
IRISH FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES PUBLICATIONS

The Year in Review – 2016

Ruth Barton (ed.)

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Introduction

Ruth Barton242

Irish-American Autobiography. The Divided Hearts of Athletes, Priests, Pilgrims, and More

James Silas Rogers

Brian McIlroy243

The Road to God Knows Where/ A Estrada para Deus Sabe Onde

Lance Pettitt and Beatriz Kopschitz Bastos

Díóg O'Connell246

Theirs is the Glory: Arnhem, Hurst and Conflict on Film

David Truesdale and Allan Esler Smith

Eunan O'Halpin249

Introduction: 2016 – The Year in Irish Film and Media Publications

Ruth Barton

It has been a sparse year for publications on Irish film and media, a phenomenon that is hard to reconcile with the prolific output of those industries. Of course, there is a time lag between the appearance of a film or TV show and its academic treatment, yet it is hard to see why so little is coming through from publishers. One possible explanation is that the 1916 commemorations superseded all other events. Certainly, publishers were falling over each other in the past year to keep up with readers' interest in public and private accounts of the Rebellion. Irish cinema, an arriviste art form with little history, may have slid down the priority list. My feeling also is that the shocking underfunding of the Irish Third Level system, and particularly graduate study, are now being felt in the low tally of recently completed PhDs in Irish film. With that comes a lack of the crucial new scholarship needed to keep the discipline thriving. My other concern is that international publishers are not hugely interested in what is, realistically, a minor subject. We still have local publishers, many performing stellar feats on minimal budgets, but when it comes to international rankings, publications from these small Irish publishing houses don't count. Rising scholars, even established scholars, will want the prestige of a major Anglo-American publisher's name running down the spine of their book. Failing that, they may decide to opt for publication via journals, certainly not a bad option given the much greater chance of finding a readership. A further deterrent are the extortionate cover prices now routinely being demanded by book publishers, many of whom have no compunction in charging €80-€100 for a hardback volume. How many of our students can afford to read our books? I hope that I'm wrong, and this is a blip not a trend, but I don't feel the market as it is favours the kind of books I'd like to see coming out on Irish film and media.

Ruth Barton is lecturer in Film Studies at Trinity College Dublin and the author of a number of books on Irish cinema, including *Jim Sheridan: Framing the Nation* (2002); *Irish National Cinema* (2004) and *Acting Irish in Hollywood* (2006). She is also editor of *Screening Irish-America* (2009). Her most recent monograph is *Rex Ingram: Visionary Director of the Silent Screen* (University Press of Kentucky, 2014). She is currently co-editing, with Simon Trezise, a reader on music and silent cinema.

Irish-American Autobiography. The Divided Hearts of Athletes, Priests, Pilgrims, and More.

James Silas Rogers

Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017.

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208 pages

Reviewer: **Brian McIlroy**

Academic works on autobiography seem to have come into their own in the last twenty years, and James Silas Rogers' contribution to this corpus is a welcome addition. He focuses specifically on Irish-American texts, building no doubt on his previous publications (2009, 2013) and perhaps seeking to serve as a counterpoint or supplement to Liam Harte's focus on Irish autobiography (2009, 2017). As the genre dares to put the self at the centre of investigation, if not celebration, one might be forgiven for thinking that the current "selfie" culture and the ubiquity of Facebook and other social media platforms for self-expression might make book-length navel-gazing redundant in the future. Yet, any perusal of the bookstores still operating shows this not to be the case: both biographies and autobiographies comprise a fair chunk of shelf space.

It's not hard to see why. Nearly every talk show on television has someone promoting his or her memoir or life story. The celebrity book that promises to go behind the scenes, to the "real" life, is simply an act of seduction, but one for which many are happy to fall. The books are guilty pleasures for readers, who seek to confirm prejudices or find ennobling stories. But it's not always famous people who write autobiographies, and these lesser-known works should also claim the attention of academics in order to understand a particular period or set of circumstances. For years, I have casually made a distinction between autobiography and memoir, treating the former as personal investigation and thoughts, and the latter more about the significant people one meets on one's life path. This loose barrier between the two terms seems to have eroded in the critical discourse, and perhaps one is actually judging a work based on its narrative complexity and "insight" rather than its chronological and external veracity. Creative non-fiction is all the rage in MFA Creative Writing programmes, and it may simply be that in the past we didn't have the right vocabulary for these works beyond degrees of plausibility. In some sense, to write an autobiography is to make a documentary film of one's life, a Griersonian "creative treatment of actuality." The best autobiographies seem to know this intuitively, and yet they all run the risk of the reader's patience, who must be both entertained and convinced the inevitable embellishments are not outright and egregious lies.

