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**Waiting for the Truth:  
A Re-examination of Four Representations of Bloody Sunday  
After the Saville Inquiry**

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**Report**

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## **Abstract**

### **Waiting for the Truth: A Re-examination of Four Representations of Bloody Sunday After the Saville Inquiry**

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On January 30, 1972, in Derry, Northern Ireland, British soldiers opened fire on Irish citizens participating in a peaceful civil rights march, killing thirteen men and injuring as many others. This event, called “Bloody Sunday,” was the subject of two formal inquiries by the British government, one conducted by Lord Widgery in 1972 that exonerated the British soldiers and one led by Lord Saville, which published its findings in June 2010 and found the British troops to be at fault. Before the second investigation gave its report, a number of dramatic productions had contradicted the official British version of events and presented the Irish point of view. Two films and two plays in particular—the drama *The Freedom of the City* (1973), the filmed docudramas *Bloody Sunday* and *Sunday* (both 2002), and the documentary theater production *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* (2005)—were aimed at audiences that did not recognize the injustices that took place in Derry. All four dramatic presentations in some way

replicate the words and actions of one or more significant individuals involved in the march or in the investigation that followed it. This report examines the possibilities and limitations of the three different genres the authors used to present the truth about the atrocity that the British government refused to acknowledge for thirty-eight years. It also reassesses the success and value of each production in the light of the Saville Inquiry findings.

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On January 30, 1972, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) organized a peaceful march through Derry, Northern Ireland, to protest internment, a policy instituted by the British government in August of the previous year. It allowed police to imprison without trial anyone suspected of paramilitary activity or allegiance to a paramilitary group. Although marches were banned at the time, officials in Northern Ireland permitted this one to take place but made provisions for the British Army to reinforce the local police should the protest turn violent. That Sunday the security forces blocked part of the route the protesters had planned to take so that they could not reach their intended destination, the Guildhall in the city center. Angry about the presence of the soldiers, several individuals began to throw stones at the army barricades that had been set up to monitor the march. These so-called “hooligans” became intermingled with the peaceful marchers. Some members of the First Battalion Parachute Regiment (Paras) ignored their orders and followed the hooligans into the Bogside, a Catholic stronghold. There the Paras killed thirteen men and injured as many others. A fourteenth victim died months later from his wounds. Some of the dead were shot from behind as they tried to run or crawl to safety, and seven were teenagers. Prime Minister Edward Heath immediately launched an investigation into what became known as “Bloody Sunday.” With Lord Widgery as the sole judge, the Tribunal took less than twelve weeks to publish its findings, which exonerated the British soldiers.

This atrocity and its aftermath have inspired a multitude of literary and artistic works as well as two formal inquiries commissioned by the British government. They marked a major escalation in “the Troubles,” the internecine struggle in Northern Ireland

between the Protestant majority and the Catholic minority that lasted for thirty years. Bloody Sunday had three direct effects. First, it extinguished any hope of cooperation between the Catholic community and the British Army. Initially, many Catholics had welcomed the peacekeeping force because it provided them protection against the oppressive measures of the Protestant government (Ó Dochartaigh 134-5), but problems with the troops had gradually developed. While some British military officials had maintained “the central goal of avoiding escalation and confrontation through negotiation and compromise,” the events of January 30 cemented the open hostility and antagonism that the Catholics had come to feel toward the British soldiers (Ó Dochartaigh 287-8). Second, eight weeks after Bloody Sunday the British government imposed a policy of Direct Rule, transferring governing power to Westminster and abolishing the Parliament of Northern Ireland, which had operated since 1921 (McCann, *Bloody Sunday* 6). Finally and perhaps most significantly, the massacre was so horrifying that it radicalized people who had not previously been invested in the armed struggle. Many believed that Northern Ireland had been plunged into “a state of war” and that nonviolent protests were useless (Hegarty, “Government” 1167). As a result, 1972 became by far the most violent and deadly year of the Troubles, with over 450 people killed after Bloody Sunday (Sutton).

Lord Widgery’s report made the situation even more volatile. His conclusions, based on 94 interviews with citizens, journalists, medical and forensic experts, and soldiers, found that most of the British soldiers had acted with restraint and that they had probably used their weapons in response to hostile gunfire. While admitting that the



shots by some soldiers “bordered on the reckless,” Widgery laid the blame primarily on the NICRA, whose leaders had organized a march “in which a clash between demonstrators and the security forces was almost inevitable” (“Summary” 1 and 8). The judge also refused to acknowledge the innocence of the victims, maintaining “a strong suspicion that some [of them] had been firing weapons or handling bombs in the course of the afternoon and that yet others had been closely supporting them” (“Summary” 10). These findings outraged the citizens of Derry, who knew that they were incorrect and unjust.

The conflict in Northern Ireland continued for some 26 years after Bloody Sunday and did not effectively end until April 10, 1998, with the signing of the so-called Good Friday Agreement. As an unofficial part of the peace negotiations, the House of Commons authorized a second inquiry into the tragic events, and Prime Minister Tony Blair selected Lord Saville to head it.<sup>1</sup> The investigation lasted twelve years and cost over £190 million. Its members heard oral testimony from over 900 witnesses including 505 civilians and read written statements from 2500 others. These staggering numbers stand in stark contrast to the limited number of people who spoke at the hearings conducted by Lord Widgery. The Report of the Saville panel was made public on June 15, 2010. It officially recognizes what the citizens of Derry have believed since the day of the shootings, that the attack by British paratroopers was unprovoked and that the Irish victims were innocent civilians. The Inquiry unequivocally blames those soldiers who

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<sup>1</sup> Although the investigation is officially called the “Bloody Sunday Inquiry,” it is usually referred to as the “Saville Inquiry” in the media.

experienced a “serious . . . loss of discipline” and fired without reason (Report 5.4). It exonerates both the NICRA and the victims, stating that none of the latter did anything to justify being shot (Report 4.33, 3.79).

Established just three years after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed in South Africa to expose human rights violations during apartheid, the Saville Inquiry had a similar function.<sup>2</sup> According to Graham D. White, both the TRC and the Bloody Sunday Inquiry represented an effort by a government and its citizens to confront a “traumatic past” of national importance (“Quite” 175), and Angela Hegarty notes that the two share a similar “subject matter”—the acknowledgment of violence and abuse carried out by state actors (“Government” 1172). The two forums also placed heavy emphasis on “witness testimony concerning memory of past events” and allowed people to speak publicly about their painful experiences, some for the first time (White, “Quite” 175). Both bodies discouraged the notion that their work was similar to a trial, which is by nature “adversarial” and ends with a decision “for” or “against” one of the parties, as Lord Saville pointed out in his opening statement as head of the Inquiry. While these similarities are indubitable, Patrick Hayes and Jim Campbell warn against drawing comparisons between the two entities given the different contexts of the British inquiry and the TRC. They note that the TRC granted amnesty to those who testified, while the British inquiry was not given the power to do so (153). Most importantly, the Saville Inquiry did not share the TRC’s official goals of reconciliation and the promotion

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<sup>2</sup> Although truth commissions have operated in many countries, the TRC in South Africa is often used as the model for dealing with the past in Ireland (See Hegarty, “Government” 1150 and Bell.).

of national unity (Promotion) although its findings may have facilitated healing.

Before the Saville Inquiry findings were published, a number of dramatic productions had contradicted the official British version of events and presented the Irish point of view. Carole-Anne Upton has identified several that “fulfill an important local function” within the Derry community and were largely written or produced by those with close ties to the city (184). They include *Just Another Sunday* (1999), *Scenes from an Inquiry* (2002), *The Long Auld Road* (2004), *Bloody Sunday: A Derry Diary* (2007) and *Heroes with their Hands in the Air* (2007). While these texts are significant, they were intended primarily for an Irish audience already familiar with the events. Four other works—*The Freedom of the City* (1973), *Bloody Sunday* (2002), *Sunday* (2002), and *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* (2005)—are worth closer examination because they were largely aimed at audiences who did not recognize the injustice. In particular, they targeted the British public, most of whom believed the Widgery Report to be accurate (Hegarty, “Government” 1167). Furthermore, all of them in some way replicate the words and actions of one or more significant individuals involved in the march or in the investigation that followed it. Their authors use these ties to real people and events to make their audiences aware of the truths that were not presented in the official record.

