news interviews, black and white surveillance footage, and even phone calls and video messages; Viewers fill in the blanks between the "documentary" and "real-life" sequences. From lighting, frame, and angle to the inclusion of time tags, all techniques reinforced the perceived conventions of real-time technologies — news, smartphones, and security cameras— to create a sense of authenticity. As interviewees foreshadow Wikus' transformation through detailed television interviews, the film flips between what the viewer must interpret as reclaimed company footage of Wikus at work. But even when Wikus' cameraman is not shown with him, the handheld trope features similarly as *Bloody Sunday* which the Chicago Tribune described as giving "the action a startling sense of intimacy".[123] The juxtaposition of these filming techniques traditionally confined to their respective corners of media arts imbibes a multi-viewpoint advantage and, accordingly, narrates on the ability of journalism to project messages via selectivity. An allegory in and of itself, *District 9*'s symbolic nature is less a product of its visual motifs, although a final scene which follows Wikus over a hill silhouetted by the setting sun emphasizes the passing of time and a growing sense that his time is running out. Also of special note is the characterization of the alien, Christopher, who agrees to hide and help Wikus. Christopher, who wears clothes, has a son, who can read and understand English, is obviously tech literate to an advanced level, and makes sense of the human culture enough to understand the legality of an eviction notice, is further humanized by lingering close ups of his face which show expression in the eyes and other facial features, even if un-human. Shot in an actual squatter community in the Johannesburg township-suburb Soweto, the film seems to parallel Apartheid first in the depiction of the alien ghetto, then circumstantially in the similar real-life forced eviction and removal of over 60,000 residents of District 6 in Cape Town, in the way promotion of the MNU's policies deemed displacement was justified by the keeping of order and rule of law, and even in the language of the aliens which resembles South African Bantu languages' clicks. Not to mention, in a post-apartheid context, the "story of unwanted refugees mirrors South Africa's struggle with economic refugees from elsewhere in Africa".[124] But what the variously debated commentaries of *District 9* especially reveal is how film can rely on the conventional vehicles of a genre such as science fiction, the powerful imagery of allegory backed by such sophisticated technology as computer generated special effects, and the compelling subtext of such a notorious system as Apartheid to open an important interpretive space to a wider audience.

3.3 **FINDINGS: CONVENTION AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN WESTERN FILM**

---

[123] - "'Bloody Sunday' powerfully re-enacts an Irish tragedy," *Chicago Tribune*, 25 October 2002. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2002-10-25/entertainment/0210250291_1_ivan-cooper-sundance-film-festival-bloody.

[124] Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, "The Postcolonial Hybrid: Neill Blomkamp's District 9," in *Postcolonial Film: History, Empire, Resistance*, Ed. Rebecca Weaver-Hightower and Peter Hulme (New York: Routledge, 2014), 252.

One example of the way in which films impact public conversations or discourse about the issues they portray is the reoccurring discussion surrounding identities and platforms of actors. For example, the identities of Northern Ireland-born James Nesbitt and Liam Neeson became part and parcel of *Five Minutes to Heaven*'s critical reception, with some pointing out neither Neeson nor Nesbitt had lived in Northern Ireland for any significant amount of time since childhood. Others, like *The New York Times,* commented on the creative partnership which included German director Herschbiegel, Catholic Neeson, and Protestant Nesbitt: “In some way these paradoxes feel perfectly appropriate to the madness of the Troubles and the tenuous sanity of their aftermath”.[125] For *Bloody Sunday*, Nesbitt’s platform as an actor allowed him opportunities to speak about the conflict as well, and he alluded ten years after filming to a personal conflict about the role and his identity (“I was worried about the fact that I, a Protestant from just up the road, was arriving in Derry to tell this nationalist story”).[126] Critics pointed out that these were not the only problems with such a depiction of a real-life conflict, some even emphasizing what was missing most from the film’s narrative and critical reception was a discussion of the involvement of women, which neither film nor peace process have addressed to date. Through these contentions, *Bloody Sunday* and *Five Minutes of Heaven* are clear examples of how films participate in public discourse, engaging real debates and sometimes shaping the views of its audiences. Analysis of the visual and and narrative in the previous eleven films illustrate three key themes related to discourse on identity politics in film: Memory, Innocence, and Otherness.

3.3.1 **MEMORY**

Bloody Sunday, like any historical drama of a contentious nature, asks questions. Among them: Were civilians at the march armed, “a hot-button issue, which will almost certainly never be solved to the satisfaction of either side”, and whether the British had an agenda to arrest anyone to begin with.[127] In “Remembering Historical Trauma in Paul Greengrass’s *Bloody Sunday*”, Aileen Blaney outlines the conventional elements of the docudrama and argues “through a film style that self-consciously mimics the look of found footage and reportage style of filming, *Bloody Sunday* presents itself as a counterfeit historical document, and thereby encourages the viewer to experience it as a cultural or “prosthetic” memory”.[128] By participating in processes of such a public nature, Blaney argues that films like *Bloody Sunday* are “examples of cultural memory of the Troubles with the peace process, and its relative absence prior to this period, [suggesting] that the representation of historical trauma as cultural memory is more indicative of contemporary than of historical con-

[125] Terrence Rafferty, “After the Troubles, Telling Different Stories,” *The New York Times*, 12 August 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/16/movies/16raff.html.
[126] “James Nesbitt: Growing up, I knew what Bloody Sunday meant.” *The Independent*, 15 June 2010. http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/james-nesbitt-growing-up-i-knew-what-bloody-sunday-meant-2001674.html.
[127] Eddie Cockrell, "Berlin 2002 Review: Tragedy Revisited; Paul Greengrass’ “Bloody Sunday”,” *IndieWire*, 8 February 2002.
[128] Aileen Blaney, “Remembering Historical Trauma in Paul Greengrass's Bloody Sunday,” *History & Memory* 19, no. 2 (2007), 117.

