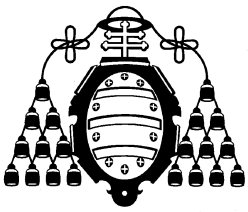

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ACROSS THE BARRICADE: HOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS IS EXPLORED IN *DERRY GIRLS*

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Derry Girls (2018) is a highly popular and acclaimed comedy series created by Lisa McGee that explores the lives of various Catholic teenagers living through the Troubles in Derry, Northern Ireland during the 1990s. It is thus a piece of media that offers commentary and insight on many aspects relating to this historical timeframe, a period that has shaped Northern Ireland and its people profoundly. The show has garnered attention due to its depiction of the Troubles, hopeful messaging, characters and humorous approach. It thus manages to depict a vision of this period that is worthy of analysis.

One episode in particular will be the focus of this analysis: "Across The Barricade". This is the first episode of season two. Its main focus is laid on a programme that places the Catholic protagonists in contact with other Protestant teenagers. It thus explores the relationship between both groups, which were in conflict during the period. This episode essentially encapsulates how *Derry Girls* (2018) deals with tensions between Catholics and Protestants in the Troubles.

The main objective of this paper is to delve into how "Across the Barricade" deals with the complex relationship between Catholics and Protestants. It also aims to contextualise the real-life influences behind the episode, establish how it fits in with previous media that dealt with these relationships, and explore how it depicts teenagers and their everyday lives in the Troubles. These issues will be explored by looking at the background regarding the tumultuous relationship between Catholics and Protestants and how previous pieces of media touch upon it. The analysis will also pay close attention to the mutual perception of the characters who represent both groups within the episode and how they are constructed. It will also be argued that the episode offers an allegory of the conflict.

This paper will do the following:

First of all, it will give a historical context. This will be done first by looking at post-Partition, a crucial point after the division of Ireland between Northern Ireland and the Irish state. This point determined the relationship and ideals of Catholics and Protestants and established many focal points of the tensions that would develop further. Then, the paper will delve into the Catholic Church, its key role in education, and how it

was viewed by both Catholics and Protestants. Next, we will look at the Troubles themselves. Finally, the Peace Process will be touched upon, as it establishes the period of reduced violence and relative peace which the conflict has been at since the Good Friday Agreement until 2018, when the show was created, and nowadays. This will serve to further explain how the episode deals with the Troubles and the historical conflict between Catholics and Protestants.

This paper will also look at other pieces of media, with a special focus on cinema. It will explore the evolution of the representation of the conflict. Importantly, it will explore ways in which Protestants and Catholics have been portrayed in media to determine the existence of stereotypes. This will also allow for a direct comparison of how *Derry Girls* (2018) and this episode in particular construct their own characters and whether they follow or deviate from previous patterns.

Afterward, we will look at the show as a whole, what it is about, its main characters, and general message. How the rest of the show portrays Protestants and Catholics will also be discussed, as it allows for the contextualisation of the episode itself and how it deals with their relationship during the Troubles.

Finally, the episode itself will be analysed. The real-life inspirations behind the episode will be explored. First, we will look at education, as the separation between Catholics and Protestants and programmes based on intercommunity contact are important to the construction of the episode. Afterwards, this paper will explore how the whole episode deals with the Troubles, as the conflict is explored through allegorical means. Importantly, it will also look at the treatment of the relationship between Catholics and Protestants and how diverse stereotypes and social context influence their perception as completely separate. The episode's exploration of teenage characters will also be looked at, as this is crucial to how its narrative is constructed. Finally, we will look at how the ending ties all of these ideas together.

This paper will ultimately explore the relationship between Catholics and Protestants and how it is depicted in *Derry Girl*'s "Across The Barricade", looking at historical aspects, previous pieces of media, the construction of its characters and how they view each other, how they interact, the allegory of the Troubles present in the episode, and its ultimate call for understanding between both groups.

1. Historical Background

1.1 Social consequences of Partition: Historical background

On 3 May 1921, a crucial event took place in Ireland's history that went on to define the island's political landscape up to today: The Partition of Ireland into Northern Ireland, with a Protestant majority, and the Irish Free State, with a Catholic majority. This caused there to be considerable minority groups in both areas that were discriminated against. In Northern Ireland, about one-third of the population was Catholic (Dobrianska, 2021), while the majority and the government were Protestant. This profoundly affected the lives of both populations in Ulster, shaping people's lives and relations in a way that eventually led to the subsequent Troubles as tensions rose.

Protestants, on the one hand, held power at the government level. To maintain this power, there was a process of "ghettoisation" (Brewer and Higgins, 1998), separating Catholics into concrete areas. Gerrymandering, the concept of drawing districts or electoral lines to benefit some groups or parties politically, was also common practice. In addition to this, Catholics had an economic disadvantage compared to the Protestant community, with Catholic households having considerably higher levels of unemployment, income support, and children in non-earning families (O'Reilly & Stevenson, 1997), which the Catholics viewed as caused by Protestant discrimination (Borooah, et al. 1995). This thus led to the othering of the Catholic population, as they were discriminated against and isolated, and to the building of separate communities. It also led to a sense of class difference, as many of the grievances held by Catholics against Protestants also originated from their lower social standing (Borooah, et al. 1995). As an oppressed minority in Northern Ireland, they also faced violence from paramilitary groups such as the Ulster Protestant Association, from the police, many of whom were Protestant, and from the general population. (Brewer and Higgins, 1998).

The Protestant population also saw their identities as constantly under threat due to the presence of this Catholic minority. One reason was related to how Northern Ireland was constituted and separated from the rest of the island, as they wanted to stay within the United Kingdom. In their view, the reunification of the country could happen in the future due to Catholic pressure. The ideology and opinions of the Protestants in Northern Ireland were thus constructed as anti-Catholic (Brewer and Higgins, 1998). In

addition, they blamed Catholics themselves for the perceived economic disparities between both groups (Borooah, et al. 1995). This all resulted in harmful stereotypes being perpetuated. “Taigs” (a derogatory term for Roman Catholics, used by Irish Protestants and Ulster loyalists) were perceived as superstitious, scruffy, treacherous, lazy, drunk, and priest-dominated. They were also considered disloyal and violent. These stereotypes were intensified due to the emergence of the IRA and their early and unsuccessful attempts to overthrow the government, blamed on the entire Catholic population (Brewer and Higgins, 1998). It was not just a question of preserving their identity as Protestants and Unionists, but they also saw their economic status as being under threat, with The Ulster Protestant League even being formed to protect Protestant jobs. Ultimately, these ideas led them to intensify the oppression in various ways.