Convinced that the Widgery Report was biased and false, the writers of these four texts fictionalized some scenes and manipulated a few of the facts in order to expose the violence and injustice of Bloody Sunday to a worldwide audience. In 2005 Eamonn McCann, one of the organizers of the NICRA march and the author of numerous books

on Bloody Sunday, observed that “a majority of people in Derry aren’t waiting for Saville to tell them the truth, but to discover whether Saville will tell the truth to the world” (“Why?” 22). Long before it did so, these works depicted the protest as peaceful, the victims as unarmed and innocent, and the soldiers as responsible for the tragedy. The Saville Inquiry findings that were published in June 2010 largely confirm these accounts. Indeed, the Saville Report itself serves as a final “text” on Bloody Sunday, irreversibly revising the official history and working to separate fact from fiction.

Despite their shared focus, the authors of the four productions used different genres. *The Freedom of the City* is a drama; the films *Bloody Sunday* and *Sunday* are docudramas; and *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* is documentary or “verbatim” theatre. Working within the possibilities and limitations presented by his chosen mode, each author creates a text that serves a distinct and important cultural function: to explore the underlying causes of the conflict that sparked the confrontation between soldiers and civilians (*The Freedom of the City*), to reenact the events of Bloody Sunday from the Irish viewpoint (*Bloody Sunday*), to give some attention to the historical context and aftermath of the event (*Sunday*), and to rhetorically indict the British soldiers involved (*Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry*).

Most of the literary works on Bloody Sunday were written after the Good Friday agreement. However, within thirteen months of the violence, one fictional account questioned the actions of the British soldiers and the findings of the Widgery Tribunal. *The Freedom of the City* was written by noted Irish playwright Brian Friel, who had participated in the march on Bloody Sunday (Nightingale). Although the play is still

performed on occasion—notably, it was revived at the 1999 Friel Festival at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin—it remains largely ignored by critics, despite the fact that some believe it occupies an important place in Friel’s canon of work because of its unique form and “political relevance” (Burke 124; also Watt 39). It presents a thinly disguised version of the events on Bloody Sunday, focusing on a confrontation between British troops and Irish protesters involved in a civil rights march and depicting the subsequent inquiry that exonerates the soldiers who killed three of the participants. Even though it opened at the Abbey, the play was intended for a wider audience and was performed subsequently in both London and New York. It tells the story of the three victims. After the peaceful protest in which they are involved turns violent, Michael, Skinner, and Lily escape into the Guildhall in Derry, taking refuge in the Mayor’s Office. Meanwhile, a huge group of soldiers amasses outside in response to the “terrorists” who “have taken possession of the Guildhall” and “barricaded themselves in” (117). When the three emerge with their hands up, they are shot on the suspicion that they are armed, their bodies so riddled with bullets that they are difficult to identify.

Friel’s references to Bloody Sunday are both direct and indirect. His stage directions for the opening scene specify, “A *PRIEST enters right, crouching . . . and holding a white handkerchief above his head. He gets down on his knees beside MICHAEL, hastily blesses him and mumbles prayers into his ear*” (107). This tableau reenacts the iconic image of Father Edward Daly kneeling over the body of 17-year-old Jackie Duddy and would be familiar to anyone who saw the news coverage of the violence. Additionally, many of the Judge’s lines are taken almost verbatim from

Widgery's Report, as several scholars have noted (Russell 48-9; McGrath 105-7). His initial statement that the tribunal's "function is to form an objective view of the events" and to embark on "essentially a fact-finding exercise" (109) comes very close to Lord Widgery's own words: "[T]he Inquiry was essentially a fact-finding exercise . . . . [I]ts task was to try and form an objective view of the events and the sequence in which they occurred" (Article 2).

Several of Friel's oblique references to the day have escaped the notice of critics, however. His character Brigadier Johnson-Hansbury says that he is in charge of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Parachute Regiment (133), the same forces involved in Bloody Sunday. Furthermore, the play makes reference to the fact that the deceased were shot with 7.62-mm bullets (162). The decision on Bloody Sunday to allow British soldiers to use this deadly ammunition instead of rubber bullets was a controversial issue in both the Widgery and Saville Inquiries. Finally, the character of Lily invites comparisons to Margaret "Peggy" Deery, the only woman injured on Bloody Sunday. Deery's neighbor and biographer Nell McCafferty describes Peggy as someone that "lived in the worse conditions . . . . She lived in a slum, an asbestos hut. . . . [H]er husband had cancer and was dying and before he died they made another baby, the 14<sup>th</sup> baby" (qtd. in L. Friel). The fictional Lily also resides in the slums of Derry with her tubercular husband and their eleven children.

When the play opened, Friel's references to current events drew harsh criticism from theater critics, many of whom dismissed it because of what they saw as its promotion of nationalist propaganda. One said, "[I]ts bias against the English robs it of

its potential power” (*Sunday Express*) and another argued, “[T]he play suffers fatally from this overzealous determination to discredit the means and the motives of the English in the present Ulster crisis” (*Evening Standard*). The *Belfast Newsletter* characterized it as “mawkish propaganda” (qtd. in Russell 59-60). Even Friel himself thought the play’s proximity to real events was problematic: “I think one of the problems with that play was that the experience of Bloody Sunday wasn’t adequately distilled in me. I wrote it out of some kind of heat and some kind of passion that I would want to have quieted a bit before I did it,” he admitted in a 1982 interview (“In Interview” 110). Friel also did not want to be held accountable for historical accuracy: “The trouble with this particular play in many ways is that people are going to find something immediate in it, some kind of reportage” (qtd. in Boland 114). In a 2006 article on *The Freedom of the City*, Richard Russell echoes the earlier critiques. He asserts that the play’s faithfulness to the events of Bloody Sunday hinders its success, writing that it “still suffers from too much factual immediacy” (62) and suggesting that “Friel clearly was not sufficiently detached” from the violence before he wrote it (63). While many have considered the play’s connection to real incidents to be a flaw, the findings of the Saville Inquiry contradict that assessment. The Report confirms the brutality of the soldiers, affirms the innocence of the victims, and counters the false conclusions of the original tribunal; through fictionalization, *The Freedom of the City* works toward the same goals. Looking back on the play in light of the Inquiry’s conclusions, critics and viewers should now be able to see Friel’s work as a literary representation of truths too horrifying to be publicly

acknowledged at the time. The drama's close adherence to the events of Bloody Sunday makes its argument against injustice all the more compelling.

Despite Friel's reliance on actual events, *The Freedom of the City* does not focus on "set[ting] the record straight," as the later docudrama films and the documentary theater production do. His play shows how those with opposing viewpoints (the media, the Catholic church, Irish Nationalists, British officials) distorted the events of Bloody Sunday with their polarized rhetoric, which helped to fuel the subsequent years of conflict that resulted from the violence (Fulton). Most importantly, it provides a commentary on the conditions and motivations that led people to protest and to become involved in the Troubles—a kind of exploration made possible by the flexibility and imaginative expansion afforded to fiction.

Of paramount importance in the drama is the issue of poverty. The three main characters, all Catholics, are united not by their religion but by their desire to improve their socioeconomic status. Michael, who is engaged to be married even though he is unemployed, attempts to "improve [him]self" by studying "economics and business administration and computer science" (122). Although Lily has to deal with her large family and her sick husband, she works when she can. Skinner seems nonchalant about his situation, but he is both homeless and jobless (131, 152). Unaware of the presence of British soldiers outside the Guildhall, the three characters discuss their lives and their reasons for marching. Michael, who has "been on every civil rights march from the very beginning," makes clear that he is not like the "hooligan element" he abhors (127), who protest to subvert the authority of the British government and the Protestant majority of



Northern Ireland. He marches because he wants “a decent job, a decent place to live, a decent town to bring up our children in” (160). He sees these desires as universal, applying to all people “no matter what our religion is, no matter what our politics is” (161). His statements remind audiences that the NICRA march on Bloody Sunday involved both Protestants and Catholics and was organized not to address a sectarian concern but to protest a civil rights issue, the policy of internment.

Both Michael and Skinner believe that they know why Lily marches. Michael suggests that she “campaign[s] for . . . a decent home” and “a better life for your children than the life you had” (138) while Skinner tells Lily that she is involved “because you live with eleven kids and a sick husband in two rooms that aren’t fit for animals” (154). He goes on to reveal his own motivation for protesting, as his use of the first-person plural implies: “[The march] has nothing to do with doctors and accountants and teachers and dignity and boy scout honour. It’s about *us*—the poor—the majority—stirring in our sleep. And if that’s not what it’s all about, then it has nothing to do with us” (154, emphasis added). For Lily, however, protesting is really about her powerlessness and the personal struggles of her son Declan, who has Down's Syndrome (155). She admits that she goes on “most” of the marches for him (129). Although she knows her efforts will accomplish nothing and might seem “stupid” to others, she feels she has no other recourse but to march “every Saturday” (155). Lily’s predicament may resemble that of Peggy Deery, but she is transformed through Friel’s imagination into a fully-realized character who allows him to explore the economic and emotional condition of the Irish poor. Her quiet dignity and strength resonate with the audience and elicit their empathy.