cerns".[129] As the film was released not only on the anniversary of the event itself, but during the contentious climate of its second ongoing investigation — the official report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry or Saville Inquiry was published in June 2010 and rested blame on the British soldiers — it is evident that timing was an especial undertaking of the story in addition to its narrative product.[130] But, apart from an overall attempt to remake the events as they happened, the film does restrain itself in some other areas as well. While using such strategic personalizations as the clipped, cold as steel General Ford, for example, *Bloody Sunday* "does not rely upon a humanistic narrative framework which by pathologizing unsympathetic characters would displace the state's culpability in the event and reduce the complexity of historical injustices to the human foibles of a single character or group of characters". Indeed, the inclusion of Private 027, who shown to be more sensitive than and even disgusted by the actions of his fellow soldiers, adds to such a balance (the character was based on a real soldier whose Saville Inquiry testimony alleged misconduct on behalf of the Paramilitaries): "by presenting alternating representations of the Paras, the film extends the range of its address and, in so doing, dramatizes the complexity of historical forces".[131]

Critics or no, the real identity of actors has, as mentioned, been demonstrated to additionally affect such cultural artifacts of public memory and historical trauma. Personality, which the celebrity of James Nesbitt embodies in abundance, was seen as similar to the persona shared by the character he played in *Bloody Sunday*, MP Ivan Cooper. "Nesbitt's casting therefore marked an astute directorial choice," wrote Blaney, even as his popular appeal was "emphatically not contingent upon his Protestant Ulster identity, and consequently the double-voicing of the character he plays does not alienate viewers of an alternative, or no, sectarian persuasion."[132] His reverse casting in *Five Minutes of Heaven* where Nesbitt plays a Catholic was, ironically, contingent on Nesbitt's own identity as a Protestant and Neeson's as a Catholic (he played the Protestant). Nesbitt's participation in *Bloody Sunday*, however well-received commercially or in the industry, inevitably opened him to criticism from both republican and unionist camps which were voiced through the press. Unionists, for example, questioned his loyalty and brought up his past criticisms of the British government. Leading up to *Bloody Sunday's* television release, unionist politicians were especially careful to distance themselves from Nesbitt's alleged claim that they felt a "a collective guilt" over the deaths thirty years before. In an article in *The Telegraph*, "Bloody Sunday actor 'is wrong'", an Ulster Unionist, noting notorious IRA Martin McGuinness was not depicted in the film, said "I think this has been made for the families [of the victims]. I don't think it is going to enlighten us

[129] Ibid.
[130] "Bloody Sunday Inquiry," Gov.uk. Accessed November 26, 2017.
[131] Aileen Blaney, "Remembering Historical Trauma in Paul Greengrass's Bloody Sunday", 123.
[132] Ibid., 127.

that much" while McGuinness himself lauded "the fact that English people are prepared to tackle a subject of such great embarrassment to the British Government".[133]

Hunger presents a different method of humanization and anti-memorialization than *Bloody Sunday*. Indeed, by humanizing its conflict, it seeks to check the martyrdom of its main character, Bobby Sands, at the door. Although expressly about dialogue, the famous 22-minute scene previously mentioned between Sands and an IRA-connected Catholic priest which is shot primarily in single-shot front frame emphasizes Sands resolved attitude toward violence which a recounted encounter with a suffering animal in childhood reveals. This is interpreted visually through the remainder of the film — Sands, although wrongly treated in prison, has resolved to his own interpretation of retributive violence whatever the cost, however fatalistic. The film's treatment does not glorify Sands, even as he was celebrated as a martyr by the IRA. *The Telegraph* praised Hunger's treatment through contradiction of the controversial subject matter:

> The smears of shit taking on a strange beauty in patterns on a wall; the sadistic prison officer, who, dropping crumbs on his lap or quietly catching snow on his bloody knuckles, is as pitiable as his inmates; the inspirational Sands, who, having been incarcerated in unimaginable squalor for four years, may in fact be appallingly misguided, having lost any sense of what a life is to lose.[134]

Director Steve McQueen made constant efforts to rebuff political readings of the film, heralding its human story, and the equally unpolitical star Michael Fassbinder, who grew up in the south with a German father and Irish mother from the north, also downplayed a political connection. When asked about the political relevance of *Hunger*, director Steve McQueen articulated a distant, counter-industry orientation to the feature filmmaking process: "I'm dealing with people in certain situations and circumstances. Politics will take care of itself. I'm interested in people who are involved in the situations that politicians create".[135] Notably, it addresses the lives and identities of both the prison officers — who live with a constant threat of assassination — as well as the prisoners — who live without some rights and comfort. It is often interpreted as a humanity trumps politics story or one that champions the human condition. Irish playwright Enda Walsh, who co-wrote *Hunger* with McQueen, qualified that such humanity wasn't necessarily orchestrated, but a natural extension of the core story. "Balance wasn't something we were concerned about. It wasn't like "Someone whacks a prisoner here, so we have to show a prison warden getting whacked there"", she said in an interview with the *Irish Times*, "The idea was to portray Northern Ireland in that period – this quagmire of hatred – in microcosm, without getting into historical context".[136]

---

[133] David Sharrock, "Bloody Sunday actor 'is wrong'," *The Telegraph*, 8 January 2002. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1380739/Bloody-Sunday-actor-is-wrong.html.

[134] Esther Addley, "A great right hook of a role," *The Guardian*, 30 October 2008, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/oct/31/periodandhistorical.

[135] David Coggins, "Steve McQueen," *Interview* 39, no. 2 (March 2009), 96.

[136] Eoin Butler, "'The idea was to portray Northern Ireland in that period - this quagmire of hatred - in microcosm'." *Irish Times*, 14 February 2009.

In "Eye witness - memorialising humanity in Steve McQueen's Hunger", Eugene McNamee argues that McQueen "marries a particular filmic formal device of lingering on highly aestheticised details of human behaviour with an overall filmic sensibility of refusing 'politics' in favour of 'humanity'".[137] Perhaps this particular "art-house" approach creates the distance needed to prevent the audience from sympathizing too much with one side; indeed, McQueen, whose non-industry background is perhaps the real indicator here, pioneered a technique characterized by lingering, long takes. Both *Hunger's* unfamiliar narrative structure and visual style are like a counter-narrative in that they work as an antithesis to the traditional Hollywood conventions of plot and framing, not to mention the content as well as the pace of the story is often uncomfortable. *Hunger*, which portrays a clearly obstinate British government, then makes subtle yet powerful observations of the IRA. Yet however it was achieved, *Hunger* does appear to deal with a political protest in a less political way by emphasizing such a sense of humanity. *Hunger* is also clearly about identity, particularly otherness and belonging. The film's aural elements, for example, feature several historically salient selections of statements by then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Francis Frascina wrote in her arts analysis "White Cube, White Culture, White Riot", that this portrayal was an extension of "Thatcher's legacy and identity politics fashioned by the echoes of Empire" through her "uncompromising attitudes to the deaths of hunger strikers...which she characterized solely as the demands of criminals and terrorists".[138] Inseparable from its roots in the British colonization of Ireland and the brutally settled 'Irish Question', Frascina writes:

