

Irish Horror: Neil Jordan and the Anglo-Irish Gothic

By Brian McIlroy

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“*Darby O’Gill and the Little People*, one of the first films Sean Connery was in. It’s Disney, a piece of Irish kitsch, part of that vogue for Celtic, misty kind of things, . . .Sean Connery played a young man who transgressed some rule or other, and this leprechaun (Jimmy O’Dea) appeared to him. And there was a banshee, a ghost that announces the death of somebody in a community—this magnificent green creature who would appear in the Irish landscape at night and howl. That is my first memory of a truly horrific, frightening experience in the cinema.” (Neil Jordan) ⁱ

“I thought of Bram Stoker, whose derelict house I used to pass on my way to school, at the Crescent, in Marino. But perhaps the most austere, the most complete ghost behind this script was that of a contemporary of Stoker’s, Oscar Wilde. A film which becomes in the end a necrophiliac romance, in which a living couple fall madly and blissfully in love with a couple who have been dead for centuries can only aspire to his sublime sense of fantasy and cynicism.” (Neil Jordan on the sources of his script for the film *High Spirits*) ⁱⁱ

“The classic Irish Gothic novel . . . is characterized by a combination of narrative complexity, emotional hysteria and the incursion of supernatural systems on a hopelessly flawed and corrupt ‘real’ world. In the gothic vision, any hope of social change in the present is belied by the persistence of the sins of the past. The message is that we are all victims of history, only most have not recognized it yet.” (Gerry Smyth) ⁱⁱⁱ

Apocalyptic visions, madness, extreme obsessions, psychosis, and the metaphorical (and sometimes real) disinterring of the dead are inextricably linked to Irish literature and culture as well as to Irish history. The burden of the past in Ireland haunts still—from the disagreements over how many died in the famine in the 1840s and whether or not the local and national authorities could have saved hundreds of thousands of poor starving people, to the heart-wrenching and painful efforts of families to find and unearth the remains of their loved ones, who were murdered, dumped, and buried

unceremoniously during the conflict in Northern Ireland in the last 35 years. Other recessive traumas are too easy to mention—the many battles between the British Crown and the Irish nationalist and republican forces over 800 years of colonial experience, added to vicious and chronic local sectarianism, have kept the profession of Irish historians alive and well.

It is no surprise then that Irish artists would seek ways to address these events, even if what they finally produce might appear lame and inadequate to the demanding historian. The tendency among Irish filmmakers has been to adopt a “kitchen-sink” realist style to approach these issues, leaving the imaginative field fairly open to Ireland’s most known cineaste. Why has this been the tendency? It’s as if Irish people, mostly represented visually as working-class are always looking back in anger (a la John Osborne and other Northern English books, films and plays of the 1950s and early 1960s). This aesthetic also extends to Scottish Cinema, except for the recent and remarkable film *Orphans* (Peter Mullan, 1999) influenced by magic realism.^{iv} Generally, Celtic narrative cinema (Ireland, Scotland, Wales) has not taken up a new aesthetic to accompany new content, nor been particularly interested in the horror genre. Indeed, the small corpus of Irish-related horror/thrillers would include Hilton Edwards’s *Return to Glennascaul* (1951) and Robin Hardy’s *The Fantasist* (1986), both of which are minor works. And yet, many writers, filmmakers and critics are fixated on a dichotomy between the English Imperial apparently “rational” order and the Irish “Celtic, misty kind of things” Neil Jordan mentions above. And here, to understand the latter—for we have only to conjure up Cromwell and the Roundheads

to understand the former—we must have some understanding of the nuances of Ireland’s political history.

Political and Literary History

One of the truisms of English imperial power--and one that is often misunderstood--is that it successfully ruled and colonized Ireland just as much by manufacturing consent and negotiation as by the threat of force and Protestant settlement. It was this fact that drove Irish nationalists and republicans in the late 19th century and early 20th century to look for a Gaelic Revival to differentiate the Irish from the English and to force the “West Brits” (Irish people steeped and comfortable in British culture—represented, for example, by Gabriel Conroy in James Joyce’s short story, “The Dead.”) to make a stark choice.