Rogers sees the act of autobiography as an ecumenical religious activity, though I think it would be fairer to say that it has spiritual significance for all participants. His book knowingly only looks at Irish-American Catholic experiences, though this has the virtue of allowing the reader to compare the impact of this cultural background at different historical junctures, from the late nineteenth to the early 21st century.

Rogers divides his book up into ten chapters in his effort to prove his thesis that the assumed "Ethnic Fade" as the Irish assimilated into mainstream America has been overplayed, and that Catholic Irish heritage informs all the autobiographies under scrutiny. The critic begins by examining sportsmen, including the boxers John L. Sullivan and James J. Corbett. Their autobiographies are of note not for the sparkling prose but the clear desire for the men and their class to be seen as moving from "shanty-town" to "lace-curtain" Irish. The desire for respectability and the demand of a form of respect undergird these life stories.

Corbett did after all become known as “Gentleman Jim.” It’s not fully clear why Rogers chooses to discuss Barbara Mullen’s autobiography *Life is an Adventure* (1937), published when the actress was only twenty-four. Her film and television career were all ahead of her, so what we get instead is a reflection on the impact of an absent father (Pat Mullen, who assisted Robert Flaherty in making *Man of Aran*) and a controlling mother who wanted her to be a dancer. Such an autobiography captures the realities of single parenting in America in the 1920s and 1930s, though Barbara was to reconcile with her father, a moment that ends the narrative. The inclusion of Barbara Mullen as the sole female rewarded with a chapter makes one wonder if men and women approach autobiography differently, or whether the importance of Irish-American heritage is more significant to men’s lives. I would have liked to hear more from Rogers on this possible distinction.

Certainly, Rogers takes us on a journey to rethink the actual term autobiography. He writes a chapter on *New Yorker* journalist Joseph Mitchell, who, although from Scottish heritage, often wrote of the Irish communities, and by all accounts loved reading James Joyce and drinking in Irish bars. I suppose in a way the journalist by immersing himself in the community begins to record his own life as much as those around him. In much the same way, Jackie Gleason’s *The Honeymooners*, a long-running TV show purportedly about two working-class families, draws on a specific Brooklyn Irish of Gleason’s childhood. It’s thus not off the mark to consider the TV show as a kind of autobiography, a working through of the social amelioration of an ethnic community. Much of the humour of the series revolved around the desire for upward mobility’s trappings, such as playing golf, but equally an inability to carry them off with confidence.

Rogers devotes his shortest chapter to priest memoirs of the mid-twentieth century. One receives the impression that this must have been a tedious task, as so many of these works rarely provide the moments of human weakness and insight that draw us to life-writing. No Augustine *Confessions* here. He does find an interesting work, Donald Hayne’s 1963 *Batter My Heart*. Hayne appeared to be bisexual and was an eager student of comparative religions, so it was only a matter of time before he would leave the seminary. Rogers is disappointed, however, that such an interesting man (who became Cecil B. DeMille’s religious advisor) never seems to let his cerebral guard down. And I think this tells us something about the success of an autobiography; it’s normally one that captures emotional moments that thrust the reader into the writer’s remembered vulnerable past.

One of the strongest chapters in the volume is Rogers’s essay on Frank McCourt’s *Angela’s Ashes: A Memoir* (1996). The memoir won McCourt international renown, though his unsparing depiction of Limerick provoked widespread unhappiness in Ireland. Accusations of embellishment and exaggeration were levelled against McCourt. Rogers focuses in on the word “Tis” and the way it pops up in the narrative, not so much as an affirmative – it is what it is or what has been said – but rather as a kind of oral performance, allowing Rogers to see its use as a kind of stand-in for “Maybe”. It’s hard to see how one can truly take McCourt to task if he is writing from his own remembrance of things past. Even if one gets particular elements empirically incorrect, an autobiography lets the reader know how the past felt to the writer.

