

**RICHARD BEAN'S *THE BIG FELLAH* (2010) AND JEZ BUTTERWORTH'S *THE FERRYMAN* (2017): TWO PLAYS ABOUT THE NORTHERN TROUBLES FROM OUTSIDE OF NORTHERN IRELAND**

Hiroko Mikami<sup>1</sup>\*

<sup>1</sup>Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan

**Abstract**

During the three decades of the Troubles of Northern Ireland (1969–1998), a remarkable amount of plays about the conflict was written, most by (Northern) Irish playwrights. Recently, however, alongside growing concerns about violence worldwide since 9/11, authors who are not of Irish descent have begun to choose the Northern Troubles as their theme. This article deals with two plays, Richard Bean's *The Big Fella* and Jez Butterworth's *The Ferryman*, neither of which was written by an Irish playwright, and examines whether and to what extent it is possible to say that they can transcend regional boundaries and become part of global memories in the context of the post-Good Friday Agreement and 9/11.

**Keywords:** Richard Bean; *The Big Fella*; Jez Butterworth; *The Ferryman*; the Troubles of Northern Ireland

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\* Professor of Irish Studies at Waseda University, Tokyo, where she also serves as director of the Institute for Irish Studies. She authored *Frank McGuinness and his Theatre of Paradox* (Colin Smythe, 2002) and co-edited/ authored *Ireland on Stage: Beckett and After* (Carlyfort, 2007) and *Irish Theatre and Its Soundscapes* (2015). She translated many contemporary Irish plays into Japanese, including Tom Murphy's *Bailegangaire* and *A Thief of a Christmas*, and Frank McGuinness's *Innocence* and *Mutabilitie*. E-mail address: mikami@waseda.jp. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0731-454X>.



## 1. Introduction

The conflict in Northern Ireland, often referred to as the Troubles, broke out in 1969 and is regarded to have formally ended with a 1998 peace deal, known as the Good Friday Agreement. The Troubles lasted for three decades and have cast a long and dark shadow on both Nationalist (predominantly Catholic) and Unionist (predominantly Protestant) communities, and people still live with indelible and traumatic memories: “over 3,800 individuals were killed, with an estimated 40,000 to 100,000 individuals injured” and it is reckoned that “80% of the population knew someone killed or injured during this time” (Peak and Lynch 452-53). When the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement was marked in 2018, more concern than celebration was noted. It is easy to anticipate the return of violence since the memories of traumatic violence can ignite buried feelings of fear and anxiety, especially in a context of Brexit.

This being said, however, the 20-year period at least allows us to look at the Troubles, which are to some extent “historicised,” with a more objective perspective. Pierre Nora put it in this way: “[W]e discover the truth about our memory when we discover how alienated from it we are” (12). And in the context of French history, Nora had this to say:

Memory wells up from groups that it welds together, which is to say. . . that memory is by nature, multiple yet specific; collective and plural yet individual. By contrast, history belongs to everyone and to no one and therefore has a universal vocation. (3)

Nora’s statement about memory and history has particular meaning when applied to the context of this article on plays about the Troubles. During the three decades of the Troubles before the Good Friday Agreement, a remarkable amount of plays emerged or “welled up” from specific communities of Northern Ireland. These plays were dramatic representations of collective or communal memories that united or “weld” the whole community together, because the nature of theatre is live and communal. It is commonly understood that the conflicts had become an ironic source of inspiration for playwrights who were born there, lived there, or had special attachment to the place: staging the Troubles was an act of commemoration of what was seen and felt within the community.<sup>1</sup> Much academic research on these playwrights and their plays has already been conducted,<sup>2</sup> and reference to works written about the Troubles almost exclusively pertains to plays written by Northern Irish playwrights.

In the post-Good Friday Agreement era, however, certain changes to this “monopoly”<sup>3</sup> have been witnessed, and playwrights who do not claim Irish descent have chosen the Troubles as the theme of their works.<sup>4</sup> The Troubles seen in a wider context of history “belong to everyone and to no one.” The subjects of this article, Richard Bean’s *The Big Fella* (2010) and Jez Butterworth’s *The Ferryman* (2017), are good examples of such a phenomenon: both were written

by English-born playwrights, from the community “without,” and both were first staged in London (the Lyric Hammersmith and the Royal Court respectively), again outside of Northern Ireland.

