

Impact case study (REF3b)

<p>Institution: Queen’s University Belfast</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 30 - History</p>
<p>Title of case study: Addressing the Past: History, Film and Public Memory</p>
<p>1.Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Challenging simplistic depictions of Ireland’s revolutionary past, Fearghal McGarry’s research has facilitated greater public understanding of the causes and consequences of political violence in Ireland. Through impacts arising from an innovative collaboration with a documentary film-maker, as well as through the influence of his research on public discourse, cultural life, civil society and education, McGarry’s work has enhanced public understanding by extending the range and quality of historical evidence, contributing to a more meaningful public engagement with both history and commemorative processes within the context of post-conflict Northern Ireland and the current ‘decade of centenaries’.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research consists of McGarry’s work on republican ideology. The first phase of this explored the impact of radical ideology on inter-war Ireland. A monograph on Irish responses to the Spanish Civil War, and biographies of the socialist Frank Ryan [3] and fascist Eoin O’Duffy, demonstrated how European ideological influences influenced Irish political culture, but also how progressive republican politics failed to transcend nationalist constraints arising from the legacy of the Anglo-Irish conflict.</p> <p>McGarry’s more recent research [1&2] focused on the radicalisation of republicans from ordinary backgrounds during the earlier revolutionary period (c. 1900-1916). It demonstrated how the ideology articulated by revolutionary leaders was less influential than previously assumed, highlighting instead the radicalising influence of family background, popular culture, and local and communal influences. Emphasising the contingent nature of the political success of republicanism after 1916, it demonstrated how the conservatism of the independent Irish state reflected the shallow roots of republican ideology.</p> <p>McGarry’s research [1] was praised by such journals as <i>Irish Economic and Social History</i>, 37, (‘The finest account yet of the 1916 Rising’), <i>Irish Historical Studies</i>, 37/147, (‘outstanding . . . indispensable for our understanding of this crucial episode’) and <i>English Historical Review</i>, 128/530, (‘A more intimate history of killing during the Easter Rising is difficult to imagine . . . McGarry’s compelling study will have a significant impact on the historiographies of Ireland and revolution’).</p> <p>This research took on a new direction in 2011 when McGarry began working with leading film-maker Des Bell to make a documentary on the life of Frank Ryan [4], an Irish anti-fascist republican who died as a collaborator in Nazi Germany. The project demonstrated how a controversial historical story could be brought to a mass audience without sacrificing historical rigour and, by doing so, generated new ways of thinking about the problematic relationship between scholarly historical writing and history on the screen.</p> <p>The potential of this collaboration was recognised by the AHRC, resulting in the award of two successive knowledge-transfer projects. The first of these, ‘Documentary film and the public communication of historical knowledge in Northern Ireland’, was judged by the AHRC’s peer reviewers ‘an excellent proposal meeting the highest quality and standards of knowledge transfer/exchange collaboration’ that demonstrated ‘genuine creativity and innovation in both its topic and approach’ with ‘the potential to have a transformative effect in social and cultural terms beyond the world of academia’. It involved collaboration between McGarry, Bell, and the project’s partners – a production company (Glass Machine), broadcaster (TG4), and community art gallery (Belfast Exposed) – to support the making of the film [4]. Led by McGarry (P.I.) and Bell (R.A.), the project (2011-2012) involved an interdisciplinary collaboration to produce the film; a conference bringing together broadcasters (BBC, RTE, TG4), production companies and film and history</p>

academics to address the challenges of screening history; the creation of an interpretive website to support the broadcast of the documentary and contribute to wider debates about the relationship between film and history (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/frankryan/>); and a series of public screenings. Pioneering a practice-based analysis of the live project, McGarry and Bell explored the process by which scholarly history is disseminated through film. By **elaborating a model of good practice between historians and film-makers**, it demonstrated that, if supported with sufficient resources, the documentary form in which the public increasingly receives its information about the past need not represent a 'dumbing-down' of history. By generating a new model of creative practice between historians and film-makers, it **demonstrated the potential of KT projects to forge effective partnerships between academics and broadcasters**, both to facilitate the commissioning of documentaries, and to strengthen their ability to extend historical evidence to a mass audience.