These tensions resulted in the Belfast Troubles, a period that spanned from 1920 to 1922 when Belfast was established as a battleground between Catholics and Protestants. The city’s conflict originated from this larger context, and there were many episodes of brutal violence for its duration. It resulted in the deaths of about 500 people (Cunningham, 2013).

Catholics thus felt displaced, vulnerable to violence, and impoverished. This ultimately caused them to fall back onto their institutions for protection, leading to the domination of the Catholic Church in many areas of their lives. One of the most noteworthy ones was education.

1.2 The Catholic Church and education in Post-Partition Northern Ireland: The “state within a state”

During the period of post-Partition in Northern Ireland, the Church attended to needs such as education, health, and assumed leadership on political matters (Brewer and Higgins, 1998). This turned the institution into what Rafferty describes as “a state within a state”, an internal actor separate from political issues, allowing for the spread of Catholic ideas (Rafferty, 2008).

Education saw a growing contrast between segregated schools. Most Protestant schools were controlled and funded by the Unionist government and their Church strongly supported it, Meanwhile, the Catholic Church kept control over its own

institutions, rejecting state interference (Biaggi, 2019). It is said that this separation further strengthened the division within these communities, as subjects such as religion or history were taught in vastly different ways, perpetuating Protestant values in state-funded schools and Catholic values in Church-funded ones.

This in turn caused Protestants to see the institution as what Rafferty calls “the great bogeyman” (Rafferty, 2008), an important and dangerous actor in Northern Irish society, as they already saw them as present in every field of everyday life in the Republic of Ireland. They were blamed for the violence perpetrated by the Catholic population and accused of pursuing the unification of Ireland (Brewer and Higgins, 1998).

However, by the 1950s, cracks began to show in the relationship between the Catholic population and the Church. We begin to see the institution no longer has as much control over ideology, as the Catholic population’s politics shifted focus towards identity politics and their own protection and away from the defence of the figure of the Church (Rafferty, 2008).

There were some attempts at mutual understanding between Catholics, Protestants, and the institutions that represented them. Thus, while Catholic religious figures consistently opposed violent action, the Northern Irish State flew Union Jacks at half mast on the death of Pope John XXIII in 1963 (Brewer and Higgins, 1998). Still, the general climate was one of mutual distrust and underlying violence. These growing tensions eventually led to what is known as the Troubles.

1.3 1972 - The Troubles: Consequences for the population

The date of the start of the Troubles is contested. Many claim that their origin dates to the civil rights movements that developed in the late 1960s. Influenced by the larger international context of international activism, such as the Civil Rights Movement or student protests against the Vietnam War in the United States, protesters called for the end of discrimination against the Catholic population in Northern Irish society (Mansour, 2021). They, however, were met with repression by Protestant actors and police forces. The turning point for the Troubles happened on 5 October 1968 when the RUC suppressed a civil rights march in Derry. The Royal Ulster Constabulary, the

police force in Northern Ireland, charged into the crowd and left many injured. This was subsequently followed by extended media coverage and various days of protests.

This culminated in Bloody Sunday on the 30th of January 1972, when a Civil Rights march in Derry resulted in 13 civilians dead and 14 injured. Violence escalated with the appearance of paramilitary on both sides: the Catholic-supported IRA and Protestant-supported UVF and UDA. Their actions led to violence and a status quo that affected many in their everyday lives. Bombings, assassinations, and riots became commonplace. Police and soldiers were also much more present in urban settings, as they often conducted searches, set up checkpoint controls, and investigated bomb scares.

The Troubles resulted in more social division, as the relationship between Protestants and Catholics was further fragmented. Protestant perceptions of Catholics as a threat intensified as IRA attacks happened. This became an issue of law and order to them and allowed for the amplification of stereotypes such as their disloyalty and lack of morality (Brewer & Higgins, 1998).

We also saw further separation between the Catholic Church and the population. Politically, the institution was losing influence. Bloody Sunday proved to be a point of union between Catholics and the institution as the Church condemned the police force's violent response. However, many bishops expressed condemnation of IRA actions on many occasions. Some priests even refused to give Catholic burials to terrorists (Brewer and Higgins, 1998). This thus put the Church in opposition to not only Unionists but also some Catholics politically. One crucial point was seen in the 1981 hunger strike, led by Irish republican prisoners. They demanded the restoration of their status as "political prisoners" and various rights, garnering widespread attention. The Catholic Church, however, claimed that these actions did not align with Catholic practices as they essentially constituted voluntary suicide (Brewer and Higgins, 1998).

Throughout the Troubles, countless lives were altered. Tragically, between 1969 and 1998, 3,530 people were killed, 1,840 of them civilians, and 47,500 were injured (Bosi and De Fazio, 2017). In addition, the period further divided Catholics and Protestants into neighbourhoods, as coexistence became even more difficult, with many of these separations being maintained even today. The Troubles instilled fear in the population, as people could be killed in any place in their everyday lives, leaving them

with trauma that many still carry and has even affected newer generations up to today (Thomson, 2023). A considerable amount of the population was also involved directly with The Troubles as they joined State forces, paramilitary groups, or were prisoners during the period.

This situation led to a peace process being necessary for many, as different groups worked towards this goal behind the scenes. In August 1994 the IRA announced a ceasefire, paving the way for the possibility.

1.4 The Peace Process

In the 1980s, the political situation in Northern Ireland had changed considerably after the Hunger Strikes brought worldwide attention to the area. More voices and even countries such as the United States started to regard improving relations between Ireland and the United Kingdom as crucial for gaining political stability in the area. While Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and then Irish Prime Minister Garret Fitzgerald had already established diplomatic ties at the start of the 1980s, these further developed with the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement. The document gave the Government of Ireland an advisory position in Northern Irish affairs for the first time. It also importantly gave up the Republic of Ireland's constitutional claim on the region, with both parties leaving its status up to the choice of the Northern Irish population (Morton, 2024).

The subsequent Good Friday Agreement is cited as the end of The Troubles and the beginning of the peace process in Northern Ireland. Signed on the 10th of April in 1998, it was a set of two agreements that were closely linked together: The British-Irish Agreement and the Multi-Party Agreement. It was approved through a referendum on the 22nd of May. It allowed for creating a government that would share power in Northern Ireland, including the Northern Ireland Assembly, ensuring that both Protestants and Catholics would participate in its legislative process. This institution is important, yet has been suspended on many occasions due to disagreements between Protestants and Unionists (Culbertson, 2024). We also saw multiple bodies created to promote cooperation between Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland, such as the North-South Ministerial Council or the British-Irish Council. Importantly, the Agreement also ordered the retirement of paramilitary weapons, reformed the police force with the

creation of the Police Force of Northern Ireland (PFNI), and reduced the presence of the Armed Forces in Northern Ireland. It also allowed for the early release of prisoners who were involved in the conflict and gave those in Northern Ireland access to both Irish and British citizenship if they so desired (Citizens Information, 2022).