The naturalistic scenes at the Guildhall in which the characters reveal their motivations for marching bring to life the detached observations of Dr. Dodds, an extradiegetic, Brechtian figure who appears on stage periodically to make academic pronouncements about “the subculture of poverty” (110). The play uses the interaction between these two highly imaginative “modes of theatre”—what Patrick Burke identifies as the “‘warm’ naturalistic and the ‘cool’ Brechtian” (125)—to explore the social and economic conditions that indirectly led to the catastrophe of Bloody Sunday. Although Dodds never refers specifically to Lily, Michael, or Skinner, he is connected to them in various ways. He usually arrives on stage just before the action returns to the Mayor’s office, acting as a kind of “liaison” between the three and the other characters in the play. In addition, he discusses the same subject they consider most often—the situation of the urban poor. Finally, his comments provide insights into their circumstances. For example, his statement that the poor practice “present-orientated living” and “live with the reality of the moment” (135) is confirmed when Lily acknowledges that she has never paused to reflect on any part of her life. The 43-year-old says that “never once . . . had an experience, an event, even a small unimportant happening been isolated, and assessed, and articulated” (150). Perhaps more chilling is Dodds’ prescient observation that “the only certainty [the poor] have is death” (163), a line he delivers just before the three leave the Guildhall and are gunned down.

Through these four characters, Friel focuses on the truth about *why* Bloody Sunday happened, implicitly critiquing the way that the Widgery Tribunal disregarded the reasons for the violence. When a policeman testifies before the inquiry that Lily

“lived with her family in a condemned property behind the old railway . . .” (108) in order to provide some background information on the victim, the Judge sharply interrupts him: “We are not conducting a social survey, Constable” (108). But Friel uses the power of drama to do just that. According to William Jent, he widens the setting of the play to “every city where the poor struggle for political and economic freedom” (579). The three 21<sup>st</sup>-century works cannot undertake this kind of deep exploration because they are restricted by their documentary commitment to reenacting “what really happened.”

Such a commitment to historical accuracy in the films *Bloody Sunday* and *Sunday* and the play *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* is a product of a post-Troubles movement toward truth-telling and transparency. Throughout the long period of violence that followed the 1972 bloodshed, the British refused to support an official reconsideration of Lord Widgery’s conclusions despite the fact that the Irish witnesses denounced them. The government no doubt believed that reopening the case would undermine the authority of its troops in Northern Ireland. As an important step toward ending the violence in 1998, however, the British government was persuaded to reopen the case. The two documentary films followed in 2002, reminding the public about the 1972 violence and presenting the Irish version of events. *Bloody Sunday*, first shown on British television and later distributed to movie theaters around the world, has garnered the largest audience of any of the four works. Directed and written by Paul Greengrass, the film was made to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atrocity. It has been widely acclaimed by critics, and in February 2002 it won the coveted Golden Bear award, the highest honor for a film at the Berlin Film Festival. According to Derek Paget,

docudramas like this one “us[e] the sequence of events from a real historical occurrence or situation and the identities of the protagonists to underpin a film script intended to provoke debate about the significance of the events/occurrence” (82). In order to present an “authentic” account of the violence, *Bloody Sunday* reenacts with “mimetic exactitude” (Blaney 119) some of the iconic images of the day, like Father Daly performing last rites for Jackie Duddy and Barney McGuigan’s body covered with a NICRA banner. It stays true to the memories of many Derry citizens, some of whom appeared onscreen (Blaney 117). Actor James Nesbitt recalls that “busloads” of people from the town came to participate in the filming in Dublin (DVD Commentary).

To show the British and other audiences the truth about what happened, *Bloody Sunday* mimics the formal characteristics of a documentary. It is shot with hand-held cameras that provide the shaky frames typical of television news coverage. Additionally, it uses film stock that was doctored post-production to resemble grainy newsreel footage from the 1970s (Blaney 130). Aileen Blaney lists many other ways that the film “performs authenticity” (127). Her examples include Greengrass’s use of real soldiers to play the parts of the Paras and his insistence on improvisation in order to force the actors to embody their characters and “live in the moment.” One example she does not emphasize is the use of Derry natives to portray several of the film’s Irish figures. To cite a poignant example, the young man who plays Gerry Donaghey, one of the main characters, is Declan Duddy, nephew of Jackie Duddy, the first victim killed on Bloody Sunday (DVD Commentary).

The film's documentary style performs several important functions. First, it gives viewers a sense of immediacy, bringing past events into the present moment. Paget notes the urgency with which docudramas like *Bloody Sunday* “‘point towards’ their anterior realities” (134). Second, this style communicates the chaos that resulted from the shooting. Like the protesters themselves, audiences are confused when they hear actors speaking over each other or mumbling, and they experience a kind of disorientation when the camera abruptly shifts position, allowing them only brief glimpses of certain scenes that do not provide a clear sense of events as they are occurring. Finally and most importantly, documentary-style footage encourages audiences to accept what they see as fact. Janelle Reinelt points out the “appeal of the documentary trace” and writes that “the link to the truth claim still functions as at least partially persuasive in performances that evoke the documentary discourse—persuasive of the link to facticity through the trace” (83). Steven Lipkin argues that audiences associate realism with truth even though the two are not synonymous. He asserts that docudrama “employ[s] strategies based upon perceived proximities [to the real events] so that, at its most powerful, it convinces us that it is properly both logical and emotional to associate cinematic proximity with moral truth” (31). If his view is correct, Greengrass' decision to employ a documentary style is an *ethical* choice as well as an aesthetic one. Greengrass admits that the point of the film—its “moral truth”—is to “say ‘*this actually happened*’” (DVD Commentary) even if the British government does not recognize that fact.

To appear objective, the film gives some attention to all sides involved in the confrontation. It focuses on one of the Paras named Private Lomas, who is obviously

uneasy about the events of the day. When his fellow soldiers discuss the people they shot and the number of rounds they fired, he says, “I saw it. I saw you shoot civvies.” One man tries to excuse their actions, claiming that “all civvies are terrorists.” Lomas responds, “*Terrorists?* I never even saw a gunman.” Later, he is racked with guilt when he lies to support his comrades, reporting that he saw a civilian holding a firearm on one of the barricades. Although he is obviously uncomfortable with his false statements, he does not recant them on camera, but the scene suggests that he will do so later. Lomas is based on Private 027, a Para who disavowed his original statement to his superiors and criticized the conduct of his fellow soldiers before the Saville Inquiry.<sup>3</sup> Greengrass discusses his reason for including this soldier: “I wanted to convey the way that, in the same way that the event was complex, the cover-up was complex. . . . In a sense you can kind of understand, but not at all justify, individual soldiers lying to cover themselves” (DVD Commentary). Indeed, this scene sympathetically depicts a soldier lying to protect his unit, thus helping viewers see what might have motivated some of the Paras to give false testimony. Aileen Blaney asserts that this character keeps the film from “indiscriminately vilif[ying] all of the Parachute Regiment on active service on Bloody Sunday” (124).

In fact, the script leaves open the possibility that the soldiers truly felt threatened although it does not go so far as to justify the Paras’ actions. In one scene a round of bullets flies above the soldiers as they observe the march behind a wall. These shots

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<sup>3</sup> To protect the identities of the soldiers, those who witnessed the events of Bloody Sunday were given numbers (e.g. Private 027) while those who fired rounds were assigned letters (e.g. Soldier F). Members of the Official and Provisional IRA who testified were also assigned numbers (e.g. OIRA 1 or PIRA 11).

suggest that British soldiers may have been provoked into action. The Official Irish Republican Army (IRA)<sup>4</sup> is at first represented by a villainous-looking man sitting in a parked car before the march begins. He clearly opposes the nonviolent protest, asserting his belief that “Marching’s not going to solve this thing.” Nevertheless, when he is approached by Ivan Cooper, a Protestant member of Parliament who worked with the NICRA to organize the march, he promises to keep weapons away from the event. On two other occasions, however, members of the Official IRA appear onscreen with guns, but they are quickly reminded that their use is “not approved.” Thus the film acknowledges that both members of the Official IRA and soldiers had weapons on Bloody Sunday and that the British may not have been the first to fire.