The success of this project led to the award of funding for 'Documentary film, public history and education in Northern Ireland' (2013-14). This on-going project supports three related strands of activity: a collaboration with the EU-funded Teaching Divided Histories (TDH) initiative (<http://www.nervecentre.org/teachingdividedhistories>) which harnesses digital creative technologies to provide an innovative means of teaching young people about conflict; a collaboration with a production company (DoubleBand Films) to develop a documentary on the Easter Rising; and further exploration of the role of film in promoting historical understanding, focusing on continued dissemination of *The Enigma of Frank Ryan* and an international conference on film and history to form part of the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture festival.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- [1] Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising. Ireland: Easter 1916* (Monograph, pp xiv, 365: Oxford University Press, 2010). In REF2.
- [2] Fearghal McGarry, *Rebels. Voices from the Easter Rising* (Edited collection, pp xxiii, 363: Penguin Ireland, 2012). In REF2.
- [3] Fearghal McGarry, *Frank Ryan* (Biography, pp 127: University College Dublin Press, 2010 ed). Supplied by HEI on request.
- [4] *The Enigma of Frank Ryan* (Film: Glass Machine Productions, UK/Ireland, 2012). A copy of this DVD is available from HEI on request.
- [5] Des Bell and Fearghal McGarry, 'One cut too many? History and film: A practice-based case study', *Journal of Media Practice*, 14/1 (2013), pp 5-23. Supplied by HEI on request.
- [6] Fearghal McGarry, '1916 and Irish republicanism: between myth and history', John Horne and Edward Madigan (eds), *Towards Commemoration: Ireland in war and revolution 1912-23* (Essay, pp 52-59: Royal Irish Academy, 2013). Supplied by HEI on request.

Knowledge transfer fellowship grant:

Awarded to: Fearghal McGarry

Title: Documentary film and the public communication of historical knowledge in N. Ireland

Sponsor: Arts and Humanities Research Council (AH/I026626/1)

Period of grant: 1 October 2011-30 September 2012:

Value of grant: £103,898.

Follow-on funding grant:

Awarded to: Fearghal McGarry

Title: Documentary film, public history and education in Northern Ireland

Sponsor: Arts and Humanities Research Council (AH/K002775/1)

Period of grant: February 2013- January 2014:

Value of grant: £82,494

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Narrative

The principal impact results from the dissemination of McGarry's research which challenges simplistic views of the past that reinforce divisive conceptions of identity and contribute to the

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potential for conflict in a divided society. Further impacts have resulted from the knowledge-transfer projects developed to disseminate this research. Key beneficiaries include: community, third-sector and cultural heritage organisations that draw on McGarry's research for educational and commemorative initiatives; the creative sector which has benefited from McGarry's research and knowledge-transfer activities; and educators whose curriculum resources have been designed or influenced by McGarry's research. Examples of the principal types of impact are outlined below:

A: Public discourse

McGarry's research has been extensively reviewed in the media, while over 7,500 copies of *The Rising* [1] and 4,500 copies of *Rebels* [2] have been sold. His research has been disseminated widely via radio and television programmes, podcasts, and historical resources (such as the BBC's history website). His research is disseminated beyond scholarly audiences: the *T.L.S.* (25 Nov. 2011), for example, reported that *Rebels* was a popular book among young army officers serving in Helmand province. Audience sampling demonstrates that *The Enigma of Frank Ryan* [4] (which has been screened internationally and will be broadcast on television in Ireland and abroad) enhances public understanding of history. For example, 57% of the respondents surveyed at the Foyle Film Festival (22 November 2012) answered positively when asked 'Did watching this film change the way you think about the history of Irish republicanism?', while ninety per cent judged the film to have contemporary significance.

B: Cultural life

The Enigma of Frank Ryan [4] was viewed by several thousand people at film festivals in Dublin, Galway, Belfast, Foyle, Montreal, Cairo, Denver and Minneapolis; community festivals including Féile an Phobail, Europe's largest community festival); and other public events, many of which have generated further press and public debate.

The Abbey Theatre, Ireland's national theatre, has commissioned leading playwright Jimmy Murphy, to adapt *Rebels: voices from the Easter Rising* [2] for the stage to commemorate the centenary of the 1916 Rising. This production will challenge popular assumptions about the rebellion by drawing on primary-source testimony to dramatise revolutionary voices in a theatrical setting.

McGarry's current AHRC project will contribute to the 2013 Derry-Londonderry City of Culture Festival programme by organising an international conference on film and history in October.