Another strong chapter involves the South Boston Irish community and the autobiography by Michael Patrick MacDonald, *All Souls: A Family Story From Southie* (1999). MacDonald’s work all too vividly depicts a community in abject misery, suffering from an illusion that they are a self-regulating community. Indeed, Netflix recently did a series on the Irish Mob, and included individuals from this South Boston neighbourhood. What’s striking is that the community has no longer any strong role for the church, so the ethnic fade seems to have occurred and the only constant is the specific geography, a ghetto

perhaps. And yet, it's a community riddled with crime and poverty. Even one of its supposed street heroes – Whitey Bulger – turns out to have been an FBI informant.

Perhaps an original turn in the book is an analysis of a few memoirs that look specifically at growing up in suburbia. The general consensus is that the suburbs are where the ethnic fade is at its most acute, as escape from the inner-city has been achieved. Yet, Dan Barry's *Pull me Up: A Memoir* (2004), a depiction of a Long Island community that was hastily formed in the early 1960s searchingly explores the tentacles of his parents' Irish and Irish-American background. Rogers is surely correct to argue that the suburban memoir is a more generally held experience, and indeed one where the Catholic Church reasserted itself as integral to the community.

Rogers ends his entertaining book by considering the recuperative nature for Irish-Americans of visiting Ireland. Much has been written on this "Roots" phenomenon. I must confess I may have rolled my eyes on occasion at the way every American president must have his Irish connections researched, but among the less famous one cannot deny the healing power of understanding where your parents or grandparents came from. Naturally, there is a commercial aspect to this. Rogers quotes the voice-over for a Mastercard ad directed by Jim Sheridan: "Plane tickets to Ireland \$1200. Train fare to the town where your mother was born: \$63. Drinks at the pub where she met your father: \$8. Finally finding out where your mother is coming from: Priceless." (150). Rogers seems to end his study with the reasonable belief that autobiographies are acts of healing or a coming to terms. The best not only order experience to explain how you became the person you've become, but pick out key emotionally troubling moments, give them a proper airing, and hopefully lay them gently to rest.

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Brian McIlroy is Professor of Film Studies at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of *Irish Cinema: An Illustrated History* (1988); *Shooting to Kill: Filmmaking and the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland* (1998); and editor of *Genre and Cinema: Ireland and Transnationalism* (2007).

The Road to God Knows Where / A Estrada Para Deus Sabe Onde.

Lance Pettitt and Beatriz Kopschitz Bastos

Florianópolis SC: Editora da UFSC, 2015.

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192 pages

Reviewer: **Díóg O’Connell**

Alan Gilsenan’s 1988 documentary *The Road to God Knows Where* is taken out, dusted off and re-issued in the third edition of the series edited by Lance Pettitt and Beatriz Kopschitz-Bastos (2015) and published by Editora UFSC in Brazil, in both English and Portuguese, the first two being: *The Uncle Jack* (2011) and *The Woman Who Married Clark Gable* (2013). Outlined in the introduction to this publication, the aim of the series is to publish the screenplays of “outstanding films from Irish cinema” as a way of appreciating them in their “cinematic and cultural afterlives”. This book is a welcome addition to the growing and diverse range of publications about Irish cinema in the past two decades. What we have here is a slim and focused study of one film, *The Road to God Knows Where*, with DVD attached, two essays, script and an article by the director himself, Alan Gilsenan, placing this documentary in a wider historical, cultural and production context. The principal application of such a publication, from an academic perspective, is in the teaching and research of Irish film. Screening the film with attendant texts provides a live experience for the student and teacher to explore meaning as it has been constructed and is being constructed. As a teacher who has a clear memory of the production context of this film, it makes for an enlivening pedagogical experience, whereby the students also contribute to knowledge formation. The digital age has changed the experience of learning from “master and student” to one that is interactive – learn, teach and be taught at the same time, for both teacher and student alike. This publication provides a resource in its slim volume to engage interactively – viewing the film, reading the script, studying the essays and presenting one’s own critique – in a limited way. It lays the marker, and suggests new ways of publishing that suit the student (and teacher) of the twenty-first century in a more relevant way. So the aspiration and objective of the publication are well placed. However, the question is, does it deliver?