> *Hunger* represents the vicissitudes of 'non-belonging': Irish Republican ethnic identity under British rule. Paradoxically, this itself contains the vicissitudes of 'belonging too much', in that collective association with violent resistance – the IRA – leads to self-obliteration…However, *Hunger* posits a more complex existential dilemma about responses to, and escapes from, colonialist insistence on a fixed and absolute otherness that can be controlled and eradicated.[139]

Memorialization and martyrdom are likely possibilities of narrative discussion in the biography genre, particularly in the case of large-scale biopics, such as *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* and ***Winnie Mandela.*** The immense focus on one life, or a small cluster as in the case of Mandela, Winnie, their family and associates, which is usually already well-known and either celebrated or condemned amongst different groups and nations variably, is difficult to prevent from obscuring the less savory elements of a person's life. Of course such a discussion of 'balance' invites the dangers of impending cacophony which sometimes prevent constructive conclusions from being reached. The key takeaways from both the biopic as a grand convention and the life of Mandela are

---

[137] Eugene McNamee, "Eye witness - memorialising humanity in Steve McQueen's Hunger," *International Journal Of Law In Context* 5, no. 3 (September 2009), 281-294.
[138] Frascina, "White Cube, White Culture, White Riot", 524, 533.
[139] Ibid., 538.

the propensity for remembering, martyrdom and, ultimately, the making of myth. Indeed, *Long Walk to Freedom* director Justin Chadwick voiced his own fears at the prospect of telling the story of lives and events so monumental: “At first I resisted it…Mandela’s life represents 100 years of apartheid”.[140] Mandela’s life has become something of a myth — one necessarily propped up during South Africa's early stage of post-Apartheid nation building, but perhaps one that has overstayed its welcome and now feeds into a fragmentary social discourse central to the rhetoric of identity politics. Writing in an editorial for *The Round Table*, Terry Barringer questioned the British Commonwealth’s commitment to Mandela’s public image: “In memorial services, commemorations and press comment in South Africa and around the world, a heroic myth shifted and temporarily settled before our eyes. Mandela is now enshrined as a hero and patron saint…In Mandela, the Commonwealth and Africa have found themselves a white martyr”.[141] Similarly, in his column for *The Guardian*, Simon Jenkins wrote that the statesman’s “reputation has fallen among thieves and cynics. Hijacked by politicians and celebrities ... he has had to be deified so as to dust others with his glory. In the process he has become dehumanised...Human history needs myths, but needs to know them as such”.[142] On a global scale, this rhetoric has ironically obscured the very central value of Mandela’s role in the myth of a ‘rainbow nation’ and the attributive goals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission — forgiveness, inclusion, even a nuanced interpretation of forgetting. Arguing “enough is enough”, Jenkins wrote at the time of Mandela’s funeral that the spectacle of the Mandela myth was illustrated in the event’s “lavish preparations” and “cult of the media-event”. He suggested, mirroring Hannah Arendt’s renowned concept of the banality of evil, perhaps a “banality of goodness” threatened to revision an importantly complex history. Reflecting on the British (and what I find incredibly indicative of the American view as well) continued celebration of war through commemoration and memorial events such as Remembrance Day (UK) and Veteran’s Day (USA), Jenkins wrote:

> Remembering is easy. Forgetting is hard – in personal relationships as in a nation’s collective response to the world around it. The task is not to ignore some past event but to view it in proportion, to find some compromise between present and past. Throughout history, societies that do this, that manage to “let the dead bury their dead”, have tended to succeed and move forward. Those that cannot forget, that wander the stony paths of their past and drink at the rancid well of grievance, are those that decay from within.[143]

Even as *Long Walk to Freedom* and *Winnie Mandela* do not lend themselves wholesale to such a rhetoric — indeed, they present a fair amount of nuance — particularly in the depictions of Winnie

[140] Justin Chadwick, “Mandela the Man,” *Televisual* 8-9 (2014), 8.
[141] Terry Barringer, "Editorial: Mandela and More—2013 and the Commonwealth's Search for a Good Myth,” *Round Table* 103, no. 1 (February 2014), 2.
[142] Simon Jenkins, “The Mandela coverage and the banality of goodness,” *The Guardian*, 10 December 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/10/mandela-coverage-banality-of-goodness.
[143] Simon Jenkins, “No more remembrance days — let's consign the 20th century to history,” *The Guardian,* 9 December 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/09/no-more-remembrance-days-consign-20th-century-history.

and the comparative approach she and Mandela took in regard to violence, the decision to commercialize the production and release through the use of Western actors, for example, seems to elevate their stories to a level begging more serious consideration and critique.

Representation of identity themes in *Invictus* also pertain to collective memory and myth. A typical example of the Hollywood blockbuster, *Invictus* was big budget and helmed by some of Hollywood's brightest stars (Clint Eastwood, Nelson Mandela, and Matt Damon). Eastwood has examined various instances of violence, conflict, race, and the underdog before, and his style in *Invictus* is consistent with both Hollywood storytelling conventions (a stirring soundtrack, dramatic sports montages, etc.) and his well-established moral agenda. In *The Ethical Vision of Clint Eastwood*, Sara Anson Vaux examines what she terms his "keen sensibility to individual and societal suffering" through a reading of his thirty-three films. In *Invictus*, Vaux interprets how the lines of division are "dissolved through the astute manipulation of symbols and rituals — a cup of tea, a song, and a series of games; where the entire film is played virtually and actually on a blood-soaked rugby pitch instead of a battleground".[144] But Vaux considers these things as if *Invictus* is only "the celebration of nonviolence" which "fittingly concludes Eastwood's three-film revelations of human beings at war with their mirrored selves", the prior two being *Changeling* (2008) and *Gran Torino* (2008), as if Eastwood invented the story (which certainly would have been impressive), as if he invented Mandela's character, as if he orchestrated the entire match himself (the highly structured and predictable style of storytelling does seem to indicate the latter, which is indeed the point). To view Eastwood as the mastermind of *Invictus* is a folly, but an easy one to commit, because the visual elements conspire too formally. Most audiences are so familiar with Hollywood plot conventions they are blind to them, therefore confusing the 'true story' of the 1995 rugby championship with the filmic version. *Invictus*, while well-meaning, is a precise indictment of cinematic hegemony, as is Vaux's interpretation of the film as a moral tale without a deeper examination of its historical and cultural contexts wherein 'based on a true story' becomes an afterthought.