These documents marked what many considered the beginning of a new era of relations between Ireland, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom, and an inflection point on which to build away from the Troubles. The Agreement has mostly been implemented, with the prospects regarding ceasefire yielding positive results (Landow and McBride, 2024) and violence and deaths caused by politically motivated violence having been reduced greatly in the region (DeSouza, E, 2023). The division between Catholics and Protestants remains prominent, however. The usage of flags and parades is often controversial, with political connotations infused into them. The two social groups also do not normally interact nowadays, and there are still active paramilitary groups (Landow and McBride, 2024). Nevertheless, the most significant challenge to the Agreement has been Brexit. This prompted the application of the Northern Ireland Protocol (2021), a treaty established between the United Kingdom and the European Union that was set to avoid hard borders between Ireland and Northern Ireland and to maintain the protection of the Good Friday Agreement (Curtis, 2024). It has, however, been contentious in Northern Irish society. Unionists took issue with the fact that it allows the territory to stay in the European Union market and with the presence of a customs border in the Irish Sea (Campbell, 2022), both of which mean a detachment from the United Kingdom. Whilst the peace process has thus allowed for the reduction of political violence, and a “fragile peace” (Cochrane, 2021), it also calls for constant revision and maintenance as tensions still exist in the region.

1 Northern Ireland Conflicts in Cinema

2.1 General Overview

Northern Ireland, its conflicts, and especially The Troubles have generated interest on the part of film directors and TV creators at large. Whether it be from Northern Ireland, Ireland, The United Kingdom, or other parts of the world, such as the US, we see that representation of the conflict has been prominent historically.

In the 1960s censorship laws limited the content that could be shown. Pieces of media touching on Northern Irish relations were often met with controversy. Nevertheless, some early attempts at dramatising these issues did exist, such as Sam Thomson's play C*emented With Love* (1965). This dark comedy portrayed corruption in Protestant and Unionist political structures. BBC management in Belfast sparked controversy due to the postponement of their broadcast of the play from its original date in early November 1964, as they saw it as touching upon delicate subjects in that period (Hill, 2023).

From the 1970s to the beginning of the 1990s, depictions of the Troubles were still somewhat controversial. However, they started to be more common. Many dramas, thrillers, and TV plays began to utilise the conflict as a backdrop for their stories. One of the first important TV show to do so was *Harry's Game* (1982), which portrayed a government cabinet minister killed by the IRA and an undercover policeman who was sent to find him. However, these dramas were often accused of being superficial, cliché, and of ignoring political reality, instead opting for "Romeo and Juliet stories " (McLoone, 2009). Comedy relating to the Troubles during the period was scarce, although the BBC tried their hand at sitcoms. *Foreign Bodies* (1987-1989) dealt with an Irish nurse who fell in love with a Protestant mechanic, while *So You Think You've Got Troubles* (1991) tried to satirize religious tensions by having an atheist of Jewish descent living in Belfast.

The 1990s saw the development of "peace process cinema" (McLoone, 2009) which generally dealt with the conflict from the Irish rather than the British perspective (Neve, 1997) and mostly represented characters rejecting violence with a more

optimistic tone (McLoone, 2009). Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* (1996), for example, reimagines some of the most important figures in Irish independence, mainly depicting the idea of compromise behind the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which led to the Partition of Northern Ireland. Jim Sheridan's *The Boxer* (1998) deals with an IRA prisoner going to Belfast, starting a boxing club, and eventually renouncing violence.

We also saw the emergence of "Troubles comedies", which parodied thrillers and poked fun at tensions in Northern Ireland (Schwerter, 2018). David Caffrey's *Divorcing Jack* (1998), for example, is a film that satirizes thrillers by having an anti-hero as its main character. Barry Levinson's *An Everlasting Piece* (2000) features two barbers who work together, one Protestant and one Catholic. These films were often well-received, as the peace process had already started, with a more optimistic perspective allowing more comedic scenarios to be explored (McLoone, 2009).

From the 2000s onwards, we also started to see more frequent depictions of a younger demographic growing up during the Troubles, which had often been ignored in cinema (Murphy and Aguiar, 2019). Some examples include Terry Loane's *Mickybo and Me* (2004), which depicts a Catholic and a Protestant child becoming friends in Belfast, and Glenn Leyburn and Lisa Barros D'Sa's *Good Vibrations* (2012) which deals with a DJ who opens a record shop, meets children who are in a band and ultimately becomes their leader and, more recently, Kenneth Branagh's *Belfast* (2021), which focuses on a protestant 9-year-old boy and the struggles of his family in a Protestant community during the Troubles.

Nevertheless, throughout the history of cinema relating to the Northern Irish conflict, the representation of Catholics and Protestants has varied and reflected different perceptions, with Catholics being portrayed most often and Protestant representation having been historically scarce and poor (Bazin, 2013).

2.2 Protestant and Catholic Representations

When looking at the dramas from the period between the 1970s and the 1990s, we see that they usually depicted the relationship between the British government and the IRA. One criticism is that of the supposed glorification of the IRA, with depictions of their actions as political rather than criminal (McLoone, 2009). One example is John

MacKenzie's *The Long Good Friday* (1979) where the IRA is represented as a force that can beat even London's toughest criminals. Nevertheless, through this exploration, Catholics were also portrayed as the main perpetrators of violence. This contrasts with the lack of Protestant depictions, as they were ignored and constructed as "the other" (Bazin, 2013)

Post-Troubles films like *Michael Collins* (1996) and *The Boxer* (1998) mainly placed their focus on Catholic characters turning away from violence (Bazin, 2013). There was still a lack of Protestant representation, with the few that did portray them doing so with depictions of violent, sometimes psychopathic characters (Bazin, 2013). *Nothing Personal* (1995) by Thaddeus O'Sullivan, for example, is about a Protestant bar being bombed by Catholics. In it, a character then shoots the first Catholic to come out of the pub, who turns out to be innocent, thus reflecting the idea that Protestants ultimately kill Catholics for no reason (Bazin, 2013). However, comedies such as *Divorcing Jack* (1998) or *An Everlasting Piece* (2000) made fun of both Catholics and Protestants depicting them working together (Schwerter, 2018). They thus did not necessarily represent them as enemies.

Recently we have also seen more sympathetic and less mindlessly violent Protestant characters in cinema and more peaceful relationships between these communities. *Mickybo and Me* (2004), for example, depicts Protestant and Catholic characters as friends. In *Belfast* (2021) we see a direct challenge to traditional portrayals of Protestants as inherently violent, as it focuses on a Protestant family that completely rejects all violent acts done by both sides (Navarro García, 2024).