Part of this political programme purposely put a lot of value on the Irish peasant experience and folklore, for it was these people who had suffered the most during the famine and British rule generally. In the imaginings of W.B. Yeats and Patrick Pearse, Celtic mythology became a source of strength, mystery, a counterbalance to the conservative Roman Catholic Church, and this pagan power suggested a necessary founding myth of the putative Irish nation. In this context, the recourse to the supernatural, including leprechauns, faeries, banshees, faith healing, somnambulism, and plain old miracles is more readily appreciated. The ignorant Irish peasant lout of

English caricature is reframed as an idiot savant with a magical channel to a natural and supernatural reservoir of knowledge and spirituality.

But this is only one camera position from which to “treat” Ireland, and through which Robert Stevenson’s *Darby O’Gill and the Little People* (1959), for example, is informed. Neil Jordan refers more favorably towards the influences of Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde, which present a camera position from a minority urban sensibility forced to consider a majority rural perspective. We are now in the world of the much written about Anglo-Irish Gothic, a mode summarized succinctly in terms of the novel by Gerry Smyth above. The Irish gothic is inextricably tied to the Anglo-Irish settler culture and the colonial experience generally. In this paradigm, with theoretical help from Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha, it’s assumed the Protestant populace’s awareness of its insecurity produces a monstrous tension that reveals itself in supernatural and highly emotional writing. Indeed, Alison Milbank argues that Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) was perceived by his peers as an attempted “mediating between Catholic and Protestant conceptions of Christianity.”^v Though others simply argue that the vampire in his castle stands in for the rapacious British and Protestant colonizer and settler emanating out from Dublin Castle and other de facto garrisons with the express purpose of feasting on the native Irish. Seamus Deane—perhaps too cleverly—sees a direct (yet perversely inverted) link between Stoker’s 1890s *Dracula* who travels by sea in a coffin during the day and the so-called “coffin-ships” which poor Irish famine emigrants had to endure to reach North America.^{vi} Both were living dead, and both would come back to haunt.

What Milbank and other writers on the Gothic, such as W.J. McCormack, have ventured is that the Act of Union in 1801 that dissolved the Dublin Parliament left the Irish Protestant elite directionless.^{vii} Specifically, it created a duality—apparent supporters of the colonial system but also victims of it, since the center of local power had shifted from Dublin to London. Julian Moynahan also points out that Charles Maturin and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, two of the great Irish Gothic writers, emerged from Dublin-based Huguenot heritage, not the landed gentry of the (Protestant and Anglican) Big House.^{viii} They had, in other words, in their family history faint echoes of Catholic persecution in France. This history goes some way to explain why many of their novels take place in medieval, Mediterranean Catholic Europe, a place where barbarians and monsters thrive! So, one can see the Irish Gothic as Protestant unease within Ireland, penned by almost reluctant and guilty intellectuals speaking for and about a native Irish who were still struggling in the 1800s to articulate a sense of self-worth in political terms. One can also see the various mechanisms of literary gothic as an acceptance of the irrational not just in religious terms but also in the areas of personal activity and feeling. Vampirism, for example, attracts and repels in equal measure, whether it be read or viewed in Stoker's *Dracula*, Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), or Jordan's *Interview With the Vampire* (1993).

Jordan and the Gothic

Yet, the interesting question here is why should Neil Jordan, an Irish Catholic-educated writer find the so-called Protestant Gothic of particular force? Arguably, the Dublin-centered Jordan shares with the urbane sophisticates of Maturin and Le Fanu, an equal sense of fear and wonder about the wild Irish countryside and its inhabitants. More directly, he prefers the exploration and release of the supernatural because it allows ready discussion of race, gender and nationality issues. Of course, it further allows the sensational treatment and examination of sexuality, matters most difficult to address in a culture that has often tried to deny the reality of such desires. This restrictive atmosphere is best revealed by the continual (though mostly narrow) debates over abortion, effectively still illegal in Ireland. In March 2002, a referendum was held in The Republic of Ireland to decide whether a 1992 Supreme Court ruling that a woman could have an abortion if she were deemed suicidal, should be struck down. The vote was 51% to 49% in favor of the Supreme Court Ruling. The urban vote was largely liberal; the rural vote was largely conservative. Every year, it is estimated that 7,000 young women travel from Ireland to England for abortion services. In Northern Ireland, abortions can occur for “medical reasons,” but by refusing to transfer the 1967 “liberalization Act” of England and Wales to Northern Ireland (which effectively decriminalized homosexuality and abortion) the current Northern Ireland Assembly aligns itself with the policy of the Republic of Ireland.

