

Bloody Sunday: National Trauma and National Cinema

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On 30 January 1972, members of the British Special Forces, Paratrooper Unit 1, opened fired into a crowd of civil rights protesters in the Catholic city of Derry. By the end of that day 13 civilians were pronounced dead and another 14 were seriously injured, one of whom later died as a result of his injuries. The day would become known as Bloody Sunday and the subsequent Widgery Inquiry into the event, which backed up the military's line that it had acted appropriately, would ensure that it would remain one of the most contested and politically explosive events of the 'Troubles'. As part of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, the British Labour government, led by Tony Blair, publicly recognised the historical position of Bloody Sunday as a 'great gaping wound'¹ in the history of Northern Ireland. Acknowledging the role the British had played in the creation and perpetuation of the trauma surrounding the event, Blair overturned the rulings of the Widgery Inquiry and set up the Saville Inquiry to reopen the investigation into the events of that day in a transparent manner² with the hope of achieving justice for all involved. On the 15th of June 2010 the long awaited report of the Saville Inquiry was passed down. Saville found that the British Army had responded with unnecessary force and that, worse, some of those involved in the event had made false statements to justify their actions. David Cameron, the recently elected conservative Prime Minister, stood in front of the Parliament at Westminster and issued a public apology to the people of Derry. In this historic speech he charged that:

¹ Paul Greengrass, *Bloody Sunday – DVD Commentary*, dir. Paul Greengrass, 2002.

² The findings of the Saville Inquiry were handed down on 16 June 2010.

Background to the Inquiry, hearing transcripts, rulings and judgements, reports and statements, press notices and the final report of the Inquiry can be found at www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org.uk/

the conclusions of this report are absolutely clear. There is no doubt, there is nothing equivocal, there are no ambiguities. What happened on Bloody Sunday was both unjustified and unjustifiable. It was wrong.³

He was equally clear, however, that:

Lord Saville finds no evidence that the events of Bloody Sunday were premeditated, he concludes that the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland governments and the army neither tolerated nor encouraged the use of unjustified lethal force.

He makes no suggestion of a government cover up.⁴

In this paper I wish to examine Paul Greengrass' 2002 docudrama *Bloody Sunday*, paying particular attention to the way in which the film operates within the sphere of trauma therapy. As part of this argument I will be looking at the role the film plays in re-narrativising or demythologising the historical event and how this helps to achieve a coming to terms with the violent break in the history of Northern Ireland that Bloody Sunday constitutes. In order to do this I focus on the way in which Greengrass has attempted to achieve, in his own words, 'an account [of the story] we can all broadly share'⁵ through his use of the documentary aesthetic, non-actors, binary characterisations and large amounts of improvised dialogue in his script. Finally, I explore the way in which the film breaks with traditional narratives of the event and the effect this had on its reception in both Ireland and Britain.

For both sides Bloody Sunday became a pretext for continuing violence, while the British Government's response to the event, the subsequent findings of the Widgery Inquiry, and the unwillingness on the British part to enter into meaningful dialogue, set the tone for future interactions around events such as the Dirty Protest and subsequent Hunger Strikes by IRA prisoners in The Maze's notorious H-Block in the late 1970s and

³ David Cameron, 'Bloody Sunday: PM David Cameron's Full Statement', (UK: BBC News Online www.bbc.co.uk/news/10322295; accessed 11 November, 2011).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Paul Greengrass interviewed as part of: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews*, 2002.

1980s.⁶ The British Government's decision to establish the Saville Inquiry marked an acceptance of potential culpability around Bloody Sunday, but it also denoted a shift in 'ownership' of the story. Traditionally, narratives surrounding the 'Troubles' have formed part of what could be termed a Catholic Canon of Northern Irish discourse. In his book *Shooting To Kill: Filmmaking and 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland*, Brian Mellroy points to the dominance of Nationalist and Republican stories in 'Troubles' filmmaking,⁷ a finding reiterated by John Hill.⁸ This is by no means a trend found solely in cinematic narratives of the conflict but is, in fact, part of a wider interpretation of the 'Troubles' as Catholic/Nationalist dominated. This portrayal is by turns negative – constructing violence as 'irrational and atavistic',⁹ a traditionally British point of view – or positive, grounded in political activism, reflecting the Catholic/Nationalist position.

While the history of Bloody Sunday has been seen in both these lights the effect of the Widgery Inquiry was to close the British side of the narrative, meaning that the story, until recently, has coalesced exclusively around anti-British and pro-Republican sentiment. The event has thus become a site of closed identity belonging only to a set Catholic/Nationalist community and thus has come to be a symbolic event within the wider trauma of the 'Troubles'. This prevents 'outsider' access to the discourse, either Northern Irish Protestant or British.¹⁰ The denial of outsider access to

⁶ These are themselves significant traumas within the 'Troubles' and have been the subject of a number of films such as *Some Mother's Son* (1996, director: Terry George, Eire/USA), *H3* (2001, director: Les Blaire, Eire) and, most recently, *Hunger* (2008, director: Steve McQueen, UK/Eire). See David McKittrick & David McVea, *Making Sense of the Trouble: the story of the conflict in Northern Ireland* (London, UK: Blackstaff Press, 2000), pp.63, 157, 260.

⁷ Brian Mellroy, *Shooting to Kill. Filmmaking and the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1998), p.7.

⁸ John Hill, 'Images of Violence', *Cinema and Ireland*, eds. Kevin Rockett, John Hill and Luke Gibbons (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), John Hill, *Cinema and Northern Ireland. Film, Culture and Politics* (London: British Film Institute, 2006) pp.197, 208.

⁹ Fidelma Farley, 'Ireland, the Past and British Cinema: *Ryan's Daughter* (1970)', *British Historical Cinema. The History, Heritage and Costume Film*, ed. Claire & Amy Sargeant Monk (London: Routledge, 2002), p.130.

¹⁰ Indeed James Nesbitt – who played protagonist Ivan Cooper, the Civil Rights leader and Derry politician in the film – commented that Bloody Sunday was entirely elided from the history taught at his Protestant school in Coleraine, a town situated within the greater County of Derry (Interview with James Nesbitt: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews*).

and therefore of alternative voices within the canonical narrative, and the closure of the British story, established the history of Bloody Sunday as a perpetual site of conflict between Irish Catholic/ Nationalist communities on the one side and Protestant/Loyalist communities and Britain on the other. This effectively kept the trauma frozen open, rendering it a story the Irish couldn't forget because the British wouldn't remember. In re-apprehending the event through the Saville Inquiry and re-entering the dialogue in the context of the peace process, the British government made it possible for the traumatic space of Bloody Sunday to be re-examined within an environment of reconciliation.