This discourse is indicative of an imperial pattern. In a study of the narratology of transitional justice, Michael Rothberg included *Invictus* — "a blatantly Americanized version of South Africa's transition" — as an example of "the transnational forces that are shaping the narrative of transitional justice today" dictated by globalizing trends in the reconfiguring rather than ending of patterns of inequality and conflict.[145] Furthermore, in "Hollywood on Race in the Age of Obama: *Invictus*, *Precious*, and *Avatar*", Bruce Baum examines what he deems a "problematic view of racial politics at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century: that countries like the United States and South Africa now have moved into a post-racial era" in the way *Invictus* "as a US movie

[144] Sarah Anson Vaux, *The Ethical Vision of Clint Eastwood* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), 187-188.
[145] Michael Rothberg, "Progress, Progression, Procession: William Kentridge and the Narratology of Transitional Justice," *Narrative* 20, no. 1 (2012), 6-7.

about South African racism…betrays the dearth of historical memory common among Americans, particularly white Americans, concerning the extent to which the modern world has been shaped by white racism".[146] Additionally, the film's premise of sport as a symbol of unification for a country that then rides into the sunset of providence is taken a bit overboard:

> It would be a misreading of history to imply that rugby represented the sine qua non of reconciliation in South Africa and it would do a tremendous disservice to the work of thousands of South Africans less heralded than Mandela and Pienaar…[and] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)…thus to do much of the hard work of addressing the painful apartheid past, had yet to even convene when Stravinsky's kick sailed into history. And South African rugby was hardly free from politics of racism in the years to follow.[147]

Invictus ultimately over-simplifies the story of reconciliation, a successful championship having wrought the nation free of their previous fears, traumas, and abuses. While it does not make a mess of the competing primacies of various claims of identity, it unfortunately goes the way of the other extreme in not requiring viewers — such as white Americans, many of whom either believe the appointment of black president to their nation's office made them very progressive indeed or even those who deemed Obama's success was due to his racial identity — to consider the true reparations of a system which disadvantaged so many, not unlike the lingering effects of slavery and segregation in the United States. All considered, *Invictus* is a Hollywood-licensed feel-good story that doesn't reflect the true complexities of post-conflict reconciliation in formerly oppressive, sectarian democracies.

3.3.3 **INNOCENSE**

As a follow-up to a discussion about reconciliation, the Troubles cinema piece *Five Minutes of Heaven* (2009) provides its own commentary on the subject with a conjoined interpretation of the innocence and victimhood of its two main characters — one the killer and the other the victim's aggrieved brother. In the *Journal of Irish Studies*, Ruth Barton suggested the film utilizes nearly all of Troubles cinema conventions, including the emphasis of commonalities between each family despite their opposed identities, nationalist artwork in each respective neighborhood, and the identification of the assassination as a senseless killing. Indeed, as I argued in the analysis of *Five Minutes of Heaven*, the opening sequence not only seeks to point out the essentially banal nature of violence between these two families (and, by extension, their respective sides of the conflict), but it also questions Little's responsibility by characterizing his youth — was he culpable to the compelling

---

[146] Bruce Baum, "Hollywood on Race in the Age of Obama: Invictus, Precious, and Avatar," *New Political Science* 32, no. 4 (December 2010), 628-629.

[147] Catsam, "Go Amabokoboko!: Rugby, Race, Madiba and the *Invictus* Creation Myth", 167.

propaganda and violence he no doubt encountered daily at so young an age? *Five Minutes of Heaven* sidesteps this answer by ultimately focusing on Little and Griffen after Little has served time in prison for the murder. Griffen's last minute decision not to participate in the television show compels Little to seek him out. Little is now a peace worker who wants to talk and Griffen a tormented emotional wreck who wants physical vengeance. In a rare piece of academic literature about the film, Stefanie Lehner comments on "post-conflict masculinities" in "the performative dimensions of restorative justice practices" like South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation commission as well as like televised encounters which *Five Minutes of Heaven* addresses. "It is notable that the majority of literature on Northern Ireland and transitional justice mechanisms has remained remarkably gender-blind" by which she included film treatments, criticizing the peace process whose depictions accordingly reflect the "all-male process".[148] The film seems to argue in the end less about victimhood than to promote the idea that only forgiveness will heal, although BBC Northern Ireland producer Stephen Wright said "the film is about the complex psychological relationship that exists between the perpetrator of a crime and the victim. It is not about truth and reconciliation. It is not about finding easy answers".[149] *Five Minutes of Heaven* is critical of the television show in question, "One-on-One", modeled after the real-life show hosted by Desmund Tutu for the BBC called "Facing the Truth". In an interesting paradox, the film even offers helpline information for affected viewers at the credit roll, "thus positioning the production itself within the parameters of the fictional programme on reconciliation it had so recently satirised".[150] The film seems to have an identity crisis of its own, although a thoughtfully articulate one. As Barton summarized, "these ironies and the production's own unresolved ambivalences — the word or the fist — ultimately reflect, rather more than reflecting on, the continued tensions surrounding reconciliation in Northern Ireland."