This leads us to the comedy *Derry Girls* (2018), released in 2018 by Channel Four, which depicts the daily life of various teenagers living in a Catholic community during the Troubles. Its depictions of Protestant and Catholic characters can be traced to an evolution from previous forms of media and how they dealt with the Troubles. Whilst the show mainly focuses on its Catholic protagonists, it also portrays Protestant characters, staying away from more stereotypical depictions in its comedy. In addition to this, less focus is put on the actors of violence such as the IRA, as the show aims to portray how more commonplace people live their lives.

2 Derry Girls: An Introduction

3.1 General Overview

Derry Girls (2018) is a sitcom first released in January 2018. It was created by Lisa McGee, who lived through the Troubles herself when she was young. It explores the lives of teenagers from a Catholic background in Derry growing up in the context of the Troubles in a mostly comedic tone. Its main characters are Erin, Michelle, Clare, Orla, and James, a group of five teenagers with distinct and relatable personalities. Erin is often portrayed as an idealist with big aspirations who is often over-dramatic yet very determined; Michelle is rebellious, vulgar, bold, and loyal; she gets the group in trouble and defies authority on numerous occasions; Clare is bright academically, very ideologically driven yet does not often follow through as she is high-strung and does not like getting into trouble; Orla is portrayed as having a more naïve, awkward and sometimes strange yet playful personality; James is from an English background and thus gives the audience the perspective of an outsider whilst slowly integrating into the group as the show goes on, becoming supportive and loyal to them in the end.

Thus, the show uses these characters to portray the perspective of a realistic group of teenagers, a demographic that has often been ignored in media relating to the Troubles (Murphy and Aguiar, 2019). It also depicts how everyday life would look like growing up, dealing with realistic concerns a group of teenagers would have, such as passing exams, attending a concert, or finding someone to go to prom, amongst many others. Much of the comedy derives from these issues. This often contrasts with the period's dark background. One example of this is the ending of Season 1, "Episode 6". Its final scene depicts these main characters dancing in a school play after solving conflicts relating to their friendship, which from a teenage perspective usually takes on a crucial role. This is in stark contrast to the report of a bombing, which is taking place at the same time. The series thus utilises its depiction of mundane situations in contrast with the background of the Troubles.

The show, many times, is also based on true events and elements. It also uses them in situations to develop its comedy. In Season 2's "The President", for example, Bill Clinton visits Derry. The comedy in the episode derives from the girls wanting to meet his daughter Chelsea Clinton. It also, however, depicts the importance of this historical event in 1995, as the visit of a US president was vastly significant and gave those in Northern Ireland a "sense of hope" (McBride, 2023). The show also incorporates many real-life Troubles political figures in TV broadcasts, such as Ian Paisley, John Hume, Martin McGuiness, and Gerry Adams, thus further establishing the show's setting and often offering commentary relating to them. As an example, in Season 2 Episode 3, "The Concert", John Hume, then leader of the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party and key figure in establishing a peaceful solution in Northern Ireland (Christie, 2022), makes an appearance on the family's television. They say: "John's really dying for peace, like, isn't he? / It's all he ever goes on about", which serves as a comedic commentary on his role in the period. The show thus uses real-life elements to contextualise, create comedy, and depict the impact that these events had in Derry society.

Derry Girls (2018) is also a show that generally adopts a hopeful tone. Even through the many hardships, it makes sure to portray the importance of building a better future (Kavanagh, 2022). This is especially evident in its final episode, which evokes a sense of positivity towards the future in a post-agreement world. One sequence that serves as an example is that of Erin speaking with Grandpa Joe, one of the older characters in the cast, about the Agreement and her concerns with letting paramilitary prisoners go free. She asks him: "What if we do it and it is all for nothing?". Grandpa Joe answers: "What if it does? What if it all becomes a ghost story you'll tell your wains one day?" This sequence is therefore one that is fairly optimistic on a post-Agreement Northern Ireland, as it prophetically reflects how the situation has changed for the better from a modern-day perspective. It also, however, shows hope for more work towards peace in a more modern period, as post-Brexit tensions have also underlined the importance of cooperation towards a better future.

3.2 Derry Girls: Catholic and Protestant Representation

This leads us to the show's depiction of Catholics and Protestants, crucial to its context of the Troubles. Its main focus is on a Catholic community and their daily lives, but it does not ignore Protestants altogether.

Catholics take centre stage within the show, with the main cast living in a Catholic community. As both Catholics and Protestants were often separated in the period, this conforms with realistic circumstances in which characters such as these would have lived, as well as previous media representation. However, the show depicts them as rejecting violence and not tied to the IRA. It also does not portray them as characters defined by their suffering, thus deviating from many other films and TV shows (Bazin, 2013).

Meanwhile, the show does not completely erase Protestant representation, but it does present Protestants as the exotic Other. They are seen in "Episode 5", where Orange parades are mainly depicted as a nuisance. Through comments such as Michelle's "It's a pity. I think there's something really sexy about the fact they hate us so much", however, it is also established that they see them as somewhat "exotic" (Jarazo Álvarez, 2022). When Protestant characters are developed further, however, they defy their traditional portrayals as violent and rabidly anti-Catholic. Season 3 Episode 1, "The Night Before", is a prime example. When the main characters are suspected of stealing school equipment, they are taken to the police station for interrogation. The interrogating officer is Chief Inspector Byers, played by Liam Neeson. Whilst he represents a role that would tend to be violent, that of a Protestant police officer in the Troubles, and the teenagers are scared of him, it comically strays away from this depiction, as he is mostly just annoyed by their antics. The inclusion of actor Liam Neeson is also important, as he lived through the Troubles, having claimed that he was "surrounded by violence" when growing up (McCaul, 2024).

The show ultimately mainly places its focus on its Catholic community and represents the common lives of those who live in it. It does not, however, completely stay away from Protestant representation. The show tackles stereotypes of Protestant characters by acknowledging the lack of intercommunity contact and mutual understanding present and how it creates an effect of exoticisation in both communities.

We thus delve into Season 2 Episode 1, “Across The Barricade”, which deals with these characters participating in a school programme with a Protestant group of teenagers. This work will thus look at this episode in depth, mainly focusing on its usage of real-life elements, its portrayal of the relationship between Catholics and Protestants, and its examination of teenage issues. It will also look into the ending and how it fits within these themes and the general spirit of the show.

4. “Across The Barricade”

4.1 Summary:

“Across The Barricade” (season 2, episode 1) deals primarily with the interaction between its main characters and a group of students from a Protestant school. Along with their teachers and a priest, they partake in a weekend activity called “Friends Across The Barricade”. Its main purpose is to encourage peaceful interaction and unity between these groups.