C: Civil society

One example of McGarry's engagement with civil society to contribute to processes of commemoration, memorialisation and reconciliation is his participation in a two-day conference (organised by Trinity College Dublin's Centre for War Studies and hosted by Monaco's Princess Grace Library on 20-22 October 2011), which brought together ex-combatants from the Northern Irish conflict, third sector organisations, and British and Irish government officials to frame approaches to the challenges of commemoration during the 'decade of centenaries'. The subsequent publication *Towards Commemoration* [6], featuring contributions by political representatives, community leaders, journalists and academics) was described by former Irish president, Mary McAleese, as an 'important' and 'extraordinary' contribution to political reconciliation.

McGarry has participated in numerous commemorative initiatives, including the Community Relations Council's 'Remembering the Future' public lecture series (880 YouTube views, Nov 2012-Jan. 2013) and many local government initiatives. As a member of its Review Body, he advises on the Ulster Museum's 'Connecting Histories' project to reshape its modern history gallery to inform public understanding of the revolutionary period during the 'decade of centenaries'.

He is a founding member of the Universities Ireland Historians' Committee which, supported by the ten Irish universities (<http://www.universitiesireland.ie/>), has initiated a sustained engagement between historians and civil society organisations, educational groups and cultural heritage bodies to inform commemoration of 'the decade of centenaries'. Its activities include the establishment of third-level student scholarships, and an annual series of conferences aimed at teachers, third-sector bodies and the public. Over 300 politicians, civil servants, teachers, journalists and members of the public attended the 2013 conference (addressed by McGarry) which was opened by the President of Ireland. As a result of the committee's lobbying to enhance public access to

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archival records, the National Archives (UK), Public Record Office Northern Ireland and National Archives (Ireland) has initiated a collaboration to digitise, and make accessible to the public, archival records relating to 1913-23.

D: Education

McGarry's current AHRC project will have a direct impact on post-primary education by producing KS3 curriculum materials for Teaching Divided Histories' innovative project which exploits digital media to educate young people about conflict and peace-building. A module on 1916, designed by McGarry's project in collaboration with TDH, has been unveiled at TDH's international conference. McGarry contributes to other educational resources such as The Historical Association's Modern Ireland podcast series which had registered 3,500 downloads (mainly secondary students, teachers and the general public) by March 2013.

E: Influencing creative practice

In addition to publishing a model of good practice to guide collaboration between historians and film-makers [5], McGarry's AHRC projects have demonstrated how KTPs can promote collaboration between academics and private sector media companies to develop documentaries. Angela Graham (Green Bay Productions, Wales), has described our project as an example of 'historians taking the initiative towards the medium' and a pioneering model of the potential of KTPs to build links between academia and the creative industries.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)*A: Public discourse:*

- A.H.R.C. project website: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/frankryan/NewsEvents/>
- For details of activities of the Historians Group, whose steering committee McGarry sits on, see: <http://www.universitiesireland.ie/>

B: Cultural life:

- Referee: Literary Director, Abbey Theatre.

C: Civil Society:

- For dates and details of McGarry's engagements with civil society, see: [http://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/fearghal-mcgarry\(7162bd81-8f60-4eaa-a43b-a2432e0325b7\)/activities.html](http://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/persons/fearghal-mcgarry(7162bd81-8f60-4eaa-a43b-a2432e0325b7)/activities.html)
- For details of the Community Relations Council's 'Marking anniversaries' lecture series, see: <http://www.community-relations.org.uk/marking-anniversaries> (follow link for McGarry's YouTube lecture)
- For former Irish President's speech describing *Towards Commemoration* [6] as an important contribution to reconciliation, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA3ZUBKqf5I>

D: Education:

- Evidence of McGarry's contribution to second-level educational resources can be found on The Historical Association's podcasted history of the world website: http://www.history.org.uk/resources/secondary_resource_4865_124.html

Referee for McGarry's collaboration with TDH: Director of Education, Teaching Divided Histories project, Nerve Centre (<http://www.nervecentre.org/education/teaching-divided-histories>)

E: Influencing creative practice:

- A former Development Producer, Green Bay Productions, describes McGarry's project as a pioneering example of the potential of knowledge-transfer partnerships to build links between academics and creative industries: <http://www.clickonwales.org/2012/05/the-enigma-of-frank-ryan/>
- For a model of good collaborative practice, see D. Bell and F. McGarry, 'One cut too many? History and film: A practice-based case study', *Journal of Media Practice*, 14/1 (2013), pp 5-23 [6].