This portrayal is partially borne out in the Saville Report. Although it plainly states that no one in the paramilitary group began to shoot first, it found that at least three of its members fired on soldiers on Bloody Sunday. One Official IRA operative (OIRA 1) in particular waited at a “pre-arranged sniping position in order to fire at the soldiers” (Report 3.12). Even though his shot missed its target, the Report surmised that it might have contributed to escalating the violence, changing “a riot control situation into a gun battle” in the minds of some Paras (19.181). Despite this fact, the Saville panel was careful not to blame the members of paramilitary groups for the events of the day. Instead of responding to these shots by OIRA 1 and the rioting of the hooligans with appropriate force, the Paras were ordered to carry out a mass arrest operation. In doing

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<sup>4</sup> In 1969 a splinter group calling itself the Provisional IRA separated from the larger organization, which in turn became known as the Official IRA. The two groups disagreed on a number of issues including the necessity for armed action. Both were active in Derry during the time of Bloody Sunday (Ó Dochartaigh 169-170).

so, some disobeyed the strict instructions of their superior officers and entered the Bogside, a no-go area for British soldiers (Report 3.14). The 2010 Report determined that the entire operation was ill-advised, since those who were throwing stones and antagonizing the soldiers were intermingled with the peaceful protestors; it was therefore impossible for the Paras to separate the two groups (3.18-3.19). The Saville findings recognized Official IRA activity during the march, which was accurately depicted in the film *Bloody Sunday*, but did not use it to legitimize the disproportionately brutal action of the soldiers.

Although it is concerned with historical accuracy, Greengrass' film also contains fictional material. Paget explains that the genre of docudrama "follows a cinematic narrative structure and employs the standard naturalist/realist performance techniques of screen drama" (82). In doing so it often blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction. Blaney specifically notes the fact that *Bloody Sunday* shifts between an "impersonal news-vérité style" through which viewers see historical events reenacted, and imagined private moments that focus on a particular character (131). While such moments may be melodramatic and may seem to undermine the authenticity of the documentary mode, Steven Lipkin asserts that the personal and impersonal scenes actually complement each other. The private narratives "offer alternatives to the kind of sober discourse about history that would be the province of documentary" (10). For him, films that use both documentary style and fictional elements "allow a sense of closeness to . . . history, an access made possible by rendering chaotic, destructive horrors understandable" (10).



The two characters whom *Bloody Sunday* foregrounds are Ivan Cooper and Gerry Donaghey, a young Republican who was one of the fourteen victims. In order to provide what Greengrass calls a “human element,” the camera follows Cooper and Donaghey into their domestic spaces and shows both men involved in interfaith relationships that drive their commitment to the peace process (DVD Commentary). Ivan loves Frances, a Catholic, and he admits that he is personally invested in achieving peace: “So that’s why I’m doing it, you know? That’s why I go to the meetings, that’s why I go to the marches, because, you know, I think *we’re* worth marching for.” Gerry, a Catholic whose girlfriend is Protestant, refuses to heed his sister’s warning that he is “going to get that wee girl into trouble” by continuing to see her. When Gerry and Hester kiss goodnight on the streets of Derry, audiences cannot miss the British soldiers in the background with their tanks nearby; the *mise-en-scène* invites spectators to relate the personal struggle of the young couple to the larger religious and political struggle in Northern Ireland. While the technique of reducing a national conflict to a personal, domestic one is an obvious melodramatic ploy (Elsaesser 170), it keeps viewers interested in the story.

The film also uses the conventions of melodrama to identify a primary villain and a maligned victim.<sup>5</sup> Audiences see General Robert Ford, Commander of Land Forces in Northern Ireland, as the malefactor. Although Blaney argues that the film does not place the blame on him alone, she acknowledges the hostile attitude of the Irish toward him: “[H]is face personified the British military’s disregard for Catholic life in Derry on that

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<sup>5</sup> At other times the film takes pains to avoid the Manichean good/evil binary typical of melodrama by including Private Lomas, the Para with a conscience, among the “evil” soldiers and by presenting an unsavory Official IRA member in contrast to the “good” Irish citizens.

day and the state's effort to cover up the army's responsibility for the loss of innocent life" (121-2). At the time of the film's release in 2002, recent testimony at the Saville Inquiry had resulted in renewed criticism of Ford,<sup>6</sup> especially regarding his communication with his commanding officer in the weeks before Bloody Sunday. In a memo he had argued that the leaders of the Derry Young Hooligans (DYH) should be shot with intent to kill if they ignored repeated warnings when they were rioting (Bew 123). His suggestion was never approved by his superiors, but several people alleged that the shoot-to-kill policy was in the minds of the soldiers on Bloody Sunday. A BBC article quotes Arthur Harvey, a lawyer representing many of the victims' families at the Inquiry: "... the personalities who were left in charge of [controlling the NICRA march] were the personalities most likely to bring about a policy of killing people in order to produce a moral effect" ("Inquiry"). In one scene in *Bloody Sunday*, Ford cheers the Paras as they break through the barrier to chase the "hooligans": "Go on 1 Para. Go and get them, and good luck." However, during his long testimony before the Saville Inquiry, Ford maintained that he worked in Derry "purely as an observer" on Bloody Sunday. The film shows him making this statement, but it does not exonerate him as the Saville Report eventually did. The Inquiry found that Ford's shoot-to-kill recommendation was never circulated among the troops and could not have been a causative factor of the killing that day (2.14). Still, they questioned his judgment about making such a suggestion (4.10).

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<sup>6</sup> Although General Ford did not testify until October 2002, nine months after the film was released, several earlier witnesses had either mentioned him or accused him in their testimony.

While Ford is the evil villain, 17-year-old Gerry Donaghey is portrayed as an innocent victim. *Bloody Sunday* encourages viewers to sympathize with him by showing several events from his perspective. His private scenes with Hester and his sister Mary make it clear that he intends to protest peacefully, avoiding violence and any confrontation with the police. When he speaks with a Catholic priest on the day of the march, Gerry assures him that he will not participate in any rioting despite his history of altercations with British soldiers. Consequently, viewers are horrified when he is shot running away from the Paras, and he dies ignominiously at a roadblock in the back of a car as he is being rushed to the hospital. The sadness of his death is emphasized by the image of Hester waiting for him, not knowing that he has been killed.

Despite its use of melodrama, *Bloody Sunday* serves as a repository of the collective memory of the citizens of Derry. Although the filmmakers themselves did not interview those who witnessed the event, they brought to life well-researched published accounts like Don Mullan's *Eyewitness Bloody Sunday* (Greengrass 4). The lawyers at the Saville Inquiry clearly valued the film as a fact-based account. In a bizarre series of questions, one asked the real Ivan Cooper about the veracity of particular scenes in *Bloody Sunday* during his testimony. After initially declaring the film to be accurate, Cooper rethinks his assertion when one of the lawyers presses him for details. He ultimately admits that the meeting with the Official IRA man in the car is "pure fiction" (51, Day 420). He also declares that he had no romantic encounter with Frances on the day of the march (50, Day 420). Regardless of such minor discrepancies, audiences regard the film as factual. The judges at the Berlin Film Festival praised its

“extraordinary authenticity” (Ezard) and Richard Kelly commented that the film’s factual details “render [*Bloody Sunday*] dense and alive” (77).

The second film entitled *Sunday* was written by celebrated screenwriter Jimmy McGovern, who won critical acclaim for *Hillsborough* (1996), a docudrama about the 1989 stadium disaster that resulted in the deaths of 96 spectators. Despite the fact that *Sunday* won several awards, including the Prix Italia, it was overshadowed by *Bloody Sunday*, which premiered on British television eight days before McGovern’s work. Blaney points out that the two films were often reviewed together in the weeks leading up to their premieres (117), but *Sunday* received little critical attention after it aired. The two films are clearly docudramas although they are quite different aesthetically. While *Bloody Sunday* is entirely staged, *Sunday* intertwines reenactments of scenes with documentary footage from amateur videographers as well as professional crews. Director Charles McDougall sometimes staged an entire scene around a few seconds of borrowed footage in order to incorporate it (DVD Commentary). Although the inclusion of the historical footage is meant to contribute an air of authenticity to *Sunday*, viewers are jolted by the mixing of film stocks that have different colors and are of different qualities. Most filmmakers include real documentary material to “provid[e] vital contextualization” and “se[t] the scene in time and place” (Paget 69). Although the historical footage sometimes functions in these ways in *Sunday*, especially in the opening scenes, it often distracts the viewer and contributes to the film’s unevenness and lack of aesthetic continuity. While *Bloody Sunday* uses its aesthetics to set the tone of the film—the camera’s shakiness confuses the viewer and communicates viscerally the chaos of the

events—the decision by the creators of *Sunday* to switch between real footage and reenacted scenes reflects their commitment to historical accuracy rather than their concern about its disconcerting effect on viewers.