By focusing on a Protestant protagonist in the person of Ivan Cooper, *Bloody Sunday* operates at a remove from the specifically Catholic milieu in which the event usually finds expression. Further, by portraying the event through the eyes of all involved Greengrass has re-placed the event, in the sense that it now exists within a dual sphere of ownership across the collective psyches of Northern Ireland and Britain. In effect this requires that the film occupy the same contested space and history within which the Saville Inquiry operated. The director's aim in doing this was, he has stated, to attempt to create a broad account of the history that can be 'recognized across the islands' of Britain and Ireland.¹¹ Greengrass' purpose was not solely to explore the veracity of accounts of the day but also to provide a shared acknowledgement of a day which, as Nesbitt has said 'is as much an English tragedy as it was an Irish tragedy'.¹² In doing so, I believe that Greengrass has created a film that speaks to the goal of reconciliation, both with respect to the peace process and in context as the final aim of trauma therapy, in a way films which emphasise the plight of the victims, such as Jimmy McGovern's *Sunday*, do not.

Within the sphere of trauma therapy the aim is to re-narrativise the original site of the trauma in such a way as to breakdown the memorial scar tissue surrounding the wound. The focus is on rupturing the mythologies of memory, so that the patient can reorder and thereby renegotiate the trauma. This process allows the traumatised individual to move through the trauma with purpose, considering all aspects of the situation. At times this move towards reconciliation (for that is the purpose of this phase) may require the traumatised individual or group to reorder or rethink the sequence of events and in doing so recontextualise them so that they come to a greater

¹¹ Paul Greengrass interview: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews*.

¹² James Nesbitt interview: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews*.

understanding of the trauma itself.¹³ By examining the event itself in detail¹⁴ I would argue that Greengrass' film provides a similar functional space to that of the guided narrative journey of remembrance within a clinical setting – a point I will return to later on in this paper.

One of the underlying aspects of narratives around manmade traumas such as Bloody Sunday is the psychological need to create a black and white version of events, one with clearcut victims and perpetrators who engage in clearly amoral and/or unethical behaviour without any regard for the consequences of their actions. Such a polarised account of history allows little room for movement across the opinion divide and certainly no room to consider that the perpetrators may in fact be victims of circumstance themselves. Understandably, such histories, in which both groups cast the other in the role of perpetrator, can also lead to continued resentments towards either party.¹⁵ Reconciliation, on the other hand, requires that both sides are able to accept a *joint* history irrespective of their role. This is not possible within an ontological dynamic that favours one group's narrative over the other.

Part of the continued trauma around Bloody Sunday is the result of disabled history. Essentially this is an effect of a conflict between what Joep Leerssen refers to as 'society remembrancing' or 'official history' and 'community remembrancing'.¹⁶ Monumental in mode, 'society remembrancing' is marked by what could best be termed an 'agreed forgetting', that is, it ties up loose ends and turns history into 'the past'. In contrast, 'community remembrancing', with its emphasis on victim suffering, disables the past tense of history. It is this latter mode that has

¹³ Luke Gibbons, 'History without the Talking Cure: Bloody Sunday as "Modern Event"', *Hidden Truths: Bloody Sunday 1972*, ed. Trisha Ziff (Santa Monica: 1998), Michael Hanna, *Misconceptualizations of Trauma* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2003), p.19, John P Wilson, *Trauma, Transformation and Healing: An Integrative Approach to Theory, Research, and Post-Traumatic Therapy* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1989), p.203.

¹⁴ Rather than its aftermath, as do films such as McGovern's *Sunday*, released in the same week.

¹⁵ Nyla R. Branscombe, Ben Slugoski and Diane M. Kappen, 'The Measurement of Collective Guilt: What It Is and What It Is Not', *Collective Guilt: International Perspectives*, eds. Nyla R Branscombe and Bertjan Doosje (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.18–19.

¹⁶ Joep Leerssen, 'Monument and Trauma: Varieties of Remembrance', *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. Ian McBride (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.215.

dominated accounts of Bloody Sunday. Leerssen points out that this mode 'resists revisions and has a pious sense of its established truths'¹⁷ and while this is not necessarily a bad thing *per se* it does tend to engender a sense of moral outrage around the event that does little to promote the open discussions required for true reconciliation. In addition to this, the constant re-performance of the past in the present further entrenches the accepted status quo, further alienating the perpetrators from their own history and rendering them increasingly unable to access the historical space from which to acknowledge fault, which is the opposite of what is intended. The iterate nature of 'community remembrance' thus stalls the acceptance of collective guilt which is necessary for the success of any process of reconciliation.

In their studies of the mechanism of collective guilt in relation to ethno-political war crimes such as the Holocaust or, more recently, the ethnic cleansing during the Bosnian-Serbian conflict, Nyla Branscombe et al have found that:

Acceptance of collective group guilt is greatest when the focus is on the ingroup's [perpetrators] role in perpetrating the harm done compared to when the focus is on the suffering experienced by the outgroup [victims]. With the assignment of collective guilt, the focus is shifted to the outgroup, and the emphasis is on how members of that group should feel about their group's harmful actions towards the in-group.... Collective guilt acceptance involves a belief that one's group has done wrong to another group with the guilt reflecting what we have done.¹⁸

By positioning his film as one of 'reconciliation', Paul Greengrass is essentially operating within the parameters of collective guilt acceptance and as such he is required to reopen discussions and to bring the story into the grey areas between both sides. This, in effect, acts as a re-rupturing of the initial event requiring both 'victims' and 'perpetrators' to confront their own levels of culpability in the conflict that followed. *Bloody Sunday* is, thus, not just a film that speaks to a single event but one that promotes a

¹⁷ Joep Leerssen, 'Monument and Trauma: Varieties of Remembrance', p.220.

¹⁸ Nyla R. Branscombe, Ben Slugoski and Diane M. Kappen, 'The Measurement of Collective Guilt: What It Is and What It Is Not', *Collective Guilt: International Perspectives*, eds. Nyla R Branscombe and Bertjan Doosje (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.18.

wider acceptance of collective guilt around the whole of the ‘Troubles’. As such we must consider that Greengrass’ portrayal not only ruptures the accepted narratives surrounding a key moment in the conflict but also ruptures the perception that the ‘Troubles’ is somehow all the fault of the British. By suggesting that some of the blame for the ongoing violence may, in fact, be internal, *Bloody Sunday* challenges the dominant mythos of ‘Troubles’ related cinema. By concentrating only on the twenty-four hours around the event, rather than showing it as ‘continual history’, contextualising it within a framework of prior Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) violence at the 1968 civil rights march in Derry and the psychological violence of the Widgery Inquiry, Greengrass has to a large extent¹⁹ freed the event from the weight of politics that surrounds it. This is not to say that *Bloody Sunday* discredits the accounts of those Derry citizens present at the march. Nor does it justify the actions of the British army on the day or – contrary to the opinion of critics such as Eoghan Harris²⁰ – justify subsequent IRA reprisals. Rather it seems that Greengrass understands innately that Bloody Sunday has come to signify more in the Anglo-Irish realpolitik than just one event. By bringing us back to that ‘one event’ the film takes a step back and requires the audience to make (or attempt to make) their own sense of what happened that day and how it could have occurred. This encourages the viewer to create a new foundational myth. In effect the film mimics the position of remove that one expects from a psychologist within the clinical therapeutic environment.