Beyond the political and social climate, Jordan is clearly influenced by many artistic strains—the linking of violence and Catholicism in Martin Scorsese’s gangster films, such as his *Mean Streets* (1973), or the whimsical nature of many European art films

of the 1960s, such as Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966)—but mostly he seems comfortable within Hollywood's general melodramatic tendencies, where sentiment and emotion are encouraged to live. Witness the passions in *The End of the Affair* (1998), which depends on the supernatural—a religious miracle—to play a major part in how the main characters experience the meaning of their existences. Look at the exotic titles of Jordan's fictional works—*Night in Tunisia* (1979), *The Dream of the Beast* (1983), *Sunrise with Sea Monster* (1994).^{ix} He uses the term “Miracle” for his 1991 film to describe a boy discovering his long lost mother for the first time, not to mention the ambiguous term “Angel,” the title of his first feature film (aka *Danny Boy* 1982). His work with Angela Carter on *The Company of Wolves* (1984) and with Ann Rice on *Interview with the Vampire* opens his Gothicism out in plain view.

Even when Jordan turns to a rather unsuccessful attempt at Hollywood comedy in *High Spirits* (1988), we see his recycling of all these themes that I have been discussing: the monstrous, incestuous familial bonds, the presence of the past as a determining power, and the outbreak of general madness and mayhem. In Jordan's film, Castle Plunkett is in dire straights and Peter Plunkett (Peter O'Toole) chances upon the idea of marketing his Irish castle as one full of ghosts and ghouls. While his American tourists are unimpressed with the staff's best ghostly efforts to scare them, the guests do suffer and enjoy the awakening of the dead Plunketts. Much of the humor rests on the conceit of living people loving most of all those people who are dead.

This raising of the dead forces a reevaluation of contemporary relationships and sexuality. Sharon (Beverly D'Angelo) has been sent over by her father Jem Brogan, the Irish-American who will retain the rights to the Castle if the Plunketts cannot make their loan payments. He wishes to transfer the Castle to California, brick by brick, to create a kind of theme park. Peter Plunkett delivers a vicious assault on Jem Brogan's family by suggesting that one of his ancestors hoarded food during the famine. Ironically, Peter Plunkett's decision to market Irish heritage (a haunted castle) as a tourist destination is not qualitatively different from Jem Brogan's intentions. One of the niceties of Jordan's script is that Sharon Brogan ultimately falls in love with a male ancestor Martin Brogan (Liam Neeson), thereby suggesting not just a necrophiliac romance but also an incestuous one. With Jack's (Steve Guttenberg) marriage to the once dead Mary Plunkett (Daryl Hannah), who magically lives as Sharon dies, the productive link between Ireland and America is solidly made. Of course, this strategic move in the scripting taps into the fantasy of many Irish-Americans fascinated with their heritage, and the romantic notion of returning to claim a special touchstone to the past. Additionally, Jordan's interest in making this into a sex comedy reveals itself in his fervent satire of the Catholic priesthood and its strictures against fornication and sexual thoughts in general. The American Brother Tony (Peter Gallagher) sees this trip as a retreat to finally decide his path within the Church. He is fully tempted by Miranda (Jennifer Tilly), and he succumbs to his general happiness. A most compelling image is this white-collared novice surrounded by ghostly nun habits while steam rises from his groin, almost as punishment for desiring Miranda. Along with jokes about Martin Brogan's body odor

and natural functions, Irish hang-ups about sex and the body could hardly be made more obvious and critiqued more clearly.

Despite the general attempt at humor—and this film did not succeed well critically or commercially—there is a difficulty with the reliance upon the past as a form of modernization for the castle. At one level, the real family ghosts appear, in what is probably the best scene in the film, appalled at the failure of the Plunketts and the staff to create believable ghosts and save the castle; at another level, Jordan seems to be suggesting, much in keeping with notions of the Gothic, that harmony is restored when past and present are reunited. This explains the rather touching scene between father (Ray McAnally) and son, a conversation about feelings that probably only could occur because one of the participants is dead. So, in this film, the strange happenings in the middle of the night, so common to gothic and melodramatic works, turns out to be restorative and life affirming. The gothic horror frees his characters to be themselves.