Worldwide, there have been growing concerns about violence and terrorism. The terrorist attacks in New York on 9/11 have required consideration of various cases of violence in a global context, and at the same time people have begun seeking to understand or make sense of terrorism as a social and human phenomenon of the twenty-first century. In their historical context, the Troubles of Northern Ireland have become universal issues best understood in a wider and global perspective rather than a local and specific perspective confined to Northern Ireland. This article examines whether and to what extent it is possible to say that these two plays about the Troubles of Northern Ireland, depicted from “without,” can transcend regional boundaries and become part of the conflict’s global theatrical discourse in Northern Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement and the entire world after 9/11.

## 2. Richard Bean’s *The Big Fella* (2010)

*The Big Fella* was premiered by Out of Joint, a touring theatre company based in London. Max Stafford-Clark, one of its founders and director of the play, calls himself “Hibernophile,” conveying his long-held strong connection with and attachment to Ireland: he is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin and directed several plays at the Abbey Theatre, the National Theatre of Ireland, and stated that Out of Joint has become “something of an Abbey Theatre in exile”<sup>5</sup> (O’Connell 2011). It is Stafford-Clark who “discovered”<sup>6</sup> the playwright Sebastian Barry and commissioned him to write *The Steward of Christendom* (1995), whose production is remembered as one of the most triumphant productions of Irish theatre in the 1990s.

Stafford-Clark directed another play by Barry, *Anderson’s English*, in 2010, just before the world premiere of *The Big Fella*. Comparing two plays in an interview with O’Connell for *The Irish Times*, he stated the following about an Englishman directing a play about the Troubles written by an English playwright, as if challenging Irish readers:

[W]hy should we leave Irish history to the Irish? . . . [*Anderson’s English*] is a play about one of the best-known English writers [Charles Dickens], and written by an Irishman, so why not have a play about the Irish by an Englishman? Any country’s history is most interesting examined from without.<sup>7</sup> (O’Connell)

The interview appeared at the time when *The Big Fella* was transferred to Dublin’s Gaiety Theatre after its successful UK tour. It is interesting to note that O’Connell, while interviewing Stafford-Clark, had to “brush aside” certain “worries that an Irish audience might react negatively to an English writer and director taking on the Troubles” (O’Connell) for the paper’s readers. A deep-rooted belief is revealed here:

particular and localised memory can only be depicted by those who experienced it first-hand: that is, in this case, a belief that only (Northern) Irish playwrights can write plays about the Troubles to properly represent the situation.

*The Big Fella*, written by Richard Bean, a Hull-born Englishman, represents however a new and interesting perspective from “without.” The play was placed in the context of global terrorism from the beginning, instead of being confined to the localised milieu of Northern Ireland. The idea for the play sprang from Bean’s visit to New York in 2001 soon after the terrorist attacks. He was “intending to write a play about Islamic terrorism but ended up with a drama about support for the IRA among Irish Americans” (Standard). Having witnessed a scene in which firefighters were collecting money in order to commemorate their fellow workers who had become the victims of terrorism, Bean immediately associated them with those who had been raising money for the IRA:

We know perfectly well that the Irish American community supported the IRA for 30 years. And the core of that group was police and firemen, many of whom died in 9/11. That’s the smacking big irony that I don’t think anybody else has talked about. (Lukowski 2013)

In the play a series of incidents that happened during the Troubles, a mixture of well-known and less remembered, is chronologically observed from an apartment in the Bronx: Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972; the Hunger Strike in 1981; the kidnapping of Shergar, a racehorse, by the IRA in 1983; the seizure of 150 tons of weapons and explosives bound for the IRA on the *Eksund* (Libyan boat) in 1987; the bombing at Enniskillen in the following week that killed 11 people and injured another 63; the visit of Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin, to the US at the invitation of Bill Clinton in 1995; and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and the bombing of Omagh that followed in August. Finally, the epilogue, set in the morning of 9/11, hints at the death of Michael, an Irish-American firefighter. Michael was recruited by David Costello, the titular “Big Fella,” to the New York unit of the Provisional IRA in 1972 immediately after Bloody Sunday, and his IRA membership coincides with the 30 years of the play’s time span. By condensing the three decades of troubled history within the running time of three and a half hours,<sup>8</sup> the play establishes a historically objectified perspective of the twenty-first century.