The selection process for this series remains elusive. Acknowledging that “the films in this series may not be the best known, widely available or commercially successful films of Irish cinema”, the editors argue that they “warrant this greater exposure not only in their own right as individual creative artefacts but to add to the richness and variety of what constitutes Irish moving image culture in the twenty-first century” (Pettitt and Kopschitz-Bastos 2015: 7). Given that *The Road to God Knows Where* was made in 1988 when Ireland was a very different place, is the series working on the premise that art is timeless, that films and documentaries withstanding the test of time can be re-visited and re-explored to provide new insights for new audiences in new eras? Certainly true of many films and documentaries of the past hundred years, the premise raises questions about meaning and interpretation. Are they embodied in the text, are they created by the audience and do they change over time? If this is the criteria used in selecting Gilsenan’s *The Road to God Knows Where*, then it is fitting. This documentary presents a multi-layered text, at the level of content and style, to be re-visited by new audiences. It is socially, politically and culturally relevant and timeless.

As this book reveals, from a number of perspectives, this film’s production context and life beyond its filmic space tell us a lot about the film itself and the film’s wider context, making it a relevant case study. Firstly, it was Channel 4’s interest in Ireland in the 1980s which led to the production of films like *Mother Ireland* (Anne Crilly, 1988) and *Hush-a-bye*

Baby (Margo Harkin, 1989) among others. As part of this series of programmes, Gilsonan's documentary elucidates on a very particular moment in Ireland's history, both social and political but also filmic. Gilsonan, more or less a first time director, was not part of a wider co-operative or political organisation but had cut his teeth in Trinity College's Film Soc. By his own admission, he was very lucky to get the gig.

A confluence of factors emerged. Gilsonan writes in his contribution to the publication, "the plan was to make a film about what it was to be young and Irish ... [Channel 4] wanted a young company to take it on and we seemed to fit the bill" (Pettitt and Kopschitz-Bastos 2015: 64). Gilsonan's essay gives a flavour of the process, how they came to be commissioned, the safe-guards put in place and the privileges of freedom and independence in what is increasingly a highly controlled production sector. This is clearly revealed when he was instructed by Executive Producer Davy Hammond, over a double Black Bush in Doheny & Nesbitt's pub, "to make the bloody film that I really wanted to make" (Pettitt and Kopschitz-Bastos 2015: 65). While the tongue-in-cheek tone suggests that this might not be a strictly citable recollection, it does reveal the unusual context for the production of the film and brings to mind Orson Welles and Jean Luc Godard among others, who were remarkably fortunate, at one time, to have the trust of executives, and, yet, the huge responsibility to deliver. So while the tone may be light hearted, the task in hand was anything but easy. Like other talented filmmakers who got their first big opportunity based on a gamble rather than reputation, Gilsonan produced the goods, and the feature documentary that emerged got people talking.

The film at the time evoked many reactions and responses, some of which are recounted in the book. Reaction was mixed, and came from many different fronts, some with an agenda particularly around the perception of Ireland and Irish identity, and how that should be presented. At the same time, there was another reaction, difficult to capture in words, but one no less real. The effect of this film at this time was to satisfy a craving hunger for Irish film and documentaries, that would be deeply resonant and current, that would come from within the fabric of culture and would reflect back real and current experience. This response might be hard to imagine from the vantage point of today, when the Irish film and television production sector is buzzing. But in 1988, seeing an Irish film that reflected back stories from the ground was a rare and precious experience. This publication enables a screening by the inclusion of the DVD, and taken with the essays, goes some way to remind us of this and, far from being a trip down memory lane, the re-viewing can ignite new interpretations and insights, particularly to a mixed age audience. The inclusion of the DVD is central to this.