Ten years later, Jordan would take on a more troubling Gothic-influenced investigation of small-town Ireland in the early 1960s. While *High Spirits* attempts to begin a dialogue about American perceptions about Ireland (and Irish perceptions about American perceptions about Ireland), Jordan's *The Butcher Boy* (1997) is a much more sophisticated, self-assured and edgy piece of work. Based on the Pat McCabe novel, Jordan's co-scripted work with the novelist delves much deeper within the Irish neurosis, the recent past of 1962 Ireland, a time similar to his own upbringing, as the filmmaker reveals: “[I]t gave me an opportunity to reinvent that

extraordinary mixture of paranoia and paralysis, madness and mysticism that was the Ireland I grew up in, in the 'fifties.'^x As a youth, Jordan was fed a staple of religious films, and one can certainly argue that *The Butcher Boy* is a keenly religious but anti-Catholic film.^{xi}

The fragmented town life of Francie Brady (Eamonn Owens) is beset with internal and external pressures. We are not so much watching an extended metaphor of Francie as an abused child of Irish history, as one critic has suggested,^{xii} but rather an exploration of the inadequacy of traditional Ireland and its institutions, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, and its failure to nurture its young, to confess to its own sickness, to acknowledge that its various forms of denial have created and perpetuated mental illness. It is now commonplace to observe that from the late 1950s onwards, Ireland began a slow and painful process of internationalization, of opening out to the world, inviting foreign investment and industries. Initially, however, this modernization was tied to the urban centers, particularly Dublin. It's no accident that Francie's trip to Dublin from his Monaghan town sees him attend the illicit—a science-fiction horror movie about alien invasion (a typical American displaced manifestation about the fear of Russian invasion during the Cold War). Also, he purchases here a model of an Irish country family, depicting a happy colleen sewing outside her cottage; it's ironic that he must travel to modern Dublin to find a distillation of an idealized rural Ireland. He buys this gift for his mother Annie (Aisling O'Sullivan), unaware that she has killed herself, possibly pushed over the edge by the fact that Francie had temporarily run away from home. To arrive at his

mother's funeral cortege with this imaginary happy family tucked under his arm reveals the lie of De Valera's desire for an Ireland of "comely maidens,"^{xiii} whereas the reality of many is mental illness, domestic violence, depression and suicide. Jordan complicates this apparent urban/rural division by analyzing the small town, a place neither completely rural nor completely urban; it is always a place of becoming, beckoning sometimes to the urbane future, and sometimes to the unsophisticated natural past. It is also a border county, close to that other "British" Ireland of Northern Ireland.

The urbane future is full of shocks and horrors of a different kind than the rural stagnant past. At first, it seems to be liberating. The arrival of television, on which Francie and Joe (Alan Boyle) can sneak peeks of their favourite *Lone Ranger* series as well as the series entitled *The Fugitive* (actually broadcast 1963-1967), ushers in a fantasy world as much as the comic-books they steal from Phillip Nugent (Andrew Fullerton). One of the facts of early 1960s comic books in Ireland and the UK is that the Americans produced many of them in color, whereas the homegrown product was invariably in black-and-white. No doubt this helps to explain why Jordan accompanies the film's opening credits with drawings of these attractive American comic book heroes. The myth of the American West as frontier is not so far removed from the small town in rural Ireland, though it is interesting that the boys can identify with Sitting Bull and Geronimo as much as with the Lone Ranger. Are they noble savages or delusional Robin Hood figures? But this American influence intrudes in a very real way via radio reports of the Cuban Missile crisis and the possibility of nuclear

annihilation. This news feeds into Francie's imaginings, and his depressing reality. He moves into the world of "what if?," projecting a nuclear strike in his home town which would create devastation and the emergence of mutants, with pig and bug heads; in some respects, to Francie, this would explain perfectly the reality of his current existence, his family laid waste by the metaphorical bomb of small town and Church expectations. Doctors and priests logically, therefore, take on alien heads, and he senses he is living in a world of grotesquery, assisted by the fact that he acquires a job in a slaughterhouse. It's as if he is one of the few survivors in the world of that other classic fifties movie, Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956).