Within that clinical environment the psychologist facilitates the movement through trauma to the point of integration, which I call the moment of ‘coherent history’. What one might then expect to follow is a work of mourning in which this ‘coherent history’ becomes ‘cathartic history’. In order to achieve a cathartic drama which transforms ‘inability to mourn into ability to mourn’,²¹ Greengrass here must transform the

¹⁹ *Bloody Sunday*, as an event, is so deeply connected to Anglo-Irish relations and politics that it would be an impossible task to free it completely.

²⁰ Ruth Dudley Edwards, ‘When the Real Victim Is Truth’, *The Daily Mail* (2002), 8 January, Eoghan Harris, ‘Why No Enniskillen Movie on Protestant Suffering?’, *Sunday Independent* 20 January 2002, Damien Kiberd, ‘This Film Will Really Make Your Blood Boil’, *The Sunday Business Post* 13 January 2002, Helen Murray, ‘Northern Protestants Acting the Part’, *Sunday Tribune* 13 January 2002, Kathy Sheridan, ‘About Bloody Time’, *The Irish Times* 19 January 2002.

²¹ Richard Kuhns, *Tragedy: Contradiction and Repression* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1991) p.25.

inability to remember into an ability to remember by piecing together fractured remembrances. Functioning in a way similar to the guided narrative in the therapeutic setting, *Bloody Sunday* attempts to integrate the fractured remembrances of both sides of the Bloody Sunday story in order to create a more 'whole' narrative around the event.²² To do this Greengrass brings us back to the moment just prior to the rupture and then takes us through the event play-by-play based on news footage, eyewitness reports, submissions to the Saville Inquiry and parliamentary documents relating to the affair. He employs a range of devices from style and script to character choice to (re)assemble a *mise-en-scène* that portrays as best as possible both the sense of confusion on the day and a story that both sides can share.

Playing on the concept of journalistic immediacy and unbiased reportage much of the aesthetic for this film is based around the establishment of an 'on-the-ground' point of view that depicts event simply 'as what they are'. In order to create this point of view Greengrass employs a limited *cinéma vérité* mode of filmmaking. Such a realist approach is one that requires filmmakers to place their subject within a natural environment and to capture as much footage and sound as possible in order to tell their story. In essence this is a style of filmmaking that mimics aspects of news reportage. It is also a style of filmmaking, like photojournalism, that is marked by an intrinsic acceptance of the limitations of what can be captured. In this mode, dialogue is often unscripted or loosely scripted ensuring that actors respond to events as they might in real-life. Greengrass extended this concept of 'real-life response' to the use of non-actors – such as ex-SAS officer Simon Mann (Colonel Wilford)²³ – who had personal experience of the roles they undertook in the film. He used Derry residents, many of whom had been present on the day, to recreate the march, and hired ex-British Army soldiers, all of whom had undertaken a tour in the

²² It must be noted that, as with any film, some aspects of the decision to march that day are left out of the film, notably the objection of Civil Rights Leader John Hume who, as noted by Annmarie Hourihane, feared exactly the kind of violence that occurred. Annmarie Hourihane, 'Know Him from Adam', *The Sunday Tribune* 13 January 2002.

²³ Ruth Barton made special mention of Simon Mann's casting in 'Irish National Cinema', *National Cinemas*, ed. Susan Hayward (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), p.172, as did Damien Kiberd in 'This Film Will Really Make Your Blood Boil'.

North, to portray the regular army and paratroopers deployed that day.²⁴ The interactions of people within these groups and their responses to the action in the film were unscripted in order to ensure that their dialogue remained action driven and was appropriate to their role. Key examples of this are the reaction of British military personnel to orders and their environment as well as their descriptions of life in the North. The sense of authenticity that these unscripted encounters create is enhanced through the use of a naturalistic soundtrack to the film in which conversational dialogue overlaps, snatches of unrelated background dialogue are overheard, or words are simply lost in the noise (including the important order to pullout). The fracturing of the film's aural footing in this manner is emphasised by the absence of a non-diegetic soundtrack that would ordinarily serve to facilitate our emotional and intellectual comprehension of the film.

Similarly, the visual elements of *Bloody Sunday* destabilise our accepted knowledge of the day. At a basic level the use of fast-paced and sometimes disjointed editing – jumping between different factions on the day, seemingly in real-time – gives the movie a sense of urgency and confusion that a more recognisably formal structure would have lacked. It is the camera work and lighting, conforming to the realist mode, that really serve to create a sense of a 'new' history. Often the camera appears to be 'with' the central characters of the film, rarely shooting outside their direct sphere of influence, as they move through their day. Points of contact, verbal (including the naming of another area or central character) and physical, are used as a means of connecting one place or person to the next. There are also very few establishing shots within the film giving the impression of the audience being dropped into the midst of the scene. This is emphasised by Greengrass' habit of happening upon his actors in mid-conversation (often the camera makes its way through a door or shoots through a window). In turn, this makes the 'unnatural' (for the cinema) editorial jumps appear as effortless extensions of the previous scene. However naturalised they may be, these sharp breaks also create compartments within the story that examine the different contexts within which each group was operating on the day. Hence we have the perspective of the citizens of Free Derry, that of the paratroopers behind the walls, the British Army at Headquarters, the RUC and leaders of the civil rights movement. What is evident from each of these perspectives is the manner

²⁴ Don Mullan in: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews* and Tony Keily, '30.1.72', *Film Ireland*, 85 (2002): 15.

in which each side has come to view the other. The film's focus on Ivan Cooper as mediator and, by extension, a figure of reconciliation as he interacts with community members and attempts to mediate for the civil rights movement with the official forces of the RUC and the British Army, allows the film to flow *between* these different narratives rather than pit them one against the other. The result is a sense of the extant stories intertwining into a meta-narrative of the day.