For authenticity most of *Sunday* was filmed in Derry, and it employed as actors several citizens of the town including some members of the victims' families, just as the Greengrass film did.<sup>7</sup> During the three years McGovern spent gathering information for his screenplay, he interviewed 60 townspeople including all of the families of the victims, and he had another researcher interview 100 more (McGovern 16). The film, he claims, is based entirely on “personal testimony” and always keeps as its focus “the victims and their families” (16). One critic noted that it creates an “unabashedly affectionate portrait of the Catholic Bogside community” (Kelly 77). Rather than following the perspective of the leaders of the march or one of its victims, *Sunday* focuses on Leo Young, whose brother John is killed by Paras while Leo is helping the wounded Gerry Donaghey get to a hospital. The few critics who commented on the film praised its unique perspective (Starrett 11). Like *Bloody Sunday*, this film employs the conventions of melodrama to make a national conflict resonate within a family. The Youngs are devastated by the tragedy of losing John. Leo's sister Moira cannot move past his death, and Leo faces a moral struggle between continuing his peaceful resistance or betraying his family and

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<sup>7</sup> Although most of *Sunday* was filmed in Derry, one quarter of the footage was shot in Manchester and Liverpool (DVD Commentary). In contrast, only a few scenes of *Bloody Sunday* were filmed in Derry while the rest was recorded on location outside Dublin. Producer Mark Redhead states that he and Greengrass specifically avoided shooting more scenes in Derry because they found it impossible to “reasonably re-stage the arrival of hundreds of troops and the firing of dozens of rounds of ammunition in the middle of the City at a sensitive time during the peace process.”

joining the IRA.

*Sunday* differs from its better-known counterpart in other ways as well. First, it constructs a brief historical narrative that supplements its reenactment of the 1972 events, showing both their causes and effects. In the opening scene, Leo and his brother John deliver coal to the Duddy home. In a voiceover Leo explains that the unrest in Derry began with economic struggles: “Britain was booming, Europe was booming, but Derry was on the dole.” This problem was exacerbated by another one: political inequality. Since voting rights were based on land ownership, Leo explains that in 1968 the working-class Duddys, a family of six adults, were represented by only one vote while a wealthy neighbor had six. The unrest that resulted from this situation led some people to take action against the British government and its troops in Northern Ireland. In response, the British developed a policy of internment without trial for any suspected IRA member or sympathizer. This policy in turn precipitated the fateful march in January 1972. After portraying the events of Bloody Sunday and the thirteen deaths, the film shows the aftermath of the violence. While *Bloody Sunday* only hints at the effects of the day, briefly showing young men lining up to join the IRA, *Sunday* reenacts them, depicting the Widgery whitewash as well as the community’s increased support of and involvement in the IRA. Stephen Gargan, co-producer of the film, says he wanted to include the aftermath to explore the issue of how people react when they are denied justice (DVD Commentary). In the final scene the economic problems mentioned at the beginning are indirectly referred to again as Leo continues to work as a coal deliveryman with no improvement in his situation.

Although *Sunday*'s explanation of the motivations behind the NICRA march is well-intentioned, it does not explore them deeply enough to create a significant effect. However, in contextualizing the events of the day, the film clearly denounces the Widgery Tribunal, which limited its reach to "the period beginning with the moment when the march first became involved in violence and ending with the deaths of the deceased and the conclusion of the affair" (Article 3). Like *Sunday*, the Saville Inquiry used a wider scope to gain a better understanding of the events: "Without examining what led up to Bloody Sunday, it would be impossible to reach a properly informed view of what happened, let alone of why it happened" (Report 1.5).

Besides offering a broader historical context, *Sunday* also presents a slightly different account of the violent events of the day than the Greengrass film and is more balanced in some ways. It makes clear that the IRA was not only present at the march but also armed, a point that *Bloody Sunday* only implies. After 17-year-old Jackie Duddy is shot, an IRA member takes out a handgun and fires at British soldiers, but he is quickly waved away by Father Daly, who is performing last rites over the teenager. Another person shoots at a Para standing guard at a roadblock immediately after the march, but the soldier's bulletproof vest keeps him from harm. While McGovern is more explicit about IRA activities than Greengrass, *Sunday* demonstrates far more brutal behavior on the part of the Paras. In one scene shown at two different times, a Para takes aim at a first aid worker dressed in the uniform of the Knights of Malta. He jeers, "Your white coat makes a good target. Your red heart's even better." Furthermore, on the night of Bloody Sunday, as Derry citizens look for family members at the hospital, the Paras gather at a

bar, drinking and laughing about the events of the day. Watching television footage of the march and the carnage, they brag about their conquests. One asks, “Did you slaughter that woman?” and another cries out, “Can they not take a fucking joke?” Like *Bloody Sunday* the film has a character based on Private 027; however, in *Sunday* he is used to reveal a supposed cover-up committed by Lord Widgery. As statements for the Widgery Tribunal are collected from the soldiers, this individual admits that the Paras fired into the crowd without reason. He is then informed that the panel will not hear his testimony.

These scenes are particularly inflammatory, especially considering the opening screen, which announces that *Sunday* is a “dramatized reconstruction” based “entirely on fact using British Government documents, interviews, eyewitness reports and court transcripts.” Indeed, the filmmakers vehemently defend this claim, and they were careful to recreate even small details. They note with pride that in one scene the commercial playing on the television in the background is the exact one that was playing at that moment on Bloody Sunday (DVD Commentary). Jimmy McGovern declared, “*Sunday* was the most meticulously researched drama that British television has ever seen. We . . . stand by every word of it” (16). It is true that the film’s most provocative scenes are supported by testimony given to the Saville Inquiry, but the panel did not always accept that evidence as accurate. The Inquiry Report questions the reliability of several witnesses including Eibhlin Lafferty Mahon, the first aid worker who claims that a Para fired at her and shouted that her coat made a good target. It noted that she did not mention the incident in the written report she made to the Order of Malta Ambulance Corps in the days immediately following the march, and it observed that no one else



heard the soldier's remark (108.75). The Inquiry found that a shot had probably been fired in the woman's direction but determined that it had not been aimed directly at her (108.76-108.77). In the film the remark appears unbelievable—it is unlikely that a highly-trained soldier would stop to make such provocative comments in the middle of a violent attack—and the evidence presented to the Saville Inquiry suggests that the words were never spoken.

The Saville panel also discredited the report that Private 027 was not allowed to testify against the Paras. In reality the statement the soldier submitted to the Widgery Tribunal supported his comrades' story instead of challenging it as he asserted. As the film *Bloody Sunday* correctly indicates, his first impulse was to cover up the mistakes of his fellow soldiers. Although he later claimed that his statement before Lord Widgery was written by "Crown lawyers" after they destroyed his original version, Private 027 eventually admitted to the Saville Inquiry that he alone had fabricated his statement justifying the Paras' actions (14-5, Day 247). The panel found some of his testimony about what happened on Bloody Sunday to be believable, but it discounted his contention that he had been coerced to give false testimony: "[W]hat is likely to have happened is that Private 027 felt that he had to invent a reason to explain providing a statement for the Widgery Inquiry that was inconsistent with his later accounts; and chose to do so by falsely laying blame for the inconsistency on others" (Report 179.26).

The persuasive evidence on which the Saville Inquiry based its conclusions does not support *Sunday's* claim about the accuracy of every scene. Even so, Janelle Reinelt suggests that the fictional material docudramas include should not take away from their

“authority”: “The notion that narratives and ‘facts’ are inseparably bound together in documentary form does not . . . discount the appeal to documentary evidence inherent in the form” (83). However, because those connected with *Sunday* emphasize its precision—in the director’s commentary their tone borders on the smug—this evidence of error seriously undermines the film’s impact and its goal of providing a truthful account of the events of January 30, 1972.

Unlike the two docudramas that aired in 2002, *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* contains no fictional elements nor does it attempt to recreate the events of Bloody Sunday. It is a play based entirely on the statements of witnesses that the Saville panel interviewed between November 2000 and February 2004.<sup>8</sup> It features actors repeating crucial testimony from the hearings in a set that duplicates the Guildhall in Derry, where many of the interrogations took place (Hoggard 8). The British refer to this type of documentary as “verbatim theatre,” and director Nicolas Kent calls it a “tribunal play.” It was first produced in April 2005 at the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn, London, the home of several similar productions including *The Colour of Justice* (1999) about the police investigation into the racially-charged murder of a British teenager. Critical reception of *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* was generally positive. While one reviewer suggested that it was “far from compelling” (Gosnell 11), most found it authentic, emotionally moving, and relevant to contemporary events. The *Irish Times* critic thought it was particularly poignant in light of the murder of Catholic Robert McCartney in

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<sup>8</sup> Three more witnesses were subsequently interviewed, two in June and one in January 2005 (“Questions and Answers”).