If America connotes agency, freedom, and risk, Ireland is replete with feelings of repression, failure, limitation, and dullness. Its horrors are too visceral. Francie must seek the miraculous for his active mind to survive, and he achieves this by having visions of the Virgin Mary, played in a coy manner by singer Sinead O'Connor (a controversial casting decision in itself, given her famous ripping up of the Pope's picture on television, and her allegations of child abuse when she was a young girl, the authenticity of which has been challenged by her own family). The cycle of illness—Francie's father also seems to have been through a reform school run by a Catholic order—appears to be tied to Francie's self-loathing and desire to see himself above what he calls the "Bogmen" with their "bony arses" with whom he has to consort. These people are the peasants synonymous with the rural Ireland that De Valera embraced, and which Francie (and Neil Jordan) seem to think of as an unimaginative and limited form of Irish identity.

Strangely, though, while we understand he sees rural Ireland as a nightmare experience, which is why he sees perhaps the Virgin Mary in the middle of a peat bog, a substance fully representative of Ireland's traditional economy, it is odd on the surface that all his hatred should focus on the Nugents, who have returned from England with "airs." This jealousy revolves around wealth—Phillip Nugent can afford American comic books and has a television at home, good clothes, and so on. This wealth and middle class aspiration steals away his friend Joe, despite their blood brother partnership. England also figures largely in the failure of his musician father (Stephen Rea), for Francie's Uncle Alo (Ian Hart), like many Irish, traveled, worked, and eventually settled in London to make their way in the world. To go to England for work was not exactly an Irish dream, but a practical necessity, often undermining the self-esteem of those who stayed behind (and, it should be said, the emigrants themselves often received a frosty reception in England). In this way, Francie's father sees himself as a failure, a feeling picked up by his son all too clearly. The latter's gross murder of Mrs. Nugent (Fiona Shaw), his daubing of the walls in her blood, his attempt at a fiery suicide are his response to an Irish society that is sick beyond redemption, and which has made him sick. In an odd and disturbing way, a boy influenced by American action-heroes murders a woman influenced by British culture, who is effectively a "West Brit." The triple colonization of Britain, America, and De Valera's rural and small town imaginary—a nation of small shop-keepers, as some commentators opined--literally explodes the Irish family depicted.

Jordan and Ireland

What is it then that would make Jordan so uncomfortable in Ireland that he would turn to the Gothic? Certainly, his unease with the Roman Catholic Church must take pride of place—in his first film *Angel*, he seems to idolize the freelancing faith healer who works out of a tacky caravan compared to conventional Catholic institutions; also, in this film, his fear of the provincial and its attendant isolation, sometimes determined by a powerful Catholic Church, is reflected by a minor character's decision to kill herself. In *The Butcher Boy*, Francie is molested by a deranged priest (Milo O'Shea), and this would be blackly comic if not for the current joint Irish Government and Roman Catholic Church payout of over 800 million Euro to settle the claims of 3,500 Irish adults who were abused as children in Catholic state supported schools.^{xiv}

Jordan seems to work his way through in *Michael Collins* to a hybrid Irish nationalism that accepts the existence of fiery emotions—murder and mayhem-- but also the necessity to keep them in check. The Gothic license, as defined by transgression of norms, is expressed further with the addressing of lesbianism in *Mona Lisa*, homosexuality and bisexuality in *The Crying Game*, and the feminized male in many of his works, although some observers may regard this interest as an unfortunate form of erotic and sexual tourism. As Jordan himself admitted in updating the story "Guests of the Nation" by Frank O'Connor to the script of *The Crying Game*, he felt what was missing was the erotic thread, one sure to be controversial and destabilizing.