In the prologue set at the 1972 St. Patrick’s Day Parade dinner, we first encounter Costello, a fictional protagonist, who is in his prime and full of confidence. As the “Big Fella” of the Irish American community in New York, he is giving a fundraising speech to unseen fellow supporters of the IRA. His charisma helps keep up the organisation’s morale and coherence and helps it deal with the troubles that happen within his unit as the play evolves: he raises the money for the IRA; gives an order to execute Elizabeth, who was suspected to be a traitor for the British in 1981, and protects his fellow men when Frank, a security member of the IRA, is sent to New York to find out a suspicious traitor

in 1987. Twenty-seven years later at the same function on St. Patrick's Day in 1999, he confesses to the same crowd that he has been "working for the FBI for the past twelve years" (Bean 108). This confession, a surprise to everyone, brings home the fact that, in the play with so many external struggles and conflicts, little attention has been paid to the internal conflict of the protagonist. Just as the public expects personal charisma in public figures but does not care what is going on in the depth of their minds until perhaps reading about it in their obituaries, we look at Costello's internal strain for the first time when he is about to die. In order to make sense of his life of double cross, we have to go back to 1987, the year of his turning point, and start it all again.

The year 1987 was when Costello's private life began to deteriorate: his daughter Grainne died of a drug overdose and his wife Theresa left him after their daughter's death. It was also the year when the Libyan boat the *Eksund* was seized and the Enniskillen bombing killed six innocent civilians. Costello later remembers that "[he] was at a low point in [his] life after Enniskillen" (108), and it was around this time, it seems, when he was approached by the FBI. In the scene of confrontation between Costello and Frank, a security member of the IRA from Ireland, Costello revealed his scepticism of the IRA's armed struggles because he began to think there was no "clear moral purpose" (84) in cold-blooded murder. He then showed his admiration for Gordon Wilson, whose daughter was killed in the Enniskillen bombing, saying that Wilson was "the real Big Fella" (84).

Costello's remorse for Enniskillen and admiration for Wilson seemed to be a bluff against Frank to clear his fellow men and himself of any charges, but, when the scene is re-examined, it becomes clear that they came from his true feelings. Costello was truly impressed by Wilson who held no grudge against his daughter's killers and stated that he forgave them: his "quiet dignity had a profound effect on many people in Northern Ireland" (CAIN 1987). Two fathers who lost their daughters are starkly contrasted here. Wilson mourned his daughter as a proud and brave father, whereas Costello, under the false guise of the Big Fella, was being tormented by his sense of guilt. He knew very well, it seems, that he was responsible, directly or indirectly, for the deaths of two young women.

Later in his speech, Costello tries to convince both his audience and himself that "at some point the mistake making would end" (108) by his becoming an FBI informer, but this act of "betrayal" does not in fact end the mistake making. It is even more ironical to learn that Costello and his men "joined the Real IRA" (103), a dissident group of the Irish Republican Army that is "against those who support the Good Friday Peace Agreement" (101). Costello and his men continue to be involved in exporting FX401 detonators hidden in teddy bears to Omagh. His remorse for the incident at Enniskillen and his admiration for Gordon Wilson do not stop him from being responsible for the Omagh Bomb that killed 29 people in 1998. Once you are in the IRA, "there is no out" (104). This is the consequence of the life of "Faust in reverse" (45), a "clever" warning given to Michael by Costello, when he, in a patronising manner, told him that becoming an IRA member is "selling your soul for a lifetime of pain" (45). Costello might have thought that he

was in the safe position of Mephistopheles, but he was ironically foretelling what would happen to his own life, unaware at that time of the pain he would later experience. But in the final stage of his life, Costello admits that he made “so many mistakes as a boy” (108), and he knows he must pay the price for such mistakes. Costello offers himself to be executed by his men. He dies not as Mephistopheles but as Faust in reverse. In his speech he is essentially writing his own obituary, not an idealised one but a bleak one of failure and ignominy.