Once the march is underway, Greengrass extends the journalistic element of *cinéma vérité* further in the sequences depicting the riot at the barricades and the scenes of panic once it is evident that the military is firing live rounds. In order to achieve this, Greengrass captured the events of the march, riot and shootings from multiple perspectives, sending a team of cameramen into the crowd with handheld cameras and instructing them to shoot what they could in natural light amidst the action. Further, he gave no warning to the cameramen or crowd about when the first shots would be fired, creating a situation in which people responded naturally. This in turn meant that the cameramen became part of the ensuing melee,²⁵ deliberately recreating 'the *disadvantage* of the TV reporter'.²⁶ The effect of this stylistic device is to lend a sense of immediacy to the footage that Greengrass uses in the film, grounding it within the time it depicts. Here, the past is allowed to be the past.

The decision to create a narrative 'disadvantage' in this manner is a significant choice when one considers that much of the internationally available narrative surrounding the events of Bloody Sunday is actually formed from press photographs and television news footage. Highlighting the drawbacks of this has two implications: firstly for the existing trauma narrative, and secondly for the idea that Greengrass' film is in effect mimicking the re-narrativisation aspect of trauma therapy. By bringing to our attention the uncaptured footage, the audience is asked to consider the idea of 'missing' images (missing memories) that are absent not through intent but through circumstance. From this we are left to wonder what those images may have shown and how their absence has affected our interpretation of the event. Further it reduces the 'truth'²⁷ of the image to that of simulacrum creating a disjointed movement from event to depiction to remembrance to narrative. Such a disjointed movement disrupts viewers'

²⁵ Paul Greengrass: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Commentary*.

²⁶ Tony Keily, '30.1.72', p.15.

²⁷ By this I mean not that the images are contrived and somehow depict a falsified version of events but rather 'truth' in its full epistemological sense.

ability to take refuge in any previously accepted history of the event, helping to break the cycle of trauma as a ‘wound-licking impulse which returns to, and revives, the painful memory in an ongoing recurrence’.²⁸ This effect is actually strengthened by the staging of iconic press photographs from the day amidst the action, in particular the image of Father Daly waving a white handkerchief as Jackie Duddy’s body is carried to safety (taken by Italian war photographer Flavio Grimaldi) and a shot of Bernard (Barney) McGuigan’s dead body (taken by Gilles Peress).²⁹



In addition to these reproduced photographs Greengrass recreated scenes from published eyewitness accounts of the day, notably those of the crowd tackling a gunman out of the action and a scene in which an RUC officer plants nail bombs on the dead body of Gerry Donaghy.³⁰ Within the hectic

²⁸ Joep Leerssen, ‘Monument and Trauma: Varieties of Remembrance’, p.220.

²⁹ Marion McKeone, ‘A Black and White Atrocity’, *The Sunday Tribune* 27 January 2002.

³⁰ This was actually a true contention as a submission to the Saville Inquiry makes clear:

Mr Gallagher QC, for the natural siblings, submits that two factors warrant their separate representation of his interests. They point out that it has been alleged that he [Gerard Donaghy], alone of the deceased and wounded, was found with weapons on his person, namely, four nail bombs were found in his pockets while being taken to hospital. In turn, it is alleged on his behalf that the bombs were planted by either the Police or Army. Thus, they argue, as Mr Donaghy has been singled out for having weapons in disputed

pace of the film the stillness of these images and scenes appear almost out of place, drawing attention to themselves and, consequently, to their memorial role within the formation of 'Bloody Sunday' as remembered history.

A further aspect of the potency of these images, in particular those that recreate photographs taken on the day, is that they are themselves a part of the contested history of the event. With the exception of the scene involving a gunman in the crowd, they are in direct conflict with the 'official' history of the event as found by the Widgery Inquiry and yet, in the case of the recreated photographs, operate within the memorial space that official history occupies. Indeed, these scenes caused controversy at the time of the film's release with some of the paratroopers who had been involved in Bloody Sunday continuing to deny that they had ever taken place.³¹ The scene with the gunman, however, provides a third site of 'history' between the official remembrance and the community remembrance. The British Army have long alleged that Provisional IRA (PIRA) members had infiltrated the march and had fired on soldiers. For their part, the marchers have always denied that this was the case. Along with scenes in which Ivan Cooper pointedly asks members of the PIRA to stay away, the presence of this gunman backs up the British Army assertions. By counteracting this with shots that clearly show the response of the crowd and the disarming of the gunman before he can take any action Greengrass also appears to confirm the marchers' version of events, that no shots were fired from the crowd and that the intent of the march had been peaceful protest. Having said this, the inclusion of this scene and the earlier scenes requires that 'community remembrance' acknowledge that the PIRA were present at the march and were armed and that the army were justified in making that assumption. This scene is important in that, by conceding a point – the presence of PIRA members – it allows an opening for those on the side of the army to gain access to a history that has previously been closed to them.

circumstances, the task of representing him will be a heavy one requiring separate representation.

From 'Rulings and Observations of the Tribunal on the Matters Raised at the Preliminary Hearing on 20th and 21st of July 1998' dated 24/07/98. Available from the Saville Inquiry website at webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101103103930/http://bloody-sunday-inquiry.org/ (accessed 11 November, 2011).

³¹ Damien Kiberd, 'This Film Will Really Make Your Blood Boil', Catherine O'Mahony, "'Bloody Fantasy' Reports Lead to Call for Boycott of Associated Newspaper Titles', *Sunday Business Post* 13 January 2002.

Another way in which Greengrass creates access points into the story is the careful way in which he chooses his central characters in order to create what is in effect a triple stranded story that helps to break down both the usual narrative dynamics of victim/perpetrator and Catholic/Protestant. He does this by twinning key protagonists – one from each side – in the story who were of similar experience, age and psychological positions on the day. Each character is then used as the access point to their particular group's perspective and acts as agents of interconnectedness, operating both as individuals and as a 'whole'. The focus on these 'real people' characters further blurs distinction between the mimetic event *Bloody Sunday* and the historical artefact, lending greater credence to Greengrass' narrative, and raising questions about our own. Our 'accepted history' of the event is further challenged by these characters being positioned in such a way as to shift the psychological impetus of the stereotypes we expect them to align with.³² I will now take a closer look at these twinned characters and the roles they play both within the story and in the wider context of the trauma therapy based narrative.

The first pair I will look at are Ivan Cooper and Major General Ford. As representatives of the ruling elite these men represent the opposing political ideals of the day. Despite the fact that they never meet, their situational relationship is one of antagonism. In between these two men we have Superintendent Lagan and Brigadier Maclellan (Nicholas Farrell) who, rather than being oppositional, represent the middle ground of the film. Although they answer to Stormont and the British Government, respectively, their goal is to maintain security and to act with a degree of caution. In this respect they provide us with empathetic authority figures. The final pairing, that of Gerry Donaghy (Declan Duddy) and Soldier 027 (Mike Edwards), represent those caught up in the conflict. As with Cooper and Ford, they represent opposite sides of the divide. As with Lagan and Maclellan, they also provide us with sympathetic figures on the ground. In essence they are both victims of their situations. During the course of the film they both raise questions for the viewer as to their own side's motivations on that day and to the continuing violence. Through these pairings, Greengrass creates an intersection between the major forces at play on the day: politics, security, and real-world experience.