The horror genre film proper is another more accepted way to explore these boundaries, and it has often allowed deep anxieties and fears to be articulated—fear of technology runs riot in James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1931) and Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1926) and fear of the female body runs throughout Brian De Palma’s *Carrie* (1976), normally considered a displaced discourse on the taboo of menstruation. To steal a title from Barry Grant’s book, it is the “Dread of Difference” that drives the narrative and compels us to watch.^{xv} But Jordan’s films are not horrific in the cheap, sensational way that many horror movies work—his characters are too well formed to allow the plot to rattle along at a tremendous unthinking speed. If there is a problem with a film like *In Dreams* (1999), it is because Jordan takes all the necessary plot points of a horror/thriller, and then refuses to up the tempo, attracting the criticism that his timing and talent do not fit the conventional melodramatic horror or thriller film. The film did poorly at the box-office—on a \$30 million budget, it recouped only \$11.3 million in North America, in contrast to the \$50 million budget for *Interview with the Vampire* which recouped in the USA alone over \$100 million and \$221 million worldwide.^{xvi} Typical popular review responses are that of Peter Rainer for *New York* magazine: “a dollop of supernatural claptrap” and “the wrong director for a supernatural horror thriller.” Rainer does make the good point that Jordan’s “genius is for conveying the visionary in the everyday.”^{xvii} Jordan argued that he was attempting to make a serious horror movie with a psychological exploration, rooted in childhood fairy tales—in this case *Snow White*. Earlier *The*

Company of Wolves had explored werewolves and a variation of *Little Red Riding Hood*.

One might say that his success with *The Crying Game* was fortuitous, coming at a point in North American cultural discourse that was debating these very issues of gender identity. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* was published two years before the film appeared, for example.^{xviii} His success with *Interview With the Vampire* relied to a great extent on the star billing of Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, and the pre-sold property of Ann Rice, but it allowed him to delve into *The Company of Wolves* territory that he shared with the writer Angela Carter in the mid 1980s. The point about both these films, somewhat similar to *High Spirits*, is their confidence in alternative realities, and yet equally, the confidence that these realities are neither utopias nor fully dystopias. The vampires of *Interview with the Vampire* live forever, liminal characters that haunt our imaginations. They are appealing hybrids.

Despite the personal, commercial and cultural imperatives to seek out the Gothic, Jordan's work is a kind of Wildean sublime, an exalted state that induces awe and terror, a negative pleasure.^{xix} It attracts Jordan's interest for it is a literary (and filmic) form that appeals to the visual, to excess, to fragmentation, to the refusal to serve a particular ideology. It is an artist's weapon against conformity. In the surplus value that Gothic seems to provoke, one can see the impossibility of certitude for a bourgeois subject and an aspiring bourgeois society. The horror that Jordan's Gothic brings to Irish society is one predicated upon an inner knowledge that the healthy

imagination cannot express itself in a suffocating institutionalized culture. Or, more bluntly, in the controversial words of David Trimble, Northern Ireland's First Minister, in talking about the Republic of Ireland, in a "pathetic, sectarian, mono-ethnic, mono-cultural state." ^{xx}

Notes

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- ⁱ Neil Jordan, "Neil Jordan's Guilty Pleasures" *Film Comment* 28: 6 (November-December 1992): 36.
- ⁱⁱ Neil Jordan. *High Spirits*. London: Faber and Faber, 1989: x.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Gerry Smyth. *The Novel and the Nation*. London: Pluto Press, 1997: 52.
- ^{iv} See Duncan Petrie, "Devolving British Cinema: The New Scottish Cinema and the European Art Cinema" *Cineaste* 26: 4 (2001): 55-57.
- ^v Alison Milbank in *Bram Stoker: History, Psychoanalysis and the Gothic*, eds. William Hughes and Andrew Smith. New York: St Martin's Press, 1998: 12.
- ^{vi} See Stephen de Vere's report of one such "coffin-ship" journey in Noel Kissane, *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History*. Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1995: 162-163. See also Seamus Deane's take on the import of *Dracula* in his *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997: 89-94.
- ^{vii} See W.J. McCormack, *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu and Bowen*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.
- ^{viii} See Julian Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish: The literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995: 109-135.
- ^{ix} Lori Rogers provides an excellent reading of *The Dream of the Beast*. See her "In Dreams Uncover'd' Neil Jordan, *The Dream of the Beast*, and the Body-Secret." *Critique* 39: 1 (Fall 1997): 48-54.
- ^x Neil Jordan, "Production Notes" www.butcherboy.warnerbros.com page 3.
- ^{xi} In the article "Guilty Pleasures" cited above, Neil Jordan mentions the forced feeding of religious films such as Henry Koster's *The Robe* (1953) and Henry King's *The Song of Bernadette* (1943).
- ^{xii} See Martin McLoone, *Irish Film The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema*. London: BFI, 2000: 213-223.
- ^{xiii} Eamon De Valera is very much the father figure of the Irish Republic, having been involved in the Easter Rising of 1916, surviving to be the dominant political figure in the Irish Republic from the 1930s to the late 1950s. He ended his career as President of Ireland from 1959-1973. See Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* London: Penguin Books, 1988: 485.
- ^{xiv} The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland has agreed only to pay 25% of this figure, so that the Irish Taxpayers, including the victims, are effectively paying to settle their own abuse claims. See Shawn Pogatchnik, "Irish taxpayers to bear brunt of abuse claims" *National Post* (Canada) February 1, 2002: A14.
- ^{xv} Barry Keith Grant, ed. *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1996.
- ^{xvi} Figures drawn from the International Movie Database—www.imdb.com.
- ^{xvii} Peter Rainer, quoted from his review found at www.nymag.com/critics/view.asp?id=20.
- ^{xviii} Judith P. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