Belfast less than three months before the play opened.<sup>9</sup> She maintained that the recent slaying served as a reminder of “the messy and violent human reality behind the political drama of Northern Ireland” (Yeoman 6).

The plays produced at the Tricycle Theatre appeal mainly to those who espouse progressive politics. Kilburn, located far from London’s commercial West End theatres, is a working-class area northwest of central London with a large Irish and black population. The Tricycle is widely recognized as a theatre committed to issues of social justice, especially those that are particularly important to the local community. Although the director maintains that *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* is “not polemical,” he admits that “by the mere fact we've chosen the issue we've chosen, we've actually made up our mind.” Critic Carol Martin finds that documentary theater cannot be separated from political affiliation: “The intention is to persuade spectators to understand specific events in particular ways” (11). *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* leads its audience to the inescapable conclusion that Lord Widgery’s investigation was wrong both in exonerating the British soldiers and in blaming the NICRA. The Widgery Report’s most shocking pronouncements are reprinted in the program of *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* to demonstrate the earlier tribunal’s mockery of justice. The testimonies that the play highlights are designed to incense viewers about the false Report and encourage them to demand the truth from the Saville investigation, which was still ongoing at that time.

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<sup>9</sup> McCartney was killed after a bar fight, allegedly by members of the Provisional IRA. When several policemen came to investigate, a riot broke out that prevented them from collecting evidence against the perpetrators. All of the witnesses in the pub eventually denied knowledge of the brutal murder.

*Bloody Sunday: Scenes* recreates not only the exact words of the witnesses but also the scene in the Derry Guildhall. The same piped Vivaldi music that was used to “calm the nerves” of those testifying can be heard in the background (Yeoman 6). The house lights are never completely dimmed, so members of the audience feel as if they are seated at the actual tribunal rather than at a theater performance. To reinforce this feeling, the play involves “a large cast of extras whose only theatrical function [is] to represent the material reality of the inquiry room by wandering about, coughing, shuffling papers, yawning, pouring water” (Upton 188). Carole-Anne Upton points out, however, that two important parts of the “set” of the Tribunal are not in the play. First, the soldiers do not testify from behind a screen in order to protect their identities, as they did at the Inquiry. Second, the set does not change when the soldiers take the witness stand even though the Inquiry panel moved to London to hear their statements (Upton 191). Both the anonymity of the soldiers and the move to London were controversial decisions that led many to question the legitimacy of the Saville Inquiry. Noting these omissions, Upton argues that the production seems “curiously shy of offering explicit criticism of the process of the inquiry” (191).

Kent finds the strength of verbatim plays like *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* in their claim to truth. He disparages theatrical docudramas: “[O]n the whole, either you’re doing journalism in the theatre or you’re doing make-believe in the theatre. . . . I don’t want to go to a play and not be certain if it’s true, exact words.” He seems to believe that it is impossible to manipulate truth as long as an actor repeats the precise words that an individual uttered. Martin disagrees, maintaining that “creating any work out of edited

archival materials relies on the formal qualities of fiction as much as on archival evidence” (11). Because those involved in documentary theatre make “moral and ethical claims to truth,” she warns viewers to think carefully about what is being presented to them and to remember that playwrights, directors, and actors have their own individual biases (14).

Of necessity, most of the factual and evidentiary material must be left out of a documentary play in order to focus the attention of the audience on the most important points and to cover hundreds of pages of material in a relatively short period of time. Both Kent and Richard Norton-Taylor, the veteran *Guardian* reporter who edited the script for *Bloody Sunday: Scenes*, admit that they look for narrative interest when sifting through thousands of pages of testimony. Reviewer Fran Yeoman comments that the “stars” of the Saville Inquiry like Sir Edward Heath, prime minister at the time of Bloody Sunday, and Martin McGuinness, prominent Sinn Féin politician and former IRA commander in Derry, are conspicuously absent. Kent justifies these omissions by saying that “The big hitters weren’t very dramatic in their testimony” (qtd. in Yeoman 6).<sup>10</sup> While Upton criticized the play for not making clear “the criteria for editing” (186), only a handful of the critics who reviewed it were skeptical about the process of selecting testimony. One of them mused that the audience “should be on its guard” since Norton-Taylor “seems like a man with an agenda” (Portillo 46).

While selecting significant items to include in a documentary play is critical to its

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<sup>10</sup> The play program sold at each performance included selections from the testimony of Heath and McGuinness as well as several other witnesses (Upton 187).

success, viewers must also be aware that much has been left out. As Martin puts it, “Most contemporary documentary theatre makes the claim that everything presented is part of the archive. But equally important is the fact that not everything in the archive is part of the documentary” (9). Omissions as well as inclusions can reveal a writer’s bias. In *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* Norton-Taylor does not use the testimony of Private 027, the British soldier who figures prominently in *Sunday* and *Bloody Sunday*. The report of this witness, who did not fire on the crowd, might have appealed to audiences since he acknowledges that on the night after the shootings in Derry “[w]e sat there and while the sounds of the incident had hardly died away, there was almost a recognition that there was a problem that had to be explained away . . .” (3, Day 247). Later he tells the panel that “[t]here was some serious thinking going on by people wanting to cover their arses” (142, Day 249). Norton-Taylor was obviously struck by this testimony because he quotes it in a feature he wrote for *The Guardian* (12). Instead of having this soldier appear in the play, however, sections of his testimony are given in the lengthy program that includes the statements of several other witnesses. Also, two sentences that he uttered are quoted in a question that one of the lawyers poses to another witness (86). While the creators of both *Bloody Sunday* and *Sunday* use Private 027 to avoid villainizing all the British soldiers, this soldier is remarkably absent from Norton-Taylor’s play.

Instead of using him, *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* includes the testimony of two soldiers who fired on the crowd. Soldier F shot recklessly, probably killing or wounding at least six individuals including Barney McGuigan, whose body, draped in a NICRA banner, became one of the important images of the day. Under questioning, this Para

contends that he has no recollection of Bloody Sunday despite the fact that he was present when at least seven people were killed or injured (85). Still, he willingly takes the blame for at least four deaths, arguing that each individual he shot was armed with either a handgun or a petrol bomb (90). While Soldier F insists that McGuigan had “a pistol in his hand” (88), other testimony makes it clear that the Irishman was unarmed and that he was waving a white flag when he was killed as he went to help one of the wounded (48-50). Another British witness is Soldier S. Perhaps Norton-Taylor chose to include him because he is remorseful and honest about his actions—and therefore provides a marked contrast to Soldier F—but what he admits to the Saville panel is shocking: he was pressured by his fellow servicemen to lie at the Widgery Inquiry, and under intense questioning from one of the lawyers, he reluctantly concedes that he killed “lots of people” during his service in the British Army (83).<sup>11</sup> The result of the omission of Private 027 and the inclusion of Soldiers F and S is that no truly sympathetic member of the British forces is portrayed in *Bloody Sunday: Scenes*. Furthermore, the elimination of the testimony of Private 027 undermines Norton-Taylor’s claim that he creates a “distillation” of the proceedings in his tribunal plays (12). The Saville Inquiry considered this soldier to be such an important witness that it devoted an entire chapter to the consideration of his claims. Although the Report questions his reliability on some points, noting that he falsely accused government lawyers of fabricating his statement to the Widgery Tribunal, it does not wholly discredit his testimony (179.27).

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<sup>11</sup> The Saville Report asserts that Soldier S “fired indiscriminately” (3.74) but makes no clear statement about his culpability in the killings (3.99-3.100). Likewise, in the tribunal play a lawyer reveals that Soldier S fired at least twelve rounds, but the soldier remains unsure about whether or not he injured anyone (81).

In contrast, the play includes a sympathetic Official IRA member named Reg Tester, a command staff quartermaster in 1972. While he admits that he took aim at soldiers in retaliation for their attacks, he regrets doing so: “[T]hank God that my rifle had jammed, because . . . there was [*sic*] still civilians wandering around” (95). The play omits any mention of OIRA 1, the sniper who fired on a Para but missed. Unlike Reg Tester, he shows no contrition but defends his decision to shoot by claiming that he believed the soldier had just injured civilians (80, Day 395). He justifies his action by explaining his state of mind at the time: “[H]ad I not fired that shot, he may have fired again and we could be facing 20 more people in this room who were wounded or shot on that day, and I would have to consider how I would have faced the families of people who may have been shot by that soldier the next day and told them I could have stopped it but did not fire” (81, Day 395). Instead of using OIRA 1, whose anonymity and attitude put him on an equal footing with the British soldiers, Norton-Taylor focuses on Tester, the last speaker in the play. Several critics argue that the inclusion of this character gives the play a sense of neutrality and keeps it from being one-sided, since it shows an IRA member who intended to shoot (qtd. in Botham 48). In fact it is another example of Norton-Taylor's manipulation of facts by selection and omission: he used the testimony of the most sympathetic paramilitary member and left out the militants who were unapologetic about their actions on Bloody Sunday.