³² With the clear exception of Major General Ford (Tim Pigott-Smith), about whom I will have more to say.

As I have previously mentioned the film's main protagonist is the Civil Rights leader and Derry politician Ivan Cooper. He is presented in the film as a charismatic, personable and optimistic man, his natural *bonhomie* making him clearly popular with and trusted by his primarily Catholic constituents. As the local member and as one of the main organisers of the Civil Rights March that day Cooper's role is to act as an intermediary between all groups: the more radical elements within Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICRA) who are determined to march to the Guildhall despite the military presence in the area; the PIRA; the young boys on the barricades; the RUC; and through them the military. The film's focus on the conciliatory nature of Cooper as man and politician, his consistent message that this was a peaceful protest and his determination to create an environment in which the march could safely go ahead, places an emphasis on the difference between the political activism of the civil rights movement and the later IRA/PIRA/Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)/Ulster Defence Force (UDF) violence. Central to his concern is 'the right to march in our own city', a desire, coming from him, that is unmarred by the geopolitical connotations of place that takes up much of the psychological space in other 'Troubles' dramas.



James Nesbitt as Ulster politician and civil rights advocate Ivan Cooper

As a Protestant focal point within what is traditionally a Catholic story, however, Cooper is also an agent of rupture through re-narrativisation, creating a secondary situational opposition within the meta-narrative Greengrass creates. The choice to focus on Cooper is also significant in that it positions the Civil Rights movement as a political

rather than Nationalist/Republican or Catholic cause. As such, he also represents insider opposition to the policies of the ruling Stormont government of the day that deliberately disadvantaged Catholics. So, whilst acknowledging the fact that the issues that NICRA protested almost exclusively affected Catholics, by focusing on the character of a Protestant politician as a leader of the fight for rights, Greengrass has moved the story beyond the traditional sectarian nature of 'Troubles' issues. He also provides an empathetic entry point to the history of the march for Protestants who may feel excluded by the Catholic emphasis the day has taken.

By making the events of the day his centre of attention, Greengrass creates a situation in which the usual narrative of loss around Bloody Sunday, which focuses on the families of victims, can be dispensed with. Instead it is Cooper who provides us with an idea of the personal sense of loss that Bloody Sunday meant. Through this we are able to focus not only on the loss of life but also upon the loss of a political solution. By the end of the film the viewer gets the sense that Cooper is weighed down with a sense of responsibility and foreboding for the future. Along with images of young men lined up to join the PIRA, Cooper marks the moment of rupture with a direct comment to the British Government through the media:

I just want to say this to your British Government. You know what you've done don't you. You've just destroyed the Civil Rights Movement and you've given the IRA the biggest victory it will ever have. All over this city tonight, young men, boys, will be joining the IRA, and you will reap a whirlwind. Thank you.³³

As a result of his position as politician, as Protestant and as Derry resident, Cooper is one of the mechanisms by which Greengrass combines the official and community remembrances. In doing so the film creates a shared memorial space and re-emphasises the ideals of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland that saw all people as equals, giving the film a greater sense of power. The character of Ivan Cooper then comes to embody the potential for resolved trauma.

In contrast to the natural *bonhomie* and sense of personal responsibility that characterises Ivan Cooper, we have Major General

³³ This was a scripted comment and I can find no evidence of the historical Cooper having spoken those words, though he does mention their power in the DVD commentary of the film.

Robert Ford, who was Director of Ground Forces in the North at the time.³⁴ From the outset Ford is characterised as a cold and arrogant man who sees the residents of Derry as a belligerent group of people determined to make trouble. Further to this, he also personifies the colonial mindset of the British Army at the time. Where Cooper is continually forced to justify his political position of power – repeatedly stating that he is ‘a member of parliament’ in the face of the unwavering military and police presence – Ford *is* the authority here. Ford, unlike Cooper, is not a mediator speaking to all sides. His character is one for whom the concept of negotiation (either with other military or RUC figures) has been removed. His sarcastic dismissal of local authority (in the character of the RUC Superintendent Lagan) offers further proof.



Tim Pigott-Smith as General Ford

This dismissal of local authority also extends to the manner in which he treats information that Brigadier Maclellan gives him. It is as if he is unbothered by the real-life aspects of the exercise. Ford’s goal is made clear in an exchange between him and an officer explaining the deployment of troops on the day:

Officer: [The paras are] ready to move in if there is any trouble.

Ford: I don’t think there’s any doubt about that, there will be.

³⁴ Kathy Sheridan, ‘About Bloody Time’.

His behaviour at the frontline – his blatant disregard for the order to hold by command, and his appearing almost to cheer as the military move in on the rioters – marks him as a man who relishes the idea of military confrontation, the very antithesis of the political ideals of the Civil Rights Movement. The above exchange also makes it clear that Ford is determined from the outset that his forces will go in to Derry (which he markedly refers to by its colonial name ‘Londonderry’). Effectively a declaration of intent, it accords with a later account of the day by Lord Carver, the Chief of General Staff at the time, who, in his memoirs, expressed surprise that more people were not killed. Carver states explicitly that they had expected the number to be ‘at least thirty’.³⁵

The political aspects of the Army’s actions are further underscored by Ford’s awareness of the importance of propaganda even before the march has commenced. In an early conversation at Command Headquarters he implies that the decision to pick up the Derry Young Hooligans during the march is in effect a propaganda exercise stating that ‘winning the propaganda war is essential’.³⁶ The speed with which Ford speaks to the press, as opposed to the late night press conference of Cooper, confirms this stance. This aspect of the creation of the ‘official remembrance’ haunts Major General Ford’s interactions with the press immediately after the riot and shooting has ended. Standing amidst the debris he speaks to the press, denying the use of excessive force and holding the line that there were only three deaths despite being confronted by an American journalist who states that he has personally seen more bodies. Ford’s propagandistic position is one of plausible deniability in which the discrepancy between the actual and his reported death tolls can later be explained by an understandable absence of information.

As *Bloody Sunday* does not follow the Widgery Inquiry, Ford, with his impassive manner and perfunctory replies in this scene, comes almost solely to represent the Army’s position. Through this we can see that, like Cooper’s actions, Ford’s are grounded in the politics of the day. As such,

³⁵ Katy Jones quoted in Sheridan, ‘About Bloody Time’.