The episode begins with a montage of Troubles imagery and Erin speaking idealistically about giving peace a chance, when she is cut off by Orla and shown to be giving her speech in the bath. We then see the protagonists talking to their parents about the activity they are going to do. When doing so, we see the parents as wary of their daughter’s intentions with the Protestants. We also see them as confused about the activity itself. During this initial sequence, the characters also watch a speech by then Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams playing on their television. It is, however, dubbed by an English actor. We then see them on the way to the bus, which is when they speak about their main goals for the trip. In the case of Michelle and Erin, it is to have a sexual encounter with them, with James it is to make friends with boys, and in Clare’s case, it is to establish a peaceful relationship between them. They then go to a shop to get an expensive gift for them and try to negotiate with the salesman to get it for a cheaper price. This attempt is unsuccessful, however, and they ultimately have to content themselves with a gift made out of cheap items, such as a free key ring, an open packet of sweets, and a pencil. Afterward, they see that Jenny, an overachiever and a rival to the main characters, has a bigger and more expensive gift, a keyboard. She claims that she knows what they like since she is friends with a half-Protestant.

They then arrive at the programme, where the teachers from the Catholic and Protestant schools (Sister Michael and Ms. Taylor respectively) meet, and we see the first interactions between the teenagers from the separate schools. Each student is assigned a partner from the opposite community to work together during the weekend. Then we are introduced to Father Peter, the Catholic priest in charge, who announces the first activity: Writing down differences and similarities between the two groups on a

blackboard. It turns out that, whilst he encourages them to search for points of resemblance, the teenagers can only come up with aspects that separate them.

Afterward, we see the protagonists at night, when they attempt to reach their established goals. They all fail due to different reasons, however. Michelle tries to have sex with her partner (Harry), then she sees that he has a purity bracelet. Erin also fails with Dee as he is not interested. James and Orla bother their shared partner (Jon). Lastly, Clare's assigned Protestant, Philip, who has been established previously as deaf in one ear, responds to Clare's "I'm sure you really like Catholics" with a sharp "I don't".

The next morning, the teenagers are paired to do abseiling. It consists in an activity in pairs where one person slides down a cliff in a harness connected to a rope which is managed by their partner. We see that Clare and Philip are up first, with the latter tasked to pull down the former. During the activity, Clare distrusts her partner, panics, screams, and insults Philip, calling him a "Fenian-hating madman". However, it is then revealed that this was a misunderstanding, as Philip had understood "athletes" instead of "Catholics" in the previous night's conversation. Then, conflicts that had been brewing throughout the programme erupt into a fight.

At the end of the episode, parents are called in. They are all angry at their sons and daughters about what happened and tell them off. Clare's mother asks her daughter whether she really called her partner a "Jaffa bastard", Philip's father is angry at him for not wearing his expensive hearing aid, Harry's father cannot believe he was fighting with girls, etc. At the end of the episode, Erin writes the word "parents" on the "similarities" blackboard from before and exchanges a look of agreement with her partner, Dee.

4.2 Historical context

As established, *Derry Girls* (2018) is a show that takes its premise and many of its elements from real-life situations and events. This is certainly the case in "Across The Barricade", as there are various important components of the episode that take inspiration from reality. We see various aspects where historical context is crucial to the development of the plot and the construction of the episode itself.

4.2.1 Education

One key component explored in the episode is that of education during the Troubles. Catholics and Protestants were generally separated into their own groups and school systems. Accordingly, the show's focus is mainly on an all-girls school run by the Catholic Church in which the students are also from a Catholic background. This segregationist approach was believed to be a factor that pushed tensions between both communities further.

Ultimately, many programmes such as the one seen in the episode, "Friends Across The Barricade", were created during the Troubles to maintain contact amongst Catholics and Protestants and work towards peace. These were pioneered in 1973 by a school principal from Belfast (Smith, 1999) and were since then prominent. Many were supported by the Government's Department of Education for Northern Ireland, with their main programme being that of Education for Mutual Understanding from 1983 onwards. This was established to teach respect, understanding of each other's background, and working towards a non-violent approach to the conflict (Smith, 1999). Other similar projects were also developed by churches themselves, such as the Peace Education Programme sponsored by the Irish Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, which ran from 1983 to 1986 and was oriented towards students and teachers and aimed at mutual understanding and peacebuilding (Greer, 1987). McGee herself claimed that she took inspiration from a similar programme that she had taken part in during her formative years (Channel 4).

The inclusion of this programme underlines the importance that separate education had during the Troubles and its construction of their students' identity. Throughout the episode, we see how this contact is not commonplace, as the students are not used to it and perceive one another as "the other". Through adult perspectives, the show also subtly depicts diverse voices on the necessity of these programmes and their mingling of Catholics and Protestants. Characters such as the parents or Ms. Taylor, belonging to both groups, see this as unnecessary. However, characters such as Father Peter are shown to value the importance of both groups maintaining contact. It also explores the teenagers' interaction with a programme such as this as part of their everyday lives. Thus, the programme is a vehicle to depict the larger issue of separate

education during the Troubles and to give the episode a setting to explore the larger relationship between Catholics and Protestants.

4.2.2 Allegory of the Troubles

"Across The Barricade" is an episode that is constructed as an allegory of tensions that could be seen throughout the history of Northern Ireland and of the Troubles as a whole. It first introduces the real-life issue at the beginning, and then explores these issues mainly through the roles of the teenagers, the adult figures, and, in the end, the parents.

The episode begins by already establishing the centrality of the Troubles and the tone of the episode. We see this mainly in two scenes at the beginning. One of them is the montage we see whilst Erin speaks of her thoughts on giving peace a chance. It is important as it first depicts both sides of a boundary wall between Catholics and Protestants, directly marking the mutual isolation between both groups. It then depicts British army vehicles, directly alluding to the violence of the period that this division has caused. Finally, it shows a peace mural, thus underlining the importance of a peaceful accord between both groups and the construction of a better future.

The sequence where the characters watch Gerry Adams on television is also significant to the subsequent representation of the Troubles in various ways. In 1988 the British Government banned the broadcast of messages from groups believed to support terrorism. This led to the dubbing of Gerry Adams' voice on the BBC, as he was the leader of Sinn Féin, the main Irish Republican party typically associated with the IRA. The scene thus shows a presenter speaking about the Government's restrictions on Adams and about him being dubbed over by an actor. It is also significant to note that in this speech, Adams speaks about the desire to see an end to all acts of violence , thus also referencing the need for a peaceful resolution to the conflict at the time. The adult characters' commentary, however, pokes fun at the situation and even ridicules the ban. Erin's father complains about the pointlessness of it and her grandfather retorts that he (Erin's father) is pointless. Orla's mother claims that it was dubbed because Adams' voice is sexy, which is not the case as it is the actor's that is so, completely defeating its purpose in the first place. The scene thus touches upon the conflict between the British

government and the IRA, alluding to high politics rather than everyday politics, and establishes their failure.