Irish cinema scholars, Harvey O'Brien and Ruth Barton contribute an essay each to this volume – O'Brien focussing on Alan Gilsonan's oeuvre and placing this film within this space while Barton presents a close textual analysis of *The Road to God Knows Where*. In both essays, what has been learned since 1988, about documentary, Ireland and changing cultures, shapes the writing to address the film in all its complexity. Ruth Barton unpacks the complex and contradictory relationship the film has to its content – structured around the traditional and dominant tropes that have shaped Irish cinema for decades – emigration, the Catholic Church and the Troubles – and explores how these traditions can also shape the modern era. She further discusses how romanticism and realism, as Luke Gibbons argues (Gibbons et al, 1987), are not strictly defined concepts in Irish screen narratives, but fluid and interchangeable. Barton grapples with the problematic representation of Travellers, which is no less contentious here than in many other films.

The dominant tropes of Irish cinema that structure the narrative could be viewed as traditional and predictable, and yet their overarching tone is quite radical. In the not too distant future of Irish cinema in the 1990s, these defining themes will be seen as what's holding Irish cinema back, a millstone hard to shake off. This reading, juxtaposed with the

personal essay of Gilsean, places the film beyond that of an auteurist piece, into its wider cultural context.

O'Brien, through his survey of Gilsean's work, reveals at one level how this body of work eschews the strict cataloguing of an auteurist study, and yet when the director's personal experiences are introduced, particularly his health, the work gains an added explanation. The intentionalist fallacy disavows the director of explanation and this is widely accepted in Film Studies. Yet, the Cultural Studies approach has come full circle, to render meaning meaningless, in some instances. These essays combined approach the subject like a mosaic, not assuming one meta-meaning, but providing the reader and the viewer with different levels of understanding. The work can be personal and political and the meaning can be created in different spheres. The audience works on their own interpretation. Is this what great art does? Is this what film, withstanding the test of time, does?

The editors' introduction suggests that one of the motivations for the series is the inclusion of the script in the publication. This area of study has been gaining ground for about ten years with the establishment of the international Screenwriting Research Network, an organisation that holds annual conferences and publishes a journal to promote the scholarly study of Screenwriting. Thus, this publication is to be welcomed. And yet, when scrutinised closely, the inclusion of the script might be the weakest link. The script for this documentary is included without any context. It is unclear if this is the working script, a shooting script, an editing script or simply a transcript. While documentary scripts are nowhere as institutionalised as film scripts, there are different templates. This script emphasises the dialogue of the characters with no reference to visualisation and little to sound. The pace, mood or tone, or other narrative strategies, rarely come across. What, in effect, does the publication of the script contribute to the publication and the series?

Watching *The Road to God Knows Where* and reading the essays in the book, from the vantage point of the twenty-first century raised in my mind the question of irony. Does the documentary take itself too seriously, or not seriously at all? Is its tone ironic, rhetorical or tongue-in-cheek? More importantly, is its narrative still relevant? With the peace process in place for over twenty years, the Troubles are deemed over. The Catholic Church has lost its firm grip on Irish society but the abortion issue is still far from resolved. Generating these questions of narrative, politically and aesthetically, affirms its place as a worthy publication and, notwithstanding one or two reservations, an assured source of learning.

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Díóg O'Connell lectures in Film & Media Studies, at IADT, Dublin, Ireland, specialising in Irish Cinema, Television Drama and Scriptwriting. She is the author of *New Irish Storytellers: Narrative Strategies in Film* (Intellect, 2010) and co-editor of *Documentary in a Changing State* (Cork University Press, 2012). She has written extensively on Irish Cinema, Television Drama and Screenwriting for academic books, journals and magazines and co-wrote the Irish entry on the history of Irish female screenwriters for *Women Screenwriters: an International Guide* (Palgrave Macmillan 2015). Her current research explores early Irish cinema and the contribution made by women.

Theirs is the Glory: Arnhem, Hurst and Conflict on Film.

David Truesdale and Allan Esler Smith

Solihull: Helion & Co., 2016.

ISBN 9781911096634

355 pages

Reviewer: **Eunan O’Halpin**

That *Theirs is the Glory* spans two distinct genres, military history and film, is perhaps appropriate for a book in which the bridge at Arnhem holds centre stage. It will be of interest alike to battlefield buffs and to students of film, although both may find some fault with the treatment and with the book’s structure, approach, and remarkable weight (1.2 kilos for 355 A5 pages). It discusses conflict-themed films directed by Brian Desmond Hurst (1895-1986). Hurst, a Belfast man wounded at Gallipoli in 1915, was afterwards deemed unfit for front-line service and was assigned to a labour battalion. Bored with his lot, he deserted in 1917, joining the Royal Army Service Corps, and was again wounded on the Western Front.