Such selective editing goes unnoticed by audiences who know little about the complete body of evidence that the Saville panel heard. Most reviewers mention the play's attention to detail and the “brilliantly authentic recreation” of the Inquiry as



highlights of *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* (Yeoman 6). Liz Hoggard, critic for *The Observer*, suggests that the play “offer[s] a cooler, more objective” perspective than the one presented in Greengrass’s film (8). In response to the shocking admission from General Ford that he advocated a shoot-to-kill policy, another enthuses: “With such lines from life, there is little chance the directors or editor . . . can be accused of manipulation” (Scott 58). These reactions are indicative of what Martin identifies as the tendency of documentary theatre to “strategically deploy the appearance of truth, while inventing its own particular truth through elaborate aesthetic devices” (10). Illustrating Martin’s point, Graham White argues that *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* uses its documentary aesthetics to “clai[m] authoritative insight into the Truth of the Tribunal” (“Compelled” 84).

Although the play may appear objective—both victims and perpetrators speak for approximately equal amounts of time—its narrative structure ultimately undermines that balance. The first part of the play is about the shootings; the second concerns the Paras’ cover-up. In both cases the soldiers are rhetorically indicted for their crimes. Additionally, the lawyers representing the Inquiry and those representing the families of the victims interview both soldiers and Derry citizens. From the line of their questioning, it is clear that they are largely hostile to the first group and sympathetic to the second. The lawyers for the soldiers appear only briefly to question the most inflammatory statements by three of the eyewitnesses.<sup>12</sup> In the actual tribunal, however, the lawyers

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<sup>12</sup> One witness claims that the British soldiers used dum-dum bullets, a flagrant violation of the international laws of warfare (42-3). Another believes that at least one person who had been injured was thrown in a tank by British soldiers and left for dead; the individual says he could hear pained moaning coming from the back of the vehicle (38). Both of the statements are discredited by the Saville report (122.111, 122.169, 166.134).

defending the Paras were a much stronger presence. In fact many people in Derry were outraged by what they perceived to be the adversarial questioning of certain witnesses by these lawyers. According to some accounts, they “badgered” even the sympathetic Father Daly and members of the Knights of Malta (Hayes and Campbell 165-166). By aggressively questioning certain witnesses, the lawyers defending the soldiers hoped to demonstrate that, even though the victims of the violence were innocent, the soldiers *believed* themselves to be in a dangerous situation and acted accordingly, as they had been trained to do. Although the Saville panel was unconvinced by this argument, it was a prominent line of inquiry in the trial, and many believed that it would prevail (Hegarty, “Truth” 245-246). *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* allows no time for a defense of the soldiers and functions prescriptively, encouraging viewers to lay the blame entirely on the British Paras. The actors contribute to this perception by their convincing performances. Eamonn McCann notes that “all of the civilians depicted . . . come across as credible” (“Why?” 22), and Upton observes that the audience is directed to “read the performance of the civilian characters” as more reliable “than the representatives of the state” (188). Upton attributes this effect to “the body language and demeanor” of the actors, who depend on the audience’s “affective . . . response” to their performance to increase or decrease the level of credibility they convey (188).

*Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* and other verbatim plays demonstrate that the stage is an especially appropriate place to simulate courtroom scenes and public inquiries. Gregory Mason points out the “rich dramatic potential” inherent in public inquiries, which reproduce “the clash of historical forces . . . without recourse to

fictional invention” (268-9). Nicole Rogers, who studies the interplay between law and contemporary theater, notes the performativity and the essential interaction between “actors” involved in both arenas (431). White saw for himself the importance of performance at the Saville Inquiry hearings he attended in London. He realized that the extent to which witnesses perform the “live enactment of memory recall” (“I remember clearly” or “I cannot recall”) is crucial to establishing their credibility (“Quite” 184). He believes that “strategies of performance . . . offer themselves *ahead* of truth in the courtroom setting” (“Quite” 184, emphasis added). If witnesses do not believably act the role of truth-tellers, their testimony is dismissed regardless of its veracity.

Richard Schechner’s theories about social and aesthetic dramas provide a useful model for comparing the “dramas” of the tribunal of inquiry and the theatre. For Schechner the most crucial connection between the two is that both enact *transformations*. Social dramas like trials, inquiries, feuds, and wars bring about permanent changes, while aesthetic dramas like plays “compe[l] a transformation of the spectators’ view of the world by rubbing their senses against enactments of extreme events, much more extreme than they would usually witness” (125). In a dramatic production, viewers can “reflect on these events rather than flee from them or intervene in them” as participants would (125). Schechner’s distinction between social and aesthetic dramas sheds light on the effect of verbatim theatre. Even though *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* does not wholly represent the testimony provided at the Inquiry, it helps us examine the problems created by violence and injustice. According to Janelle Reinelt, “While theatre can seldom effect social change by itself, it contributes its special *métier*

as part of democratic processes that are already or simultaneously put in train by other means” (81).

For Kent there is another important motivation for presenting these verbatim productions: “We do these inquiries because they're not televised, which I think is shocking in the 21st century. This is called a ‘public inquiry’ and yet we don't use the main media of TV and radio” (qtd. in Hoggard 8). Cameras were explicitly banned from the Saville tribunal, although they had been used in previous inquiries (“Open” 15). To justify his decision, Lord Saville claimed in his opening statement that public access was readily available through the Inquiry’s website. Still, when the tribunal began hearing witnesses in 2000, most people followed current events through the broadcast media; the lack of live footage decreased both the flow of information to the public and popular interest in the Inquiry.

Because it was a reenactment of a tribunal that had not been televised, the timing of the play’s premiere was significant. It appeared a few months after most of the witnesses were heard and just prior to the time when the findings of the panel were scheduled to be released. The panel’s report, however, was delayed another five years. During that time *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* served as an important public acknowledgement of the ongoing investigation that was often ignored in the post-9/11 turmoil (Scott 58). It reached thousands of additional people when it was adapted into a BBC radio drama that aired in January 2008, and it was replayed in June 2010 after the Saville panel published its findings. Stephanie Billen commented that the radio version “provides a timely reminder of the emotive issues” at stake in the panel’s findings

(25). The play may also have influenced the reception of the Inquiry's final report by encouraging the public to expect a truthful account that would validate the memories of the citizens of Derry and bring them some measure of justice (Upton 191).

By focusing on the atrocities committed by British troops and the Widgery Report's dismissal of their culpability in the massacre, *The Freedom of the City*, *Bloody Sunday*, *Sunday*, and *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* kept a worldwide audience aware of the injustice and the ongoing struggle for an official acknowledgment of the wrongs committed in the name of the British government. The publication of the Saville Inquiry findings marked a much-anticipated formal end to that struggle. The Report of the Saville Inquiry legitimized all four dramatic productions and confirmed their historical accuracy in all but a few details. Even though its representation of Bloody Sunday was at first dismissed by most critics as both inaccurate and extreme (Brustein 34; Lambert 14; Barnes 32), *The Freedom of the City* appears far more reliable after the Saville findings. Furthermore, the Report generally confirms the account given in *Bloody Sunday*, which was specifically mentioned during the tribunal. In contrast, the credibility of Jimmy McGovern's *Sunday* is somewhat diminished by the Saville Report, which proved several of his scenes to be exaggerated. The panel's findings also reveal how Norton-Taylor manipulated facts in his "distillation" of testimony and his choice of characters and statements to use. Nevertheless, the Inquiry's Report showed that the Irish account of the 1972 events was accurate for the most part. Because all of these works were based on that perspective, they provided alternatives to the official government narrative of Bloody Sunday. They convinced many viewers of the truth of what

happened that day and kept them from forgetting the injustice, which was not recognized by the British state until 2010.