Likewise, films depicting subterfuge and suspenseful tales of double-agents also tell us something about the debate regarding innocence and responsibility in complicated identity conflicts. Indeed, like *Hunger*, *'71* not only covers sectarian ground, but questions the role of government and empire in conquest and peacekeeping as well. For a remarkably fast-paced, violent film, the narrative is put forth lightly. Perhaps director Yann Demange achieved this by placing Hook, a character who rarely speaks, at the center of the story. Indeed, The film does not get to know any other character at this same level. Michael Gray speculated that growing up in London as a Franco-Algerian equipped director Demange to bring a necessary "outsider's perspective to the green/orange divide, to deliver, in the guise of a frenetic suspense film, a blunt excoriation of the

[148] Stefanie Lehner, "Post-Conflict Masculinities: Filiative Reconciliation in Five Minutes of Heaven and David Park's The Truth Commissioner," *Irish Masculinities: Critical Reflections on Literature and Culture* (2011), 65-76.
[149] Gerard Gilbert, "Five Minutes of Heaven," *The Independent*, 2 April 2009.
[150] Ruth Barton, "Troubles Cinema: Five Minutes of Heaven & Fifty Dead Men Walking," *Electronic Journal of the Spanish Association for Irish Studies*.

ruthless gunmen on both sides who sustained the brutal sectarian impasse, and the Establishment that blithely sent its youth out in uniform to keep the lid on this dirty war".[151] As the kindly Catholic yet cynical veteran who rescues and then stitches Hook's wounds tells him, "war is just the posh telling the thick to kill the poor".[152] Any film about such a conflict as The Troubles is generally wanting of more context, but perhaps the relative impression of *'71* that war itself is complicated, dirty, and irredeemable goes far enough in illuminating the division, subversion, and power games of which the stuff of all conflict is made.

Catch a Fire is another interesting commentary on innocence with its premise the radicalization of Patrick Chamusso. Especially in the thriller genre, the making of a terrorist is subject to a host of shallow plot devices and badly simplified subtexts. *Catch a Fire*, however, manages to pull through its narrative, albeit shakily through some parts, and presents a rarely interpreted side of the anti-Apartheid struggle in mainstream film. Nonetheless, *Catch A Fire's* critical reception was wanting for more serious takers. A review by *The New York Time's* co-chief film critic, Manohla Dargis, was so disappointed with the film's action sequences and chaotic editing (although she was on to something there) that she did not see the nuances of a film in a genre nearly impossible to redeem.[153] But Dargis, who got her start writing about avant-garde cinema in New York, is not likely looking for Hollywood's diamonds in the rough. Alternatively, the World Socialist Web Site, the news source of the International Committee of the Fourth International, criticized director Noyce and writer Shawn Slovo (daughter of the ANC's Joe Slovo) for largely neglecting the "increasingly restless black working class" in favor of the comparatively privileged yet reluctant Chamusso. As Joanne Laurier continued for Socialist Web, this may have been a jab at:

> The illusion…that the ANC set the stage for a post-apartheid South Africa, in which everyone is "just looking forward to an extraordinary bright future." At this point, only an insulated, upwardly-mobile elite can look to the future with such optimism…Since taking office, the ANC policy of "black empowerment" has enriched a tiny minority of black businessmen and government officials at the expense of the South African working class.[154]

Noyce's previous films, such as *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and *The Quiet American*, have also been known to reflect other contemporary subtexts. The latter was condemning of America's covert activities in Vietnam, and many reviewers of *Catch A Fire* noted a parallel in the depiction of Chamusso's transformation from innocent to terrorist through torture and abuse to the then ques-

---

[151] Michael Gray, "'71," *Cineaste* 40, no. 3 (2015), 57.
[152] Ibid., 56. Literally, "Posh cunts telling thick cunts to kill poor cunts. That's the army for you. It's all a lie."
[153] Manohla Dargis, "A heart Riled to Sabotage Apartheid," *The New York Times*, 27 October 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/27/movies/27catc.html.
[154] Joanne Laurier, "Catch a Fire: A story of struggle against apartheid, but not the whole story," World Socialist Web Site, 11 November 2006.

tionable cases being articulated in news media and other films about the War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan.

3.3.4 ALLEGORIES OF **OTHERNESS**

As two of the more original of this selection of films, the allegorical *District 9* (2009) and *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005) use the most obscure of narrative techniques — allegory — to parallel stories of identity and otherness. *Breakfast on Pluto* both is and contains allegories through the life of its main character Patrick Kitten Braden — a transvestite, which illustrates a crossing-over or change of identity such as sectarianism does not accommodate — and several of her encounters. During a fling with an IRA-connected glam rock band lead, Braden appears in drag as the squaw to her lover's chief in keeping with the theme (the band is called Billy Hatchett and the Mohawks). In "''Reluctant Indians": Irish Identity and Racial Masquerade", Greg Winston writes that the band's act, as a front for Hatchett's IRA activities, is a metaphor for border crossing, a visual parallel for both transvestitism and the geo-political divide of sectarian politics:

> Such metaphoric border crossings as stage Indians and transvestitism present significant threats to those who define themselves and others though constant surveillance of the geographic border between the North and the South…Substitute gender and race for sectarian politics and religion, and there develops [director] Jordan's allegory of the Troubles and the ideological essence of colonialism in much of the world beyond Ireland.[155]

Winston also points out a long-established "preoccupation" of Irish identity with the racial masquerade. Irish characters as Indians is a way, he asserts, of reclaiming a marginalized status. By appropriating the Irish colonial context to America's 'Wild West', the indigenous Irish as Native American becomes symbolic of a new resistance. "By claiming for themselves the colonizer's blatant, predetermined racial role of the primitive Other," writes Winston, "these characters demonstrate the potential for marginalized subjects to appropriate and subvert a dominant colonial trope".[156] *Breakfast on Pluto's* torture scenes are an added imperial commentary. Arrested for suspected involvement in an IRA-related bombing of a London nightclub, Braden's apparent innocence is ignored due to her non-conforming identities. The interrogation officers cannot understand her as an un-radicalized Irish person just as they cannot understand her to be transgender. The torture scenes in London are a confrontation of an imperial subtext which Charlotte Nunes argued de-

---

[155] Greg Winston, "'Reluctant Indians': Irish Identity and Racial Masquerade. In *Irish Modernism and the Global Primitive: New Directions in Irish and Irish American Literature*, ed. McGarrity M. and Culleton C.A. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 153.