The authors are David Truesdale, a prolific and respected writer whose works focus on the experiences of ordinary soldiers rather than of the generals and grand strategists who often decided their fate; and Allan Esler Smith, Hurst’s grand-nephew and administrator of his estate. Sir Roger Moore, veteran of seven James Bond movies, contributes a foreword in which he paints an affectionate portrait of Hurst, who financed his studies at RADA.

Raised in loyalist East Belfast, Hurst was proud equally of Ulster and of Ireland: he famously said that “I would fight for England against anybody except Ireland ... an Englishman is worth twenty foreigners ... an Irishman is worth fifty Englishmen”. Openly gay, he found 1930s Hollywood, where his great mentor was the Irish-American director John Ford, rather more congenial than provincial Belfast. During and after the Second World War he worked mainly in Britain, converting to Roman Catholicism in 1947, and producing both privately-commissioned dramas and public information films.

The authors concentrate on Hurst’s 1946 film *Theirs is the Glory*, in which British veterans of Operation Market Garden, the ill-conceived attempt by airborne forces to seize key river and canal crossings in the Netherlands in September 1944 which if successful was predicted to bring victory against Germany by Christmas, returned to their Arnhem battleground to re-enact their bruising experience of combat, defeat, and escape or capture. The book also provides a summary discussion of other films directed by Hurst which portray armed conflict. These include the Irish War of Independence-themed *Ourselves Alone* (1936); *The Lion Has Wings* of 1939 which extolled British air power; *Miss Grant Goes to the Door* (1940), an interesting Ministry of Information short film made to raise public awareness of the danger of German parachutists; and *The Malta Story* (1953), which is primarily about aerial warfare of which Hurst had no direct knowledge. In addition, chapters are devoted to discussion of the experiences of individual soldiers who fought at Arnhem and then re-enacted their roles in *Theirs is the Glory*; to their weaponry and that of their German opponents; and, somewhat confusingly, to the Allied attempt to seize the Dardanelles in 1915 through the landings at Gallipoli. It seems a bit odd, just because Hurst fought there, to devote a whole chapter to the theme of “Gallipoli airbrushed from history – The 6th Royal Irish Rifles”. That surely is an argument for another day, although in strategic conception as a dramatic blow behind enemy lines designed to shorten the war, and in its calamitous failure, the Dardanelles campaign and Operation Market Garden could certainly be examined side by side, even had Hurst not fought in one and directed a film which recreated aspects of the other.

The authors argue that, like the American war veteran and director Sam Fuller (1912-1997), celebrated for his brutal portrayal of violence on screen, Hurst's visceral experience of combat and loss resulted in an unusual degree of realism to his explorations of armed conflict. More problematically, they argue that the central role played by Arnhem veterans in *Theirs is the Glory* lends the film a particular authenticity. That is how the film was marketed, but against this stands the argument that combat does not lend itself to literal reproduction of individual or collective experience: why should using veterans to re-enact actual fighting necessarily make a film look more realistic? After all, there are good reasons why people have to be taught how to act. Comparable exercises seeking *verité* through the use of veterans to re-enact their war roles come to mind. These include the 1948 Norwegian film *Kampen om tungtvannet*, a reconstruction of the famous attack on the Norsk Hydro heavy water plant at Rjukan in 1943 – later dramatized in the American film *The Heroes of Telemark* (1965) – which featured four men who had participated in the original operation. The Special Operations Executive (SOE) agents Jacqueline Nairne and Harry Rée appeared in *Now It Can Be Told* (1946), a British Information Service film describing the training and activities of British agents despatched to Occupied France, while the head of SOE's French Section, Maurice Buckmaster, appeared at the start of *Odette* (1953) which deals with the adventures of agent Odette Sansom, and SOE's Vera Atkins played herself in the film. Similarly, Free French intelligence chief Andre Dewavrin (codenamed Colonel Passy) offered an exceedingly wooden self-portrait in the French Resistance film *L'Armée des Ombres* (1969). Actors generally do a much more convincing job. An example is the successful war film *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), dealing with the fictional exploits of a team of saboteurs behind enemy lines. Several of the main protagonists had considerable combat experience – Anthony Quayle with SOE in Albania, David Niven in the regular army in Normandy, Percy Herbert in Malaya – but more importantly all were also trained actors.