³⁶ Indeed ‘at a meeting on 1 February, 1972 the British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, told Lord Chief Justice Widgery that “it had to be remembered that we were in Northern Ireland fighting not only a military war but a propaganda war”’. The confidential document recording this conversation was discovered in the Public Record Office in London on 4 August, 1995’. Patrick Grant, *Literature, Rhetoric and Violence in Northern Ireland 1968–98* (Hampshire (UK), New York (USA): Palgrave, 2001) pp.44–45.

within the psychological space of the film, Ford comes to represent the British position as a whole. The entirely unsympathetic rendering of his character can then be viewed as a function of the ‘closed’ nature of the British narrative surrounding the event. Not only are the actions of Ford within the film antagonistic to the goals of NICRA, but within the function of a trauma narrative his character comes to represent the unacknowledged and unresolved trauma of the day and, to some extent, the fears that the findings of the Saville Inquiry would uphold those of the earlier Widgery Inquiry.

While Ivan Cooper and Major General Ford represent the opposite ends of the spectrum both politically and historically, Superintendent Lagan (Gerard McSorley) and Brigadier Maclellan (Nicholas Farrell) offer the viewer a midground. Whilst neither man has a large role in the film, or is a particularly sympathetic character, it is through them we gain an insight into the local concerns around and planning of security on the day. As with all of the pairings they also represent the British and Northern Irish narrative of the day. Superintendent Lagan is a particularly interesting character in this respect. Like Ivan Cooper, he is a man out of place within both the community and official remembrances of the day. Lagan is a Catholic, an uncommon occurrence in the RUC, even more so for the position of power he holds.³⁷ While his character is largely ineffective, snidely derided by Ford because of his Catholicism (‘so nice to have a man on the inside’), his inclusion nonetheless challenges the Catholic-as-victim, Protestant-as-perpetrator based narrative the story of *Bloody Sunday* usually follows. Lagan’s actions throughout the day also break with the traditional narrative that sees the RUC as a contributing element within the traumatic dynamic of Bloody Sunday. Our introduction to Lagan, a meeting with Ivan Cooper in which he reiterates that the march is banned, makes it clear that whilst his role is to uphold the law, he is also a realist. When it becomes obvious that the march will go ahead despite the ban, he is willing to enter into negotiations in an attempt to limit the possibility of violence. He extends this further by ensuring that Cooper is aware that the army will have a presence behind the wall and that a barricade has been set up at the Guildhall. Having got assurances from Cooper that the march will be diverted away from the Guildhall, Lagan then, as his job requires, liaises with the armed forces. He informs them that the intended march is going ahead, of the new route it will take, and that it is intended as a peaceful

³⁷ David McKittrick notes that the RUC were ‘more than 90% Protestant throughout its history’, *Making Sense of the Troubles*, p.11.

protest by the residents of Free Derry. He also receives assurances from the army that they will use minimum force as they go about their operations. It is from Brigadier Maclellan that he receives this assurance.

Brigadier Maclellan, unlike Major General Ford, had been posted to Northern Ireland for quite some time by the time the events of Bloody Sunday take place. As a result he has an interest in ensuring good community relations and, like Lagan, the avoidance of violent confrontation where possible. Maclellan thus offers us a moderate character within the British Army on the day, again a role that conflicts with the dominant trauma narrative surrounding the event. In his dealings with Major General Ford there is a clear sense that he does not completely agree with his superior's assessment of the situation. For example, in direct contrast to the exchange between Ford and the communications operator at Headquarters given above, in the briefing prior to the march, Maclellan makes it clear that the paratroopers will be sent in 'only if violence and only if there is clear separation between the march proper'.

As the breakaway section of the march begins to throw stones and bottles at the forces at Barricade 12, tensions begin to build at Command Headquarters. An exchange between Maclellan and Lagan at this point serves both to highlight McLellan's struggle to understand and control the situation from Headquarters and both men's desire to prevent the situation from escalating further:

Maclellan: Use gas at discretion.

Lagan: What are you doing?

Maclellan: I'm trying to use minimum force.

McLellan's direct reference to Lagan's earlier request also indicates that, unlike Ford, he has respect for Lagan as the head of the local authorities. When the use of water cannons and tear gas at the barricades fails to disperse the rioters, Maclellan asks if they have separation between the rioters and the rest of the march. Ground communications reply that '[they] have as much separation as [they're] going to get'. It is McLellan, here, who gives the order to hold. In this manner it is through McLellan that we come to some understanding of the way in which communications between command at Headquarters and the positioned ground forces on the day broke down.³⁸ Further, it is important to note that the order to hold is given

³⁸ As a point of interest Greengrass extends this motif in his later film *United 93* (2006, Fr/UK/USA) about the hijacked plane brought down by its passengers on 11 September 2001.

at almost precisely the same time as the first live round is heard, cracking over the noise of the riot. Thus, this juncture in the film also serves to emphasise the very real difference between the on-the-ground picture and that of Command Central operating from a remote location.

At the same time we see that Cooper and Ford, who are also present at the scene, are themselves operating from a 'removed' position. I accept that this is a contentious statement to make. It is, however, a view that *Bloody Sunday*, in my reading, supports. Cooper at all stages stays with the main body of the march, although he does send people to attempt to clear the breakaway section of the march from the barricades. He does this in order to make a point about the power of peaceful protest, stating emphatically:

Cooper: If we're going to give those young lads a future we have to show them that non-violence works. If we don't it won't just be rocks they're throwing.

Unfortunately this ideal clashes with Ford's desire for confrontation. Standing at a remove from the barricades, Ford is a cheerleader for the paratroopers, shouting 'Go the Paras' as he returns to the safety of his vehicle. With this in mind I turn to the final pairing in the film, a pairing that represents the on-the-ground perspectives of a participant in the march (and later at the riot at the barricades) and of a member of the paratroopers.

It is through this pairing of Gerry Donaghy (Declan Duddy) and Soldier 027 (Mike Edwards) that Greengrass explores the greater psychological issues around the atmosphere in Derry on that day and the trauma as a whole. Both characters have direct experience of the difference between a 'policy' in theory and the challenges it creates for those affected by it once in practice. Gerry Donaghy has experienced first hand internment without charge; it is made clear on the day of the march that he has only been released from prison for three weeks having been gaoled for rioting. Similarly Soldier 027 and his company have experienced abuse from Derry residents simply for being members of the British Army. Despite this, for both Donaghy and Soldier 027 the events of Bloody Sunday create a crisis of conscience. Both of them overtly question the rationale behind violent confrontation either through action – Donaghy's character is seen trying to get people away from the barricades – or through words – Soldier 027 questions the logic behind the operation when those they are after are 'just kids'. It is clear, too, that both see that there is a more rational, civic-led approach to ending the 'Troubles', a view that is

reflective both of the aims of the Civil Rights Movement at the time and of the political approach towards a resolution of the ‘Troubles’ that the peace process represents. Within the film the pull between their desires and the circumstances in which they find themselves is enacted on two levels. On one level both men serve to provide an on-the-ground view of the march from the level of participant: Gerry Donaghy was in the fray at Barricade 12, whilst Solider 027 is a member of Paratrooper Regiment 1 (Para 1) responsible for the shootings. It is through Greengrass’ portrayal of their movements leading up to and during the march and the subsequent riot that we gain an insight into the contributing factors that led to the shootings.