On only one major issue does the panel disagree with the view of the citizens of Derry and the literary depictions of Bloody Sunday: the problem of the weapons found on the body of Gerry Donaghey. All agree that Donaghey was shot by a Para while running away with his hands in the air. After he was injured, several men including Leo Young quickly took him to a house where a first aid worker attempted to treat him. His wounds were so serious, however, that the group decided to drive him to the hospital. On their way they were stopped at a roadblock, and everyone was arrested except Donaghey, who died there. The car carrying his body was driven by a soldier to a nearby temporary army base called Bridge Camp. Within minutes of its arrival, soldiers reported that four nail bombs were found on his body (Report 129.1, 130.4, and 132.2-132.3). From here the accounts diverge. Both the docudramas support the belief of the Irish witnesses that the soldiers planted the nail bombs on Donaghey. In doing so, the films emphasize the malevolence of the British troops and their role in covering up the events of the day.

In his commentary Greengrass explains that “Over the years the story has unfolded . . . it’s now accepted, of course, that those nail bombs were planted on the body.” Because *Bloody Sunday* shows several scenes from Donaghey’s perspective including intimate ones with his girlfriend, his death and the subsequent planting of the nail bombs is especially egregious. Soldiers wearing gloves and dressed in black quickly plant the homemade devices before calling for bomb experts to investigate. The film *Sunday* focuses on Donaghey only briefly although it reveals the grief of his sister Mary

and the guilt of his brother-in-law Jack, who works for the British Army. It does not show the Paras planting the nail bombs but makes their actions clear. When Leo tries to help Donaghey, he searches through his pockets to find some identification. After Leo is arrested, he tells investigators that Donaghey could not possibly have been carrying bombs because he would have found them in his search, and would not have gotten into a car with such weapons out of fear for his own safety. The planting of the bombs is also implied when an officer perversely commands, “Say cheese!” as he takes pictures of the dead Donaghey with bombs hanging out of his pockets.

Based on the evidence it collected, the Saville Inquiry was unable to confirm these accounts. It concluded that Donaghey “probably” had nail bombs on him when he was shot although he could not possibly have been preparing to throw one of them at the time of his death (3.111). Recognizing the importance of the issue to the Derry community, the Inquiry strongly defended its position, devoting twenty chapters—over 10% of its report—to a consideration of the case. The Saville investigators determined that the bombs could have been planted only at Bridge Camp and only during a 10-minute window (144.12). Soldiers and/or policemen there would have had to formulate a plan and to acquire the bombs or to make them well in advance of Gerry’s arrival, which they could not have foreseen—a scenario the Inquiry found highly unlikely (145.8). In addition, the panel found that at the time the nail bombs were discovered, the events of the day were not clear enough for the soldiers at Bridge Camp to know that the shootings required a cover-up (144.12). The Report, however, acknowledged that the Inquiry could not “wholly eliminate the possibility that the nail bombs were planted” (145.24) but

asserted unequivocally that whether or not Donaghey had the weapons in his possession, he in no way provoked the fatal attack (145.26). Still, Eamonn McCann maintains that the bombs were planted and writes that the Inquiry's finding on this matter "was the only cloud on the day" the Report was released ("Gerald Donaghey").

Although it does not mention Donaghey by name, *The Freedom of the City* also argues that none of the victims were armed. When the policeman testifies before the Judge, the latter asks about the presence of firearms, calling out the name of each of the three victims in turn. The policeman answers no to each one. Even so, the Judge immediately labels the victims "terrorists" (109). In the play's long flashback, the three are revealed to be peaceful protesters, and the audience comes to see the military reports that they "emerged firing" as unbelievable (134). Even more outrageous is the testimony of a forensic expert who claims that he is "personally convinced" that Michael, by far the least radical of the three, fired on soldiers (143). Like *The Freedom of the City*, *Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* emphasizes the fact that the Paras fired on unarmed protesters in the testimony it includes about the death of Barney McGuigan, who was killed by Soldier F. The audience first hears from a credible witness named Geraldine McBride, who says that she watched as the unarmed McGuigan was gunned down (48-50). When Soldier F later maintains that McGuigan had a gun, viewers know that his claim is false. By focusing on McGuigan's death rather than Gerry Donaghey's, *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* gives the audience the clear impression that none of the victims were carrying weapons.

Even though the Saville Report mostly affirmed the representations of Bloody



Sunday in these productions, the discrepancy concerning the nail bombs highlights the fact that they are pro-Irish accounts that remain separate from the official British version of events. The Saville panel looked for objective truth and plausibility; the Irish wanted to find confirmation of their perspective and closure. The people of Derry cannot accept even the possibility that Donaghey was carrying weapons, and their opinion is supported by some evidence presented at the Saville Inquiry. One of the most compelling arguments for his innocence is that the bullet that killed him passed through one of the pockets in which the nail bombs were discovered; if the weapon had been in the pocket before Donaghey's death, many argue, it would have been damaged or would have exploded. However, the Saville panel ultimately concluded that the nail bomb could have been in his pocket without being touched by the bullet (141.14). Regardless of the evidence, the Irish are emotionally invested in their version of events because they do not want the teenager to be considered a hooligan instead of a victim. Thus there remains an irresolvable gap between the Saville Report and the Irish account of the events.

In its own way, each of these four theatrical productions about Bloody Sunday served as a call for justice. One critic asserted that films like *Bloody Sunday* and *Sunday* are “our only source of information about what has been going on in [Northern Ireland]” (Vir 40). Similarly, the tribunal play kept people aware of the proceedings of the Saville Inquiry even though it had not been televised or consistently covered in the British press. *The Freedom of the City* was the first of the four to present the truth about the 1972 confrontation and the only one to delve significantly into the reasons behind it. Even though it never reached as wide an audience as the other productions, this fictionalized

account allowed its author the freedom and flexibility to explore the reasons behind the tragedy. It is this aspect of *The Freedom of the City*—its “study of poverty,” as Friel called it—that highlights one advantage of drama over docudrama and documentary theatre (qtd. in Watt 31). Because fiction is not tied to “bodies of evidence” as fact-based accounts are, dramatists are free to examine the complexities surrounding an event and to go beyond the specific details to explore underlying causes and their implications. *Sunday* is the only other work that attempts this kind of exploration, but its commitment to presenting minute details hinders its ability to make an effective analysis. The representations of Bloody Sunday indicate that an insistence on facts—like the claims to absolute precision made in *Bloody Sunday: Scenes* and *Sunday*—may not be the best way to communicate essential truths and may not produce the most aesthetically successful works.

Throughout the duration of the Saville Inquiry, many people criticized its process and remained skeptical that it would tell the truth about what happened on Bloody Sunday. Public inquiry expert Angela Hegarty wrote in 2004 that, despite the fact that it approved a second inquiry, the British state was not “prepared to abandon its defense of its version of Bloody Sunday” (“Truth” 245). Sociologist Bill Rolston and criminologist Phil Scraton expected the Inquiry to be compromised by the fact that the presiding judge was British (561). They speculated that any criticism contained in the Report would be limited to “those no longer alive or in power” and/or “non-state actors” like the NICRA (561). The final outcome of the Inquiry was also anticipated with caution by some of the victims’ families. Initially optimistic, they had become angry at the hostile treatment of

some Irish witnesses during questioning (Hayes and Campbell 165-7). The special exceptions made to preserve the anonymity of military witnesses also caused them to worry about the nature of the conclusions (Dawson 174).

However, when the Inquiry's findings were finally released in June 2010, the panel completely exonerated the NICRA and the victims and blamed the British soldiers. Comparing the Saville panel to other British government inquiries, Steve Richards notes that it was "unusual in the clarity and unqualified nature of its judgments" (36). Prime Minister David Cameron immediately acknowledged that government troops had committed "unjustified and unjustifiable" acts on Bloody Sunday ("Bloody Sunday's" 2). Both the Report and the prime minister's statement were extremely well received in the Guildhall Square in Derry, where more than 7000 people gathered to watch television screens that aired Cameron's public apology while families of the victims inside the building "could be seen waving copies of the Report at the window and giving the thumbs-up sign to those outside" ("Bloody Sunday's" 2). One Derry woman succinctly described the effect of the announcement of the Saville findings: "a weight has been lifted and the black cloud is gone" (qtd. in Donnellan 10).

The report of the second investigation guaranteed a revision of the official record of the events on Bloody Sunday. Even though the four dramatic productions considered here could not accomplish that feat, they successfully presented the truth about Bloody Sunday until the record could be changed. They serve as a crucial reminder of the social utility and political power of artistic works. In Richard Schechner's terms, they enacted *transformations*. They helped to transform the opinions of a worldwide audience and to

encourage the British public to seek the truth from their government. They made audiences not only aware of the atrocity itself and the injustice that resulted from it but also aware of the responsibility of governments to acknowledge their wrongdoings in order to prevent further violations of the rights of their citizens.

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