The play carefully avoids heroicising and romanticising Costello: he is depicted as being different from popular representations of doomed terrorists<sup>9</sup> who appeared more often on screen rather than on stage. Still, the play allows him to conclude his obituary by quoting the first five lines from Yeats’s “The Lake Isle of Innisfree.” The word “peace” that appears in the final line--“And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow” (110)--resonates on various levels here: peace as a nostalgic and idyllic longing in Yeats’s original context; peace as a condition achieved in a long process of negotiation in the context of Northern Ireland; and finally, peace as Costello’s atonement made for his sins through repentance.

Although the play invites us to accept Costello’s redemption on an individual level the same way Gordon Wilson forgave his daughter’s killers, it forces us to examine organisational dynamics within a wider context of global terrorism. As the post-9/11 has dichotomised people into “us” and “them,” Costello’s IRA New York members try to draw a line between “us” (the IRA terrorists) and “them” (the Muslim terrorists): the like-minded IRA members accuse Muslims--“they”--of “want[ing] to kill two hundred and fifty thousand innocent people” (92) while “we only murder the guilty” (92), revealing the hollowness of their justification. They cannot dismiss the fact that “we,” the IRA terrorists, also killed many innocent people in the name of crooked justice. It is even more ironic to see the clichéd accusation by Tom Billy, a New York policeman, of the Muslims’ treatment of women, an accusation that boomerangs right back to him. It was Tom Billy who violently attacked Elizabeth Ryan and killed her on stage, and she, as a committed Republican and at the same time a staunch feminist, made it very clear that she was trapped in institutionalised misogyny within the organisation before her death. The more emphasis the IRA puts on the differences between themselves and the Muslim terrorists, the more this ironically highlights the similarities of the people who are involved in terrorist activities despite their different principles and ideas. This increases awareness that the Troubles of Northern Ireland are civil conflict that happened within “us” when we were focusing on the dichotomy between “us” and “them.”

### 3. Jez Butterworth’s *The Ferryman* (2017)

*The Ferryman* is another play about the Troubles of Northern Ireland created by an English team: it was written by Jez Butterworth, directed by Sam Mendes, and first staged at the Royal Court in London. The play is set in the harvest time of

1981, during the Hunger Strike in the Maze Prison. Unlike *The Big Fella*, which historicises the Troubles over three decades from 1972 to 2001, *The Ferryman* confines the action of the play to a mere 24 hours, crystallising the whole history of the Troubles in the play's present (the harvest time of 1981), examining the past and the future through a twenty-first-century viewpoint.

The play's central character is Quinn Carney, an ex-IRA man who has been living as a farmer with his large extended family in County Armagh since his withdrawal from the organisation. In the prologue, the body of Seamus Carney, Quinn's brother, who had been missing for 10 years since Quinn's withdrawal in 1971, is found in a bog. From that moment on the ghost of the past haunts Quinn and his family and finally brings catastrophe and tragedy.

Just as Stafford-Clark, the director of *The Big Fella*, has had a personal relationship with Ireland since his university days in Dublin in the 1960s, Butterworth has personal proximity to the country through his partner, Laura Donnelly, the Irish actress who played the role of Caitlin Carney, Seamus's wife, in *The Ferryman*'s first production. The play's origin is tied to an episode about Donnelly's maternal uncle, Eugene Simons,<sup>10</sup> an image of whom came up at the end of Darragh MacIntyre's 2013 BBC documentary titled *The Disappeared*, which Donnelly and Butterworth watched together (Sweeney 2017). Simons is one of "the Disappeared," a term that "signifies a group of 16 individuals separately abducted, killed, and secretly buried by Republican paramilitaries over the course of The Troubles" (Peake and Lynch 2016, 453). Inspired further by a conversation with Donnelly's mother, sister of one of the Disappeared, Butterworth began looking into the Disappeared as the subject of a play. Donnelly's mother pointed out the silence forced upon the family members and said that "the silence can be very hurtful and it doesn't help heal any wounds" and that "it could be very cathartic for the play to be written. . . as it's one of the most traumatic elements for so many people involved in story of the Disappeared" (Sweeney).