Throughout the day we see Donaghy and his mates gearing up to attend the march. Despite a conversation with Father Daly (Don Mullan) in which he exhorts them to be on their best behaviour during the march, we see that there is a strong feeling that there is a need to ‘stand our ground’ and not be bullied by the authorities. There is a very real sense that these young men are, to some degree, caught between the position of the PIRA leader to whom Ivan Cooper speaks – who states that ‘it’s all very well for [Cooper] sitting pretty with [his] Westminster paycheck each week. Marching is not gonna solve this’ – and the desire to live a life separate from the ‘nationalist cause’. Again it is Donaghy’s character, engaged to a Protestant girl but participating in the march and riot, who embodies this conflict.

While Donaghy appears reluctant to participate in any further ‘troublemaking’ the events of the day lead him on the opposite path. During the march glimpses are caught of military lookouts on the walls of Derry. The presence of the military lends a different atmosphere to the aim of the march and, when it is diverted, a group consisting of Donaghy’s friends who have persuaded him to join them in breaking from the main body of the march move toward Barricade 12 whilst others unwittingly follow in their wake. The action of this group could be construed as deliberately inflammatory, particularly since they immediately start to taunt the security forces, but it is also clear that although they expect to provoke a response, they do not expect the violent reaction they get. As Paul Greengrass points out in the DVD commentary there was a ‘thinking [that] you were safe if you threw stones, you didn’t get shot if you threw stones, you got shot if you threw nail-bombs’.³⁹ Through the tenor of their

³⁹ Interview with Paul Greengrass: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews*. Further to this, conversations with my parents, both of whom have direct

conversations that day and the manner in which they respond to the diversion of the march, egging each other on to break away, we can see that their attitude comes from previous experience that shows this behaviour to be 'safe' and, more importantly, 'justifiable'.

On the other side of the Derry wall we are brought into the world of the ground forces and the paratroopers. Here we see how orders are missed and/or misinterpreted; how commanding officers prepare their units for action, and the sheer logistical confusion of such a large-scale operation. While some attention is given to the commanders, Greengrass primarily uses the scenes behind the wall to concentrate on the psyche of the soldiers who go into Derry. He does so by focusing on Soldier 027 who is working Communications for the unit that goes into Glenfada Park. Huddled with his group we are made aware of how little the soldiers know of what is happening on the other side of the wall. From this position the sheer noise of the march overwhelms much of the dialogue and there is a palpable element of fear on the part of some of the soldiers gathered. Amidst the chaos of this situation the soldiers in Para One discuss their sentiments around the operation to pick up the Derry Young Hooligans. As I mentioned before, it is through these discussions that we get some idea of the experiences of this group of young soldiers in Derry. Rather than couching these discussions as general conversation, however, Greengrass utilises the questioning figure of Soldier 027 to create a dialogue that allows the viewer to come to a deeper understanding of the 'cause and effect' nature of the soldiers' attitudes. Specifically this occurs around discussions on the reasons for picking up the Derry Young Hooligans, a title, it must be noted, that fosters an environment around the operation in which violent confrontation is expected. In this we can see how the attitude of Ford comes to be passed down to those on the ground. Despite this, Soldier 027 expresses doubts about 'kids' being considered as enemies, a view his fellow unit members vehemently shout down, giving examples of being spat at and abused by 'kids' in Derry despite 'coming in to help them' as evidence enough for the operation. It becomes apparent during the discussions that these soldiers are as much intent on 'showing them [the residents of Derry] who's boss' in retaliation for this abuse as they are in carrying out their orders. Soldier 027, however, provides the viewer with an empathetic character within the Paratrooper Regiment. Like the young

experience of marches in Northern and Southern Ireland during the period leading up to Bloody Sunday, back up Greengrass' contention.

men of Derry, he too feels caught between the force of his experiences and his desire to perform his duties in line with the ethics of protection.

From the above we can see the way in which the roles of Soldier 027 and Gerry Donaghy provide the viewer with a means of coming to an understanding of the environment in which this event unfolded. In light of this aspect of their characters' function, it is in their other role as 'victim' and 'perpetrator' that they have a greater significance within the re-narrativisation of Bloody Sunday. This significance stems from the fact that they provide us with a direct route between the events depicted in the film and the subsequent trauma narratives that built up as a result of the unacknowledged history of the day, whilst simultaneously providing a link to the Saville Inquiry.

As an initial participant in the riot at Barricade 12 Donaghy is a symbolic scapegoat for the British Army, providing evidence of exactly the attitude they claimed was endemic in Northern Ireland at the time. Further, as a recently released rioter he is more than likely on the list of the Derry Young Hooligans the paratroopers are charged with picking up and, as such, legitimises the army's presence on the day of the march. Donaghy is also a dual 'victim' not only in the physical sense but also in the fact that, in death, he is made a scapegoat for the military's actions when nail-bombs are planted on his corpse (in Greengrass' film by RUC officers) in order to back up the army contention that nail bombs had been thrown that day. Eyewitness accounts from the day refute this claim, much less that Gerry Donaghy was carrying nail bombs on his person, and it is these that Greengrass points to as a reason for the inclusion of this scene in the movie.⁴⁰

Soldier 027, on the other hand, provides us with the counterpoint to Donaghy. As the Communications operator for his unit it is actually Soldier 027 who gives the command that a ceasefire has been called *prior* to Para One entering Glenfada Park. Despite this knowledge, at the film's end we witness him corroborating the evidence of his fellow unit members. In his excellent analysis of both the film and the criticism it received Tony Keily

⁴⁰ Despite repeated statements from civilian eyewitnesses who consistently claimed that there were no nail bombs present that day, in its final report the Saville Inquiry concluded that Donaghy was the 'probable exception' in a group of unarmed people. See the testimonies available at: Saville, *Website of the Saville Inquiry*, Saville, *Saville Inquiry Findings*, 2010, available: report.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org/volume01/chapter003/#the-report, (accessed 20 June 2010).