[156] Ibid., 154.

mands “a reconsideration of the victimization of innocents as an admissible “cost” of ensuring national security”.[157]

Similarly, *District 9*’s narrative structures reveals two key (and intertwined) social commentaries: the phenomenon of hybridity in the post-colonial context with regard to racial purity, and, second, multiculturalism in the new South Africa with regard to the refugee question. In “The Postcolonial Hybrid: Neill Blomkamp's *District 9*”, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower argues that a discourse of hybridity is created through the characterization of three main characters as metaphors of three distinct communities: Wikus as a distinctly white protagonist whose transformation into the “Other” is a commentary on the post-Apartheid fears of conservative white South Africans regarding assimilation as well as on the relationship between oppression and masculinity, the black Nigerian gangster Obesandjo is a commentary reflexive to Wikus’s regarding hybridity as available to only those wishing to use the power of embracing the “other” so to speak, for good (or an interesting, and controversial, depiction of the archetypal African warlord), and finally Christopher, the alien, as the oppressed “Other” who “we are meant to see…as the modern-day “noble savage” who could bridge the two worlds if only allowed”.[158] Weaver-Hightower detailed how this indicative post-Apartheid vision was achieved via metaphor: “*District 9*, for instance, illustrates one provocative way to represent the gulf that still exists between races in South Africa…through the invention of a character who gets inside the sin of an oppressed Other, with all of the physical and psychological pain that transformation brings.”[159] Some of the rarer criticism about *District 9* concerned the character of Obesandjo, who Robert A. Saunders observed “epitomizes that frightening trend in African politics (he exhibits shades of the mystical and maniacal head of the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, Joseph Kony) identified so vividly in Robert Kaplan’s 1994 *Atlantic* article “The Coming Anarchy”” which was an alienating piece of journalism in and of itself. But the characterization of the Nigerian Obesandjo, who fraternizes with a witch doctor, practices “juju”, and harbors “cannibalistic fantasies”, played on the stereotypes of the other Africa. Nigeria banned *District 9* for portraying it “in a bad light”.[160]

This commentary on the multiculturalism of the “rainbow nation” also denigrates perceptions of an otherwise healed and united South Africa as well as the colonial structures that built it. In his introduction to “Framing Africa: Portrayals of a Continent in Contemporary Mainstream Cinema", which included Derek Charles’ analysis of *Invictus*, editor Nigel Eltringham observed “where once Apartheid South Africa was a brutal foil for the romance of East Africa,” such as in the films *Cry Freedom* (1987) and *A Dry White Season* (1989), “South Africa now serves as a redeemed con-

[157] Charlotte Nunes, ”In the Name of National Security: Torture and Imperialist Ideology in Sheridan's *In the Name of the Father* and Jordan's *Breakfast on Pluto*,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2009), 916-933.
[158] Ibid., 260.
[159] Weaver-Hightower, “The Postcolonial Hybrid: Neill Blomkamp’s *District 9*”, 250.
[160] Robert A. Saunders, 2010. “Of Prawns and Power: The Veiled Politics of *District 9,*” *Journal Of Global Change & Governance* 3, no. 1 (2010), 5.

trast to the rest of the continent" such as that put forth by *Invictus*. This narration, Eltringham continued, resulted in the recognition that:

> Film is a form of mapping (or 'cinemato-graphing') in which 'geopolitics is made intelligible and meaningful in the popular realm and through the "everyday" by (re)producing political and 'moral geographies' and making clear 'the lines of division between "us" and "them"… Alongside other forms of Western media, film produces 'geo-graphs of world politics' which divide the world into 'easy to manage chunks' to make it simple, meaningful and manageable to Western audiences.[161]

By blatantly exposing this view, even in allegory, *District 9* works like the marginalized masquerade in *Breakfast on Pluto* to question the overarching structures of power and narrative from within. "The film presents a surprising critique of the country's current policy of multiculturalism, that is the policy of the peaceful coexistence (but not blending) of thirteen separate language groups.," echoed Weaver-Hightower, "not simply an allegory of apartheid, as has been asserted in review after review, but a vision of post-apartheid, one both frightening and liberating". Considering the conventional vehicles the science fiction genre provides, Weaver-Hightower also noted how postcolonial studies has developed a keen interest in sci-fi, quoting film critic Eric Repphun: "the distancing effect of the fantastic elements of science fiction — faster than light travel, interstellar civilizations, etc. — allows science fiction to tell such difficult stories and ask difficult questions in ways that more classically realist genres of storytelling cannot". Although she qualifies "science fiction does carry the risk of audiences either not taking the film seriously or not recognizing a critique of their own culture," the genre continues to prove "it can open up a new space for sensitive discussions".[162]

[161] Nigel Eltringham, Introduction, in *Framing Africa: Portrayals of a Continent in Contemporary Mainstream Cinema*, ed. Nigel Eltringham (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), ii.
[162] Weaver-Hightower, "The Postcolonial Hybrid: Neill Blomkamp's *District 9*", 250, 263, 252.

CONCLUSION

I argued at the beginning of this survey that film takes on three roles, that of entertainment, that of education, and that of advocacy, and the findings that I have presented thus far suggest that films about international conflict contribute to the articulation of identity politics in public discourse. I also argued that Western filmmaking is a form of cultural hegemony, particularly in its depictions of conflict, which the centralized nature of the Western film industry as a legacy of old colonial and new imperial powers, an exceptional and rapid advancement of film technologies, and a globalizing social justice movement has afforded Hollywood (and company) a privileged, disproportionately influential position of authority in the interpretation of certain, and often controversial, historical and political subjects. In an international political landscape dominated by the primacy of Western-style human rights and identity, the origins and articulations of which are themselves sectarian to a degree, the representation of notorious conflicts, like the examples of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and Apartheid in South Africa, are subjects especially vulnerable to political manipulation. This is important for the modern filmmaker and film viewer to understand because the research raises important questions about the representation of contemporary places and peoples as well as their relations with the rest of the world. The selection of Northern Ireland and South Africa as case studies — both as formerly sectarian democracies and British colonies — illustrate specific qualities of cinematic representations of identity on the West's periphery. In the case of both Northern Ireland and South Africa, heavier-handed narratives may project a message of "new, united" societies as a post-Apartheid or post-Good Friday success stories when, in reality, many challenges remain to be addressed. Doing so obscures any responsibility the West may have for said conflict in the first place, as well as any culpability it may face now. Such an approach gravely simplifies the post-colonial experience and, in the case of South Africa, also condemns the rest of the continent as backward or lesser than this Western-style democracy.