As the episode advances, we see rising tensions encapsulated in the teenagers, as they represent the main actors of violence in the episode. Whilst at first they try to get along, and the activity is constructed to ensure that this is the case, their perceived differences finally culminate in a scuffle. This mirrors the real-life building of tensions that led to the Troubles. The origin of the conflict is a misunderstanding between Catholics and Protestants derived from the partial lack of hearing of one of its Protestant characters, which is also significant as it represents how both groups could not fully understand each other.

When looking at the roles this episode establishes, the three adults who mainly participate in the activity are also crucial. Sister Michael and Ms. Taylor establish the representation of both Catholic and Protestant figures of authority. This can be seen in the blackboard scene, which will be further analysed later, where both characters express which things they believe to be true assessments about their groups. In the fight scene, they take a while to break up the situation. This represents how Catholic and Protestant figures of authority in real life were seen as ineffective and perhaps even indifferent to the violence, as they are seen to not care about the fight.

As for Father Peter, he represents those who worked towards peace within the Catholic church. He is, however, largely ignored by the others in his intentions. He is caught in the teenagers' fight, signifying how many of those who fought for peace were also caught in the violent acts of the Troubles. In the end, he is also the character who tries to solve this issue with the parents through peaceful means. He thus represents the noble goals of trying to somewhat unsuccessfully work for peace and how both institutions and those who enacted violence ignored this. His activity's failure despite his attempts depicts how a peaceful resolution between Catholics and Protestants had not yet been achieved.

However, the role of the parents at the end is also of note. In the scene where they tell off their sons and daughters, they do not do so with those on the opposite side. Catholic parents focus on the Catholics and Protestant parents focus on the Protestants. What they ultimately represent is those on both sides who rejected the violence of their own during the Troubles and who searched for peace.

“Across The Barricade” ultimately serves as an exploration of the Troubles. The episode draws a direct link to the period at the start, with the sequence that represents Catholics, Protestants, and imagery associated with the Troubles and the Gerry Adams scene where the characters poke fun at the situation and misunderstand the true reasons for the ban. The rest is constructed as a direct allegory through its characters: The teenagers represent how violence escalated on both sides, the teachers represent religious figures who were indifferent to the tensions, Father Peter as the failed peacemaker, and the parents in the end as those Catholics and Protestants who rejected violence. The episode therefore serves as a template to explore issues between these sides at a different scale.

Nevertheless, the episode delves further into the relationship between Catholics and Protestants than this allegorical representation, exploring it through their interactions and perceptions throughout.

4.2.3 Catholic and Protestant Relations

The conflict between Catholics and Protestants is vastly important during the whole episode. This episode is set against the backdrop of tumultuous relations between them. It touches upon these tensions by focusing on both groups’ mutual perceptions and their interactions in the course of the activity. It depicts their mutual exotisation, which stems from their detachment from each other.

4.2.2 Representation

The main focus of the episode is that of the teenagers, the protagonists and those from the Protestant school, who serve as depictions of both Catholics and Protestants. Whilst representation is mostly done through Catholics, as that is the group to which the main characters belong. Regarding these characters, the focus is placed on their pre-established personalities which have been fleshed out throughout the series. When it comes to Protestants, they mainly challenge prejudices that the main characters are shown to have.

In one of the scenes, before they go on the trip, the main group speaks about their aspirations for the activity. Michelle and Erin view the Protestants as “boy toys” due to the perception of Catholics as more prudish regarding sex, which stems from the Catholic Church’s moral judgment of ideas such as sin or guilt (Kitchin & Lysaght, 2004), Protestants are seen as more sexually active. However, conceptions such as this one are broken in the episode, with the Protestant teenagers Erin and Michelle meet not interested in sexual intercourse. As has been mentioned, one is even shown to have a purity bracelet. The construction of these characters is ultimately based on breaking away from Catholic stereotyping.

Clare and her interactions with her partner Philip serve to challenge the stereotype of Protestants as inherently violent, one of the most common depictions seen in other pieces of media (Basin, 2013). Due to the misunderstanding, since she thought that Philip had expressed hatred for Catholics, she is shown to be fearful in the activity, calling him “a madman” and saying that he wants to “kill all Catholics”. This demonstrates that despite her previous intentions of building bridges with the Protestants, she cannot stick to her principles. It also further establishes her hypocrisy by depicting her desire to have a “thoroughbred” Protestant before as simply to gain status and beat Jenny in their rivalry. It is then established that Philip had misunderstood their conversation, thus not depicting him as violent. Also notable in this regard is the fact that Erin starts the fight rather than one of the Protestants. Ultimately, the episode thus establishes these characters as separate from typical portrayals of Protestantism.

Through the teenagers, we thus see how Catholics in the episode are shown through their previously fleshed-out personality in the show, whilst Protestants are shown to break away from overgeneralisations, thus contrasting with typical characteristics ascribed to them and other depictions in media. These groups are also constructed through mutual Othering.

4.2.3.2 Othering

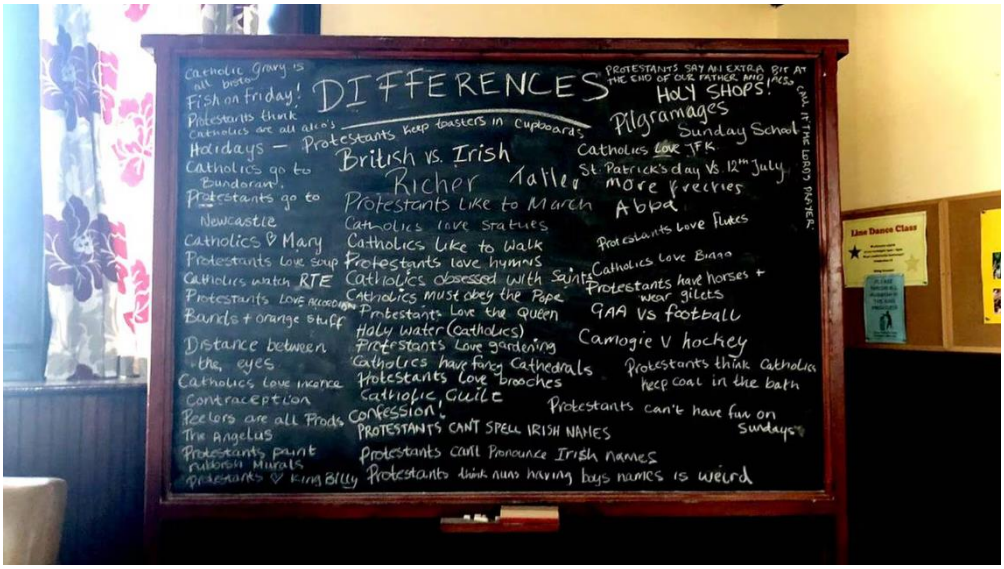
Within the episode, we see Othering constantly within the relationship between Catholics and Protestants. Othering is defined as the construction of a person or group as the “other” which is perceived as one-dimensional and completely separate from one’s own identity (Jackson, 2012). In the context of Northern Ireland, the process of