also points out that this character's eventual failure to become the 'conventional Good Thief' within the active narrative of the film is one of its strong points as it underlines 'what his [Greengrass'] film isn't doing' and that that 'is what hurts here'.⁴¹ It is Soldier 027, through his *active* participation in both the incursion and subsequent cover up, rather than Ford, who becomes the site around which the film coalesces the later trauma of unacknowledged history. Having set the character up in this manner, however, Greengrass is equally quick to stop his viewers segueing neatly from his film to the pre-existing trauma narratives. The intertitles that close the film point out that Soldier 027 has since recanted and is currently in witness protection. According to Greengrass 'he is the only soldier to give an account that differs from the standard British Army [one]'.⁴²

The staging of these two scenes – the planting of nail bombs on Donaghy and Soldier 027's moral failings both at the scene and later in questioning – immediately invoke the findings of the Widgery Inquiry. The film, however, is made within the spirit of the Saville Inquiry and these scenes actually serve as a locus for discussions about the role of that inquiry in breaking the cycle of the trauma by creating a 'coherent history' of the day. The location of the expected fulfilment of Soldier 027's conventional role as 'Good Thief' within the textual, rather than visual, epilogue of the film, however, indicates that Bloody Sunday, as both event and film, would remain unfinished business at least until the findings of Saville were handed down.

I would suggest, then, that the film's reception within the public and critical eye was as much a result of Greengrass' approach to the subject matter as it was to both fears and attitudes surrounding the then ongoing Saville Inquiry and the historical role of Bloody Sunday within the wider 'Troubles'. Given this, it is unsurprising to find that attitudes towards the film were split. For the most part the film was considered to be an even-handed account of the day despite some controversy around the disputed scenes mentioned above. Critics such as Gareth McClean called the film 'a masterpiece' and discussed the merits of its realistic style and unbiased nature.⁴³ Others noted the shift in narrative dynamic, pointing to an

⁴¹ Tony Keily, '30.1.72', p.13.

⁴² Paul Greengrass, *Bloody Sunday – DVD Commentary*, dir. Greengrass.

⁴³ Gareth McLean, 'Troubles in Mind', *The Guardian* 29 January 2002, and noted in Keily, '30.1.72'.

uncharacteristically silent Bernadette Devlin as evidence.⁴⁴ On the other side of the fence Ruth Dudley Edwards of the *Daily Mail* chastised the film for its anti-British, anti-army stance.⁴⁵

Of more interest with respect to the role *Bloody Sunday* has played within the ongoing trauma of the ‘Troubles’, however, is Eoghan Harris’ article in the *Sunday Independent* entitled ‘Why no Enniskillen movie on Protestant suffering?’⁴⁶ In this article Harris was quick to defend Dudley Edwards, claiming that people who questioned her point of view were buying into the ‘national pieties’ that protected the stories around events such as Bloody Sunday and therefore their portrayals, citing Neil Jordan’s *Michael Collins* as a further example. Further, he chastised James Nesbitt for being the ‘latest to join the jostling throng of Northern Protestant thespians who have nothing good to say about their own traditions’.⁴⁷ The tenor of both Harris’ and Dudley Edwards’ articles point less toward an issue with the contents of the film, than to a sense of disenfranchisement amongst Protestant communities surrounding public ‘remembrances’ of Northern Irish history. Whilst I do not agree with either Dudley Edwards or Harris’ reading of the film as anti-Protestant (or anti-British for that matter), I would suggest that their reactions exemplify those of communities who have been locked out of aspects of their own history either through elision (as Nesbitt alluded to in his commentary on the film⁴⁸) or through ‘protected narratives’ that favour one remembrance over another.

It is precisely because of such feelings that attempts to re-narrativise events such as Bloody Sunday, to create inclusive histories, are so important for successful trauma recovery both at the personal and national level. The evidence for this is perhaps best explained through reference to the personal experiences of the Derry residents and British Soldiers who took part in the film. Ivan Cooper, Paul Greengrass and James Nesbitt all reported that the filming had proved a cathartic experience for both groups, with each expressing that they had not understood what the other side had

⁴⁴ Annmarie Hourihane, ‘Know Him from Adam’.

⁴⁵ Dudley Edwards, ‘When the Real Victim Is Truth’. Dudley Edwards, also noted in: Eoghan Harris, ‘Why No Enniskillen Movie on Protestant Suffering?’, Kiberd, ‘This Film Will Really Make Your Blood Boil’, Murray, ‘Northern Protestants Acting the Part’, Sheridan, ‘About Bloody Time’.

⁴⁶ Eoghan Harris, ‘Why No Enniskillen Movie on Protestant Suffering?’

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ James Nesbitt in: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Commentary*, dir. Greengrass.

gone through, either on the day or throughout the ‘Troubles’. By providing a narrative that enables both sides to see the contributing factors that played a role in the day and take appropriate responsibility for them the film is able to create a dynamic that allows for collective guilt acceptance to occur. Don Mullan, speaking of the film with respect to the role of Bloody Sunday within the ‘Troubles’ as a whole, sums this up:

I think the fact that the inspiration ... and the motivation to make this movie happen [came] from two Englishmen is very, very significant and I think that in many ways it’s part of the peace process.⁴⁹

Or, as Greengrass succinctly put it:

there is no hierarchy of victims ... very many innocent people have died in the conflict ... Catholic people and Protestant people.⁵⁰

Writing in a commentary piece on the film in *The Guardian* Paul Greengrass observed that, after watching the reactions of the families involved in the tragedy that day at the screening as well as the positive interactions between the Derry residents and the ex-soldiers who took part in the filming, he ‘thought of the core of the civil rights message – that in the future we should celebrate our diversity rather than fight over it, as we have done in the past’.⁵¹ By creating a film that challenges the dominant mythologies around the moment of rupture created by Bloody Sunday, Greengrass moves the film from the usual closed position of its closed remembrances to a position of openness and reconciliation, and by so doing has been able to move his audience through the event. The realist style in which he has shot the film, with its allusion to the manner in which existing news footage is contextualised within both official and community remembrances, draws our attention to the problems of reading history from a position of trauma (either as perpetrator or victim). He further destabilises viewers’ historical understanding by creating either incongruities between the roles of characters and their casting, as in the case of Cooper and Lagan, or highlighting their similarities, as with Donaghy and Soldier 027. The effect is to create a film that I believe achieves exactly the aim of the narrative drama in trauma therapy: to reconcile the ‘traumatised’ and

⁴⁹ Don Mullan interviewed in: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Extras/Interviews*.

⁵⁰ Paul Greengrass in: *Bloody Sunday – DVD Commentary*, dir. Greengrass.

⁵¹ Paul Greengrass, ‘Making History’, *The Guardian* 11 January 2001: 5.

‘actual’ stories of the day. In doing so the film opens the door for a wider reconciliation.

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