For both the study and practice of peace in particular, this specific exercise of hegemony demonstrates that chasms in cinematic representation are ideological and economic, political and social. These representations beget impressions which may influence how protracted conflict situations are impacted; indeed, they may further or even alternatively pose as barriers to peace processes depending on how audiences receive and react to the narrative. A compelling case for memorialization or martyrdom might compel individuals to advocate for divisive recognition of controversial "heroes". Stringently communicated ideas about perpetrators re-entering public life may prevent audiences from seeing opportunities for moving forward. Unfounded yet pervasive and numerous depictions of stereotypes about a certain people group may persuade another group to vote for political representation to preserve the status quo by limiting participation of the "other". Of course,

these possible resultant situations are fragile; a single film cannot represent or explore its complex intricacies fully. But the peace practitioner can use a single film to learn more about the structural mechanisms of conflict, especially when viewed together with the body of work contemporary cinema affords audiences on this subject. If filmmakers were to take this study seriously, they might — as some clearly do already — consider with greater care the weight with which they design their narratives, as well as the socio-political implications some stories are likely to create. There is obviously quite a bit wrong with representing history on film — which begs the question, if reality cannot be simulated completely accurately, should it be artistically interpreted at all? This is an argument that talks itself in circles. It is clear, however, that some techniques are better than others at presenting (rather than manipulating) the viewpoints of history and conflicts therein. While this study does not offer a conclusive answer toward a solution for prevention of adverse narrative formation in film, I can suggest three ways to improve representation (and accordingly, interpretation) of identity conflict and transcend imperial discourse based upon an analysis of three identity themes — memory, innocence, and otherness — in eleven films about The Troubles and Apartheid. First, a conscientious filmmaker would reject and an audience recognize formal filmmaking conventions that require force-fitting of context to the parameters of a particular genre: Such a filmmaker considers the narrative weight conveyed by visual cliches like the handheld camera (see *Bloody Sunday*) as well as an over-reliance on editing (see *Catch A Fire*). Second, the filmmaker ought to reject and an audience recognize the tendency to further, which is different than to interact with, a political agenda by carefully weighing how the film engages broader discourses like martyrdom and myth (see *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* and *Winnie Mandela*), humanity and belonging (see *Hunger*), victimhood (see *Five Minutes of Heaven*), and multiculturalism (see *District 9*). Such an equally-yoked filmmaker and audience understands the the ideological contexts of the given conflict and avoids or understands and makes appropriate use of narrative devices like simplification (see *Invictus*), striving instead to portray contentious subjects with accessible complexity (see *'71*, *Breakfast on Pluto*). Finally, the filmmaker develops the ability to produce a transparent subtext. This is as much an issue of awareness as it is actually of committing action, an awareness reciprocated by both the filmmaker and film viewer — they share an equal yoke in this venture. Such a filmmaker and viewer ultimately recognizes and ponders the ability of films to project messages between fiction and real discourse.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, James M. *The Linguistics Encyclopedia* (Ebook ed.). Edited by Kirsten Malmkjaer. London: Routledge, 1991.

Balslev, Anindita Niyogi. *Cultural Otherness: Correspondence with Richard Rorty*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1991.

Barringer, Terry. “Editorial: Mandela and More — 2013 and the Commonwealth’s Search for a Good Myth.” *Round Table* 103, no. 1 (February 2014): 1-3. Political Science Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed 12 November 2017.

Barton, Ruth. “Troubles Cinema: Five Minutes of Heaven & Fifty Dead Men Walking”. *Electronic Journal of the Spanish Association for Irish Studies*. http://www.estudiosirlandeses.org/reviews/troubles-cinema-five-minutes-of-heaven-fifty-dead-men-walking/.

Baum, Bruce. “Hollywood on Race in the Age of Obama: Invictus, Precious, and Avatar.” *New Political Science* 32, no. 4 (December 2010): 627-636. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 1 November 2017).

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

Beck, Ulrich. *Power in the Global Age: A new global political economy.* Translated by Kathleen Cross. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005.

Blaney, Aileen. “Remembering Historical Trauma in Paul Greengrass’s *Bloody Sunday*.” *History & Memory* 19, no. 2: 113-138. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 24 October, 2017).

"Bloody Sunday Inquiry." Bloody Sunday Inquiry. Accessed November 26, 2017. https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/bloody-sunday-inquiry.

Butler, Eoin. “the ideas was to portray Northern Ireland in that period — this quagmire of hatred — in microcosm’.” *Irish Times*, 14 February 2009. Newspaper Source, EBSCOhost (accessed 30 October 2017).

Carnes, Mark Christopher. *Past Imperfect: History According to the Movies.* New York: Holt, 1996.

Catsam, Charles. “Go Amabokoboko!: Rugby, Race, Madiba and the *Invictus* Creation Myth of a New South Africa.” In *Framing Africa: Portrayals of a Continent in Contemporary mainstream Cinema*, edited by Nigel Eltringham, 156-174. New York: Berghahn Books, 2013.

Chadwick, Justin. “Mandela the Man.” *Televisual* 8-9, Business Source Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 12 November 2017).

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Coggins, David. “Steve McQueen.” *Interview* 39, no. 2 (March 2009). MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 30 October 2017).

De Reeper, Manon. *Film Analysis For Beginners: How To Analyse Movies*. Film Inquiry, 2016. Electronic.

Dugan, Maire A. “Peace Studies at the Graduate Level.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Science: Peace Studies: Past and Future* 504 (1989). 72-79.

Eltringham, Nigel. Introduction. In *Framing Africa: Portrayals of a Continent in Contemporary mainstream Cinema*, edited by Nigel Eltringham. New York: Berghahn Books, 2013.

Ellis, Steven. “Turning Ireland English.” BBC History. 17 February 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/elizabeth_ireland_01.shtml.

Ellsworth, Elizabeth. "Fiction as Proof: Critical Analysis of the Form, Style, and Ideology of Educational Dramatization Films." (1987), https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED285534.pdf.

Ettedgui, Peter. *Cinematography* (Screencraft Series). Woburn, MA: Focal Press, 1998.

— *Production Design and Art Direction* (Screencraft Series). Woburn, MA: Focal Press, 1999.

Frascina, Francis. “White Cube, White Culture, White Riot.” *Third Text* 25, no. 5 (September 2011): 523-538. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 30 October, 2017).

Galtung, Johan. “A Structural Theory of Imperialism.” *Journal of Peace Research* 8, no. 2 (1971). 81–117.

Gray, Michael. “’*71*.” *Cineaste* 40, no. 3 (2015): MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 31 October 2017).

Gregg, Robert W. *International relations on film*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998.

Jacobs, Christopher P. “Film Theory and Analysis, or, What did that movie mean?” *UND: University of North Dakota,* 2013. Accessed January 15, 2016, http://www.und.edu/instruct/cjacobs/FilmTheory&Analysis.htm.