In research focused on the traumatic experiences of the families of the Disappeared, Peake and Lynch point out "the clear existence of a hierarchy of victimhood, where some deaths are venerated more than others (457)," implying that the Disappeared rank lowest in the hierarchy. The media paid little attention to or even ignored them for a long time and "an official acknowledgement of the abductions and subsequent murders came only in 1999 when Republican paramilitaries admitted responsibility for the disappearance of ten of the group" (453). Peake and Lynch explain how the families left behind were treated by their community:

[I]t was commonplace to experience exclusion from their community, ridicule in their grief, dishonour of the memory of their loved one, and isolation from the institutions of government and church through both unintentional insensitivity and deliberate exclusion. The experience of being a family member of one of the Disappeared is one of personal traumatic loss but also a reflection of the community dynamics during the Troubles. (457)

The Carney family in *The Ferryman*, especially Caitlin, the wife, and Oisín, the son of Seamus Carney, have been suffering from “ambiguous loss,” a term coined by Pauline Boss in the 1970s referring to the situation of “having a loved one disappear without knowing their whereabouts or fate” (Boss, 2018). In an article written for the programme of the West End production of *The Ferryman*, Boss writes that “playwrights and poets have for eons written about the themes of grief and loss in human relationships, but how we deal with the shock of traumatic and unclear loss lingers forever.” As a pioneer in the fields of family sociology, family therapy and family psychology, Boss’s focus is, of course, on real life sufferings and writing about it is a way to reckon with it. This is what Butterworth set out to do in the play, and the personal stories about the Disappeared that belonged to only a few unlucky people would be transformed into “history” that “belongs to everyone and to no one and therefore has a universal vocation” (Nora 1998, 3).

The play deals with its politically charged issues with abundant allusions to literature, including Yeats and Heaney (Irish), Walter Raleigh (English), Whitman, Thoreau, and Emily Dickinson (American), and Virgil’s *Aeneid* (Latin). Among the rich web of references in the play, the murdered body of Seamus Carney found in a bog immediately evokes a series of Seamus Heaney’s bog poems. In the early 1970s, when the Troubles intensified, Heaney, who “began to get an idea of bog as the memory of the landscape, or as a landscape that remembered everything that happened in and to it” (Heaney, *Preoccupations* 1980, 54), wrote evocative poems about the bogland. The last poem of his second collection, *Door into the Dark*, “Bogland,” concludes with the line, “The wet centre is bottomless” (Heaney 1969, 42). The bottomless bog becomes a metaphor for Irish history and its vessel. Heaney was also inspired by P. V. Glob’s (1969) *The Bog People*, which was “concerned with preserved bodies of men and women found in the bogs of Jutland, naked, strangled or with their throats cut, disposed under the peat since early Iron Age times” (Heaney, *Preoccupations* 1980, 57). For the poet on a quest for “images and symbols adequate to [their] predicament” (56), the bog people became symbolic icons. He wrote that “the unforgettable photographs of these victims [the Bog People] blended in my mind with photographs of atrocities, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles” (57-8).