^{xix} On the Gothic sublime, see Vijay Mishra, *The Gothic Sublime*. New York: SUNY Press, 1994. Mishra sees the Gothic sublime as perfectly in keeping with post-modernism and post-structuralism.

^{xx} David Trimble, Keynote address to the Ulster Unionist Party Annual Conference, Belfast, March 9, 2002.

Neil Jordan. *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice and Anglo-Irish Colonial Order*. Jan 1999. 15. Margot Gayle Backus. Margot Gayle Backus, *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice and Anglo-Irish Colonial Order* (Duke University Press, 1999), p. 15. *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blear Witch*. Paul Welles. In relation to Foster's argument and the question of Irish Gothic memory, see Luke Gibbons, ' "Some Hysterical Hatred", History, Hysteria and the Literary Revival', *Irish University Review* vol. 27, no. 1 (1997), pp. 7-23. *Pleasure and Interpretation: Film Adaptations of Angela Carter's Fiction*. Jan 1996.

Neil Jordan was born in County Sligo, Ireland and educated at University College, Dublin where he studied Irish History and English and founded the Irish Writers' Co-operative. He published a volume of short stories, *Night in Tunisia*, that won the Guardian Fiction Prize in 1976, and has since published three novels: *The Past* (1979), *The Dream of a Beast* (1983) and *Sunrise with Sea Monster* (1994). As in many of his subsequent films, he addresses history and politics, through images of horror, the gothic, the supernatural and the macabre. Neil Patrick Jordan (born 25 February 1950) is an Irish film director, screenwriter, novelist and short-story writer. His first book, *Night in Tunisia*, won a Somerset Maugham Award and the Guardian Fiction Prize in 1979. He won an Academy Award (Best Original Screenplay) for *The Crying Game* (1992). He has also won three Irish Film and Television Awards, as well as the Silver Bear for Best Director at the Berlin International Film Festival for *The Butcher Boy* (1997). Ireland-born writer-director Neil Jordan became famous in 1992 with the release of his Oscar-nominated noir romance *The Crying Game*, but cult-cinema fans had already known him for a decade, thanks in large part to his creepy fairy tale *The Company Of Wolves*, a 1984 horror film that took an adult take on the Little Red Riding Hood story. Originally an author, with three novels and a short-story collection to his credit, Jordan began his movie career by writing and directing *Danny Boy* (a.k.a. *Angel*) in 1982. I like fairy tales, tales of shock and horror, forbidden delights. And in heist movies, you've got an impossible task. The great strength of Irish culture is in kind of anarchic acts of the imagination, anarchic storytelling. If Neil Jordan didn't exist, you'd be hard-pressed to invent him. There's simply no precedent on these shores for a gifted young novelist turning to film, then carving out a decades-long career at home and in Hollywood, all the while keeping his creative integrity defiantly intact. Back in the '70s, the notion that someone from Ireland could pull off that sort of trick would have seemed an absurdity. See our online exhibition of a sample of Neil Jordan's substantial document collections held by the IFI Irish Film Archive. Neil Jordan will be interviewed by his friend and collaborator Pat McCabe in our FREE Afternoon Talk on Saturday, May 25th at 14.10.