Johnston, Alastair Iain. *Social States: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Klawans, Stuart. “About a Girl.” *Nation* 281, no. 17 (21 November 2005): 41-43. Political Science Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed 8 November, 2017).

Laurier, Joanne. “Catch a Fire: A story of struggle against apartheid, but not the whole story.” World Socialist Web Site, 11 November 2006. https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2006/11/fire-n11.html.

Lehner, Stefanie. “Post-Conflict Masculinities: Filiative Reconciliation in *Five Minutes of Heaven* and David Park’s *The Truth Commission*.” *Irish Masculinities: Critical Reflections on Literature and Culture* (2011): 65-67.

Lévy, Bernard-Henri. *Gefährliche Reinheit*. Translated by Maribel Königer. Wien: Passagen Verlag, 1995.

McDonough, Tom. "The Practice of Theory: Cinema and Revolution.” In *Guy Debord and the Situationalist International: Texts and Documents.* Boston: MIT Press, 2002.

McNamee, Eugene. “Eye witness — memorialising humanity in Steve McQueen’s Hunger.” *International Journal of Law In Context* 5, no. 3 (September 2009): 281-294. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 1 November 2017).

Monaco, James. *How to Read a Film: The World of Movies, Media and Beyond*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Morgan, Tiernan and Lauren Purje. “An Illustrated Guide to Guy Debord’s The Society of the Spectacle,” *Hyperallergic* (blog), 13 May 2017, https://hyperallergic.com/313435/an-illustrated-guide-to-guy-debords-the-society-of-the-spectacle/.

Nau, Henry. R. *Perspectives in International Relations*. Thousand Oakes: CQ Press, 2015.

Nunes, Charlotte. “In the Name of National Security: Torture and Imperialist Ideology in Sheridan’s *In the Name of the Father* and Jordan’s *Breakfast on Pluto*.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 31, no. 4: 916-933. Political Science Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed 8 November 2017).

Oxford Reference, s.v. “culture industry,” accessed 1 November 2017, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095652757.

—. “mass culture,” accessed 1 November 2017, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100138730.

—. “modernism,” accessed 1 November 2017, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100203467.

Reynolds, David. *One World Divisible: A Global History Since 1945*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009.

Rosenberg, Harold. *The De-Definition of Art: Action Art to Pop to Earthworks.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Rothberg, Michael. “Progress, Progression, Procession: William Kentridge and the Narratology of Transitional Justice.” *Narrative* 20, no. 1: 1-24. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 1 November 2017).

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1993.

Saunders, Robert A. 2010. “Of Prawns and Power: The Veiled Politics of District 9.” *Journal of Global Change & Governance* 3, no. 1: 1-5: Political Science Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed 4 November 2017).

Sennett, Richard. *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*. London: Faber and Faber, 1993.

Sikov, Ed. *Film studies: an introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Smith, James. “The Film-Semiotics of 'Hunger' (Dir. Steve McQueen): A Movie Analysis Essay.” *HubPages Movies and Movie Reviews* (blog), 27 June 2016. Accessed 10 November 2017, https://hubpages.com/entertainment/The-Semiotics-of-Hunger.

“South Africa profile — Timeline.” *BBC News*, 9 August 2017. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094918.

Tansey, Richard G., and Fred S. Kleiner. *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*. Harcourt, 1996.

Taylor, Charles. “The Politics of Recognition.” In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, edited by Amy Gutmann, 25-73. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

—. *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

“The Troubles.” BBC. Accessed 1 November 2017. http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/troubles.

Vaux, Sarah Anson. *The Ethical Vision of Clint Eastwood*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012.

Vigne, Randolph, Alan S. Mabin and Others. “South Africa.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2 November 2017. Accessed 10 November 2017, https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Africa.

Volf, Miroslav. *Exclusion and Embrace: a theological exploration of identity, otherness, and reconciliation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008.

Weaver-Hightower, Rebecca. “The Postcolonial Hybrid: Neill Blomkamp’s *District 9*.” In *Postcolonial Film: History, Empire, Resistance*, edited by Rebecca Weaver-Hightower and Peter Hulme, 247-266, New York: Routledge, 2014.

Winston, Greg. “‘Reluctant Indians’: Irish Identity and Racial Masquerade.” In *Irish Modernism and the Global Primitive: New Directions in Irish and American Literature*, Ed. by McGarrity M. and Culleton C.A. New York: Palsgrave Macmilan. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057%2F9780230617193_9.

Yates, Steve. “The 18-year trek to Madiba’s biopic.” *New Statesman* 142, no. 5189. MasterFILE Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed 3 November 2017).

FILMOGRAPHY

Bloody Sunday. Directed by Paul Greengrass, performances by James Nesbitt and Tim Pigott-Smith, Paramount Vantage, 2002.

Breakfast on Pluto. Directed by Neil Jordan, performances by Cillian Murphy and Liam Neeson, Pathé Distribution/Sony Pictures Classics, 2005.

Catch A Fire. Directed by Phillip Noyce, performances by Tim Robbins and Derek Luke, Focus Features/Universal Pictures International, 2006.

The Color of Freedom. Directed by Billie August, performances by Ralph Fiennes, Dennis Haysbert, and Diane Kruger, Image Entertainment/United International Pictures, 2007.

District 9. Directed by Niell Blomkamp, performance by Sharlto Copely, Sony Pictures, 2009.

Five Minutes of Heaven. Directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel, performances by Liam Neeson and James Nesbitt, BBC Films/IFC Films/Pathé, 2009.

Hunger. Directed by Steve McQueen, performance by Michael Fassbinder, Pathé Distribution/Blast! Films, 2008.

Invictus. Directed by Clint Eastwood, performances by Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon, Warner Bros./Spyglass Entertainment, 2009.

Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom. Directed by Justin Chadwick, performances by Idris Elba and Naomie Harris, Pathé/20th Century Fox/The Weinstein Company, 2013.

Winnie Mandela. Directed by Darell Roodt, performances by Jennifer Hudson and Terrence Howard, Ironwood films/Equionoxe Films/Image Entertainment, 2011.

’71. Directed by Yann Demange, performances by Jack O’Connell, Sam Reid, and Sean Harris, Crab Apple Films/Warp Films/StudioCanal, 2014.