Othering is in great part explained by the separation between Catholics and Protestants. In the rest of the series this is already represented, as the main protagonists go to a purely Catholic school and live in a Catholic community, thus rarely interacting with the other group in their day-to-day lives. It is also combined with historical tensions and narratives, which lead Catholics and Protestants to construct the identity of the other through viewpoints based on stereotypes. This in turn allows for the characters on both sides to see one another as completely different. The episode explores which conceptions each group has of both the other's and their own identity and how these perceived divisions derive from them.

Whilst the whole episode explores this idea, the sequence that best illustrates it is the blackboard scene. In the activity, both sets of students are asked to identify what they view as things that unite and separate them. However, due to their othering of the opposing group, they cannot determine any point in common, instead only listing mutual differences.

What the students see as separating them is vastly important, as it depicts which historical, religious, and social aspects Protestants and Catholics viewed as dividing one group from another. It also reduces them to simple lines, highlighting how these were mostly based on stereotypes. What is portrayed on the blackboard is thus what the students see as making the separate group the "other".

The sequence itself starts with the mention of perhaps the biggest difference between them: "Protestants are British, Catholics are Irish". This point of contention was especially defined after the partition of Northern Ireland and has been the cause of tensions as Protestants desired to stay as part of the United Kingdom and feared Catholics pushing towards reunification, whilst Catholics felt more aligned with Ireland and many wanted to return to being part of the country. This motivated much of the violence in the period, as it drove paramilitary groups from both sides to action, such as the IRA, UVF, or UVA. It also created many other tensions between Catholics and Protestants, thus serving as a defining factor to why students such as these would feel divided. Since these characters view those from the separate group as the "other", the first aspect that they can think of is ultimately what has caused the most division between them.



The Irish Times, 2020

When looking at what else is included in the blackboard and the episode as a whole, many other points of contention that these students have and can be extrapolated to both groups as a whole are established.

The first aspect is socioeconomic status: Many grievances from one group to another derive from the higher economic status of the Protestant population. This idea was perpetuated by aspects such as the larger amount of Catholics that belonged to lower socioeconomic groups and the considerable difference in employment rates between Catholics and Protestants, sometimes even double (Gibson, et al. 1994). To establish the importance of this aspect, the episode includes “Protestants are richer” as its second difference, which the adult representatives from both groups agree on. Whilst Catholics blamed Protestants for this issue, which can be seen at the start of the episode when Michelle says they “already have all the land, all the jobs and all the f*cking rights”, this represents how both collectives acknowledged it to be factual. Other ideas from the blackboard also derive from this socioeconomic disparity. For example, “Protestants have horses and wear gilets” originates from Protestants being perceived as better off economically, as these are commodities that are associated with those who are rich, whilst “Protestants think Catholics keep coal in their bath” is a prevalent trope that sprang from the late 19th to early 20th Centuries and was normally associated with

poverty (Chapman, 2020), amongst many others. The economic disparity between groups is ultimately established as a factor for "othering" from both sides.

Nevertheless, some scholars such as Borooah (1995) have concluded that, despite this being the case, there were considerable economic disparities within the Catholic population itself. This is subtly portrayed in the episode through the contrast between the presents that the protagonists and Jenny can afford. Whilst they are depicted as not being able to buy a more expensive present, Jenny can buy a keyboard. Class differences are also portrayed, as Jenny's father is a surgeon, which allowed Jenny to take ballet classes and meet her Protestant friend there. Meanwhile, for example, Erin's father works as a driver and her mother is implied to work at a supermarket.

Police oppression: Historically, Catholics have suffered oppressive violence. Much of it was enforced by the police, who were mainly Protestant. Only 5 percent were members of the Catholic community (Cowell-Meyers & Gallaher, 2020). In events such as Bloody Sunday and many others they gained notoriety as being enactors of police brutality against them. "Peelers are all prods" reflects this.

Religious customs: When looking at what was included in the blackboard, we see that much of the Othering from one group to another has to do with the difference in religious traditions between Catholics and Protestants. However, other general ideas about the opposite group are also somewhat underlined through these perceptions. With Catholics, for example, we see how Protestants view their practices as influenced by the Catholic Church. This is reflected through ideas such as the allegiance to the Pope, for example. Other practices are also depicted as somewhat nonsensical to them, such as their worship of the Virgin Mary, the Angelus, the consumption of Fish on Friday, or the usage of statues for religious rituals. In the case of Protestants, we see that religious aspects are also considered somewhat arbitrary yet reflect a character that is seen as more rigid. The clearest example of this is "Protestants can't have fun on Sundays", which refers to this being the holy day of the Sabbath. Protestantism believes leisure activities must be discouraged during it. We also see other ideas such as "Protestants say an extra bit at the end of our father and also call it Lord's Prayer". The scene thus shows how Othering is also linked to religious practices and how these indirectly ascribe diverse traits to Catholics and Protestants.

Tradition also reflects how these groups see each other as different. Whilst many points are ascribed to diverse customs, one that is especially important to consider due to its association with the segregation and othering of both groups is the Orange Order. This is the Protestant tradition that celebrates the victory of Protestant Prince William of Orange over Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne, celebrated on the 12th of July (Baldwin, 2023). It has been a controversial topic between Catholics and Protestants, as Catholics have typically been opposed to them due to marking Catholic defeat, with Orange marches through Catholic areas often ending in violence (Walsh, 2015). This therefore marks how customs and historical narratives can exacerbate the idea of them being completely separate from one another.

Finally, some simply relate to leisure and popular culture. With the separation of Catholics and Protestants in their day-to-day lives, we see how they ascribe traits to one another that simply relate to free time or preferences. “GAA vs. Irish football”, “Protestant gravy is all Bisto”, “Catholics love bingo” or “Protestants hate ABBA”, amongst many others, are examples of this being the case. These ultimately show how aspects that relate to daily life can also heighten the “othering” of these groups amongst each other.