When the condition of Seamus’s body is described onstage as preserved or “pickled” by the acidic peat (Butterworth 8) and “his hands were tied and. . . he was shot in the back of the head (80),” the audience, who are possibly Heaney’s readers, could easily imagine the body in the landscape of Heaney’s bogland with the hallowing image of the bog people, victims of ritual executions 2000 years earlier. This gruesome imagery evokes the inevitable repetitiveness of history in a wider perspective from the Iron Age to the twenty-first century. And what Vendler (1998) writes about Heaney’s *North*, the fourth collection of his poems, aptly applies to what Butterworth tries to do in the play:

In an attempt to go below or beyond journalistic explanation of the Troubles, Heaney turned in *North* to an archaeological myth averring

that a wide practice of prehistoric violence, encompassing both the Scandinavian countries to Ireland, accounted for the survival of savage tribal conflict, which fundamentally was neither colonial nor sectarian, neither economic nor class-caused, but rather deeply cultural. . . . Can it be, Heaney proposes, that what we are seeing is not Catholics against Protestants, or rich against poor, or loyalist against nationalist, but rather a generalised cultural approval of violence, dating back many centuries. (1975, 50-51)

Another difficult question is then raised. When and in what context do we approve of violence? Consider the clichéd phrase, “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.” When Quinn Carney performs an act of revenge on his brother’s killers in the final scene, the violence, which is to some extent anticipated, can be approved of in the framework of fiction, especially because we understand that he intends to prevent Caitlin from murdering Muldoon, the leader of the IRA. It might be difficult to think of an alternative, less-violent ending to the play. Unlike Costello in *The Big Fella* whose agony becomes visible only near the end of the play, Quinn appears as a well-rounded character who is described in depth from the very beginning. He is the man of the house, a husband, a father of seven children, an ex-IRA member, and also a man who is attracted to his sister-in-law, the wife of his brother who had been missing for years. Our attempt to understand Quinn and the violence he is capable of is a lens through which we attempt to understand the violent situation in Northern Ireland.

Virgil’s *Aeneid* is another important literary influence in the play, as its title indicates. Towards the end of the play, Uncle Pat, a devoted reader of Virgil, recites from Book VI of the *Aeneid*, in which Aeneas ventures to the Underworld. Aeneas learns that Charon the ferryman only carries the ones whose “bones are at rest in the earth” (114). The Virgilian image of the unburied haunting the shore for a thousand years immediately brings to mind Seamus, who had been left alone in a cold, bottomless bogland for years without a decent burial. The association is further underlined by the innocent question raised by 9 year-old Mercy, to which Uncle Pat has no answer: “Where has Seamus been all this time? Where has his soul been?” (113). Heartbreakingly, a child tries to make sense of her uncle’s ambiguous loss and asks the whereabouts of his soul. Uncle Pat mentions the quotation to Father Horrigan, the parish priest, who is trapped in the dynamics of his community and forced to serve the IRA, instead of serving God. He is helpless at the very moment when a human soul is in question and he cannot give the answer to Mercy. When Father Horrigan attempts to convince the Carneys to follow the IRA’s policy of silence about Seamus’s death, Pat reveals the priest’s true character, stating that “there’s only two types of souls forbidden passage to the beyond. The unburied. And liars. Those that lie to the innocent” (115). Here, Father Horrigan is a tangible example of the institutional insensitivity to and neglect of the family of the Disappeared.

It is important to note that *The Aeneid*, an epic poem about the foundation of Rome, was written after its long civil wars: “Virgil’s life coincided with the dissolution of the Roman Republic, the civil wars, and the restoration (for

so it was intended to appear) of the Republic by Augustus” (Ross 2007, 121). Commissioned by Augustus, the first emperor of Rome, the peaceful period, the *Pax Romana*, should be praised and glorified. “It is the destiny for newly founded Rome to remember the memories of the civil wars, during which many prominent young warriors, both friends and foes, were killed and to accept at the same time the frenzy and curse of Dido” (Itsumi 2001, 156). Now two millennia later, much of its troubled memories have been precipitated to the bottom of the reservoir: they are crystallised in the poetry of *The Aeneid*.