A chapter on "Hurst and conflict on film" is of particular interest. The authors point out that one of the principal actors in *Ourselves Alone* (1936), which ran for four weeks at Dublin's Grafton Cinema, was John Loder. Loder, who played a British officer, had actually taken part in the suppression of the 1916 Rising, because he was in Dublin on leave visiting his father General Lowe. Loder gave the Imperial War Museum an interesting account of how he escorted Patrick Pearse to Kilmainham jail, the rebel leader presenting him with a cap badge in thanks for his courtesy. *Ourselves Alone* was banned in Northern Ireland because it was wrongly assumed to be pro-republican. A headline in de Valera's *Irish Press*, covering a critical review of the film, declared "Hurst to make 1916", though that was not to be. I noted other coincidences in the text: while taking a cigarette break at Denham Studios in England, a couple of the Arnhem veterans shared a light with the urbane James Mason, who was acting in Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out* (1947), a film adapted from an F.L. Green novel and akin to *Ourselves Alone* in its IRA theme and in its sympathetic portrayal of the contesting rebels and police officers. Hurst's earlier film *On the Night of the Fire* (1939), in which Mason had also featured, had been based on another F.L. Green novel. We might also note that prime minister Clement Attlee, who attended the London premiere of *Theirs is the Glory*, was like Hurst a veteran of Gallipoli, where he had supervised the successful departure of the rear-guard from Suvla Bay with his usual quiet competence.

One disappointing aspect of the book is that there is no systematic explanation of why *Theirs is the Glory* was made when it was made. The British Gaumont project clearly required not only government blessing, but official support with logistics, transport, accommodation, equipment, weapons, release of service personnel and so on. Was that reflected in the script and in the filming? The film did not delve into the deeply flawed plans for Operation Market Garden, still less suggest that ultimate responsibility for the disaster lay with Britain's most celebrated soldier Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, a devious and narcissistic man

always careful to share out blame amongst others and to accumulate accolades for himself. It was only with the publication of Sir Harry Hinsley's official history of *British Intelligence in the Second World War* in 1988 that it became clear that the Market Garden debacle was partly explained by a considerable failure of intelligence analysis: decoded German radio traffic indicated that various beaten-up German armoured units were regrouping and refitting in the area, but British generals assumed that these would be in no condition to mount sustained resistance.

Another key point concerns the Polish airborne units who participated in Market Garden, to whose contribution only one passing reference was made in *Theirs is the Glory*. Was this because the British government, who had already turned away from the Polish government-in-exile by recognising the Soviet-backed administration installed in Warsaw, did not want the film to highlight free Polish military achievements and sacrifice fighting alongside the western allies? Surely this matter deserved some exploration.

The authors write that their main aim was to present Hurst's work bearing on conflict "in context – both militarily and with appropriate content from the film scripts, or other sources – and we will leave the critiquing to more qualified authorities on film and film history". Their modesty is to be commended: they have produced not a tightly argued text, but a series of well-illustrated independent essays on some though not every aspect of Hurst's work as a re-creator of conflict on screen. In that they have achieved what they set out to do, clearing the way for further research on and analysis of Hurst and of the films which he made.

Eunan O'Halpin is Bank of Ireland Professor of Contemporary Irish History, and Director of the Trinity Centre for Contemporary Irish History. He was previously Professor of Government at Dublin City University (1998-2000). Educated at UCD and Cambridge, where he researched the history of the interwar British Treasury, he has written widely on aspects of 20th century Irish and British history and politics, his most recent monograph being *Spying on Ireland: British Intelligence and Irish Neutrality during the Second World War* (Oxford, 2008). His current research interests include Afghanistan and the belligerents during the Second World War, and fatalities during the Irish revolution, 1916-1921.