The blackboard scene is one that thus depicts how Catholics and Protestants saw each other as alien due to their lack of contact in daily life and the construction of their identities. It ultimately shows how these communities’ mutual perceptions are based on stereotypes. This is what causes the failure of the programme in the episode, as it ends up with the students not being able to see past their perceptions of the “other” as different. When we look at how it has been established as an allegorical portrayal of the Troubles, it signifies that the “othering” and vast perceived separation of both groups only serves to intensify issues later on, with the fight scene showing an escalation of these tensions to the point of causing violence.

However, the exploration of many of the issues between Catholics and Protestants and how it is dealt with can also be ascribed to another crucial aspect of the episode: Its portrayal of teenagers.

4.3 Teenage perspective

"Across The Barricade", whilst exploring serious issues, does so through the lens of its teenage characters. The teenage perspective has been often overlooked in media and traditional representations of the Troubles (Long, 2021). In *Derry Girls*, as is seen in the episode, it is part of their everyday life, with the characters having wants, feelings, and aspirations that would be relatable to many at their age. It is also a crucial element to the construction of what is explored in the episode, as it allows for the depiction of more serious topics, such as the Troubles, by reducing them to teenage issues.

In the episode, we mainly see this through the perspective of the girls at the beginning. Whilst Friends Across The Barricade is a project that intends to unite both Catholics and Protestants, to have them learn about each other, and to encourage peace, they have other aspirations in mind, such as wanting to have sex with them in the case of Erin and Michelle and wanting to make friends with them in the case of James and Orla. These are both aspirations that would be seen in a typical teenager, as romance, sexuality, and friendship are all typical concerns at this age. These goals are meant to depict that, even though the backdrop of the episode relates to the real-life tensions between Catholics and Protestants, as teenagers they have other objectives in mind that would fit their everyday lives and desires. They also serve the purpose of humanising both Catholic and Protestant characters.

Nevertheless, the teenage perspectives constructed in the episode also allow for the necessary downscaling of its serious topics. One example is its allegorical representation of the Troubles. Whilst the Troubles was a period with serious ramifications that affected many, their reduction to an issue between a group of teenagers gives the episode leeway to represent it in a more light-hearted tone.

We also see this as the case with the construction of their identities. Whilst many of the underlying ideas present in the blackboard have serious historical and cultural implications, they are expressed through the perspective of teenagers who have reduced them to more simplified elements. This essentially allows the episode to explore how and why they see each other as completely different in a context where it is viewed through the innocence of their teenage perception.

The teenage identities of the characters in the episode is ultimately crucial to its construction. It allows for the exploration of a demographic that has generally been ignored in Troubles media and for the portrayal of their desires and perspectives, with the show moving away from placing its main narrative focus on political actors such as the British Government or the IRA. It also gives the episode the framing device needed to deal with serious topics in a more light-hearted manner.

4.4 Ending

The conclusion to this episode ties all of these ideas together to portray a message of hope and unity between Catholics and Protestants.

To start, this scene utilises the characters' teenage identities directly, as what they eventually notice as uniting them most profoundly is their parents telling them off. This scene serves to humanise both groups, as Catholic and Protestant teenagers are depicted as having a highly relatable issue amongst young people in general.

Within the conflict between them, this scene also establishes unifying common ground and breaking away from the perspective of each group as completely separate. It allows for the episode to ultimately build a symbolic bridge between them that has been lacking throughout and establishes the importance of finding common ground and understanding the viewpoints of the other to move forward in the future of Catholic and Protestant relations. This is especially significant due to the allegory of the Troubles as, throughout the episode, these characters represent the main actors of violence during the period.

This ending establishes the generally hopeful tone that is seen throughout the series. It utilises the teenage identity of the characters to unify them past the tensions they had due to their Catholic/Protestant perceived dichotomy. It also goes beyond previous grievances to build bridges through their newfound common ground. The episode thus establishes a message based on mutual understanding and breaking away from "Othering" to work toward peace.

Conclusion

The main objective of this paper was to delve into how “Across the Barricade” deals with the relationship between Catholics and Protestants. It was also to contextualise the real-life influences behind the episode, to establish how it fits in with previous media that dealt with these relationships, to explore how it depicts teenagers and their daily lives in the Troubles.

We see that the episode is constructed in itself as an allegorical representation of the Troubles with its structure and escalating hostility between the teenagers mirroring that of the real-life context, as the characters present in the episode represent different key actors such as enactors of violence during the period, religious institutions, peacemakers, or those from each side who rejected violence. We also see how it references the Troubles and the idea of failed politics in its initial scenes through the depiction of a grander political scale as it is perceived by the show’s fictional characters. It is also important to consider that the main teenage characters, due to their segregation, the construction of divergent historical narratives, and lack of mutual understanding, create stereotypes that lead them to see each other as alien. These look at aspects ranging from socioeconomic issues to violence, religious practices, or personal preferences, and serve to establish their identities as opposed to the other group. In the show, these are portrayed as simplified due to their teenage perceptions and, whilst some basic ideas are held by both groups, such as their economic disparity, many other stereotypes are broken throughout the episode. The consequences of segregated education are also explored, as programmes such as this one to unite both groups existed in real life. The failure of the activity can also be attributed to these stereotypes and the escalation of violence and Othering present between Catholics and Protestants.

“Across The Barricade” also diverges from previous forms of media by breaking away from typical stereotypes seen in film and TV, humanising both Catholics and Protestants and breaking many stereotypes associated with them. We also see an exploration of the lives of teenagers and their worries, a perspective that has been generally ignored until recently. Their teenage perception is also key to the construction of the episode, as it allows for a more light-hearted representation of the Troubles and the conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Finally, the end of the episode serves to

establish a resolution that is positive and calls for a search for common ground and mutual understanding to deal with issues such as the ones seen within.

This depiction of such an issue as the conflict between Catholics and Protestants is very important. For one, it serves to convey the conflict in a light-hearted and positive tone. This is important as whilst it is a serious topic a depiction as such allows for it to be understood differently. It also conveys the idea that stereotyping and seeing each other as completely separate in these cases is what can intensify violence between different groups and ends with a call to build bridges to establish a peaceful resolution. Whilst this is all depicted in the context of the Troubles, it is a message that can be extrapolated to many other issues around the world and in modern times.

Ultimately, Across The Barricade establishes real-life connections to the period it is set in, creates an allegorical representation of the Troubles through the usage of its characters and settings and its escalation of tensions, explores how Protestants and Catholics saw each other during the period as separate due to their lack of contact and their construction of mutual and many times inaccurate stereotypes, uses its teenage characters to humanise both groups and break away from other previous representations, and takes inspiration from real-life sources relating to the context of the Troubles. It thus depicts an exaggerated and comedic relationship between Catholics and Protestants that does have an underlying serious message.

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