In the play, half-senile Aunt Maggie tells of an old dream of a new quiet life in the US, “drinking bourbon and branch water, reading Whitman, Thoreau, Emily Dickinson” (57). All these three writers lived through the American Civil War and wrote lasting works of literature: Whitman (1819–1892) wrote *Leaves of Grass*, a collection of poems that celebrates nature, democracy and individualism; Thoreau (1817–1862) wrote *Walden*, from which Uncle Pat recites at the harvest dinner table: “The true Harvest of my Life is intangible. A little stardust caught. A portion of the rainbow I have clutched” (67); and Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) wrote many evocative poems. As with *The Aeneid*, the memories of the Civil War have been precipitated and crystallised in a quiet sense of peace; in this can be the healing power of art works.

*The Big Fella* and *The Ferryman* were also written after a long civil war in Northern Ireland at the time when people began seeking to understand terrorism and the nature of violence. Written outside of Northern Ireland, they transcend regional boundaries and have become a part of the literary discourse about the Troubles in our contemporary world.

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### Notes

1. It does not necessarily mean, of course, that those plays had been confined to the communities there. Many successful plays had been transferred to the stages of the Republic or of Britain or of the other side of the Atlantic. Sometimes, there were cases in which world premieres were somewhere outside of Northern Ireland, for example, Dublin’s Abbey Theatre or London’s Royal Court Theatre. But we can still say that almost all the Troubles plays had been “monopolised” by (Northern) Irish playwrights for a long time since the outbreak of conflict in 1969.
2. Ophelia Byrne, *State of Play: The Theatre and Cultural Identity in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Ulster* (2001); Tom Maguire, *Making Theatre in Northern Ireland* (2006); Bill McDonnell, *Theatres of the Troubles* (2008); Eva Urban, *Community Politics and the Peace Process in Contemporary Northern Irish Drama* (2011); Mark Phelan, “From Troubles to Post-Conflict Theatre in Northern Ireland” (2016); Lisa Fitzpatrick, “The Politics of Performance: Theatre in and about Northern Ireland” (2018).
3. Patrick Lonergan, in his commentary on *The Ferryman*, writes that “what Butterworth might have been demonstrating is how the Irish play has become a

kind of genre internationally, a form of drama that anyone can write in” (Lonergan 203). I take *The Ferryman*, as “a play about the Troubles” written by an English man.

4. This change was observed among film industry first: in 2002 at the time when the Saville Tribunal was still in progress, London’s two TV stations, Channel Four (*Sunday*) and ITV (*Bloody Sunday*), made and broadcast two docu-dramas, commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Derry; in 2008, Steve McQueen’s *Hunger*, his debut feature film about the Hunger Strike in 1981, was released and received great critical acclaim; Ken Loach, who had made *Hidden Agenda*, a film about Northern Troubles as early as in 1990, also directed *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* in 2006, a film about the Troubles at the time of the War of Independence and the Civil War in 1920s.
5. By 2011 Stafford-Clark had directed 21 productions for Out of Joint, seven of which have been premieres from Irish writers (O’Connell).
6. Barry had written plays such as *Boss Grady’s Boys* (1988), *Prayers of Sherkin* (1990) and *White Woman Street* (1992) for the Abbey Theatre Dublin when *The Steward of Christendom* was commissioned by Stafford-Clark in 1995. Still, nobody would deny that it was *The Steward of Christendom* that made him a world-class playwright.
7. Frank McGuinness’s *Speaking Like Magpies* (2005) is another interesting example of English history “examined from without” by an Irish playwright. It was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot that happened in 1605 in which some Catholics tried to blow up the king and the Parliament and can be put in a context of the Irish situation, beyond that of English history, and also in a wider context of the contemporary post 9/11 world. See Mikami, “Frank McGuinness’s Dark Masque: *Speaking Like Magpies* (2005).”
8. The running time is based on the Japanese production at Setagaya Public Theatre, Tokyo in 2014 (20 May-8 June).
9. Johnny McQueen in *Odd Man Out* (1947), Fergus in *The Crying Game* (1992) and Frankie McGuire (Rory Devaney) in *The Devil’s Own* (1997) are examples of such representations.
10. The 26-year-old Simons went missing from his home near Castlewellan, County Down, on 1 January 1981. His body was discovered by chance in May 1984 in a bog near Dundalk, County Louth (BBC, News, Northern-Ireland).

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