Emigration and Ireland; Immigration and America

"There are very few communities in Ireland which have escaped the effects of emigration and therefore there are few individuals today for whom emigration is not a matter of painful family memory" (McLoone 1).

1841 to 1961: the Irish population decreases from 6.5 million to 2.8 million

"There can be no other country in the world where the population [in 2000] is less than half of what it was 150 years ago" (McLoone 31).

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Emigration was a feature, not a bug.

"Ireland was owned very securely and very comfortably by a post-revolutionary political elite, by a well-heeled professional class, by big cattle ranchers, and above all by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church . . . to keep it as it was, huge parts of the population had to emigrate, for otherwise the sheer weight of their discontented numbers would drag it down." (O'Toole, 10).

Post–World War II: The Republic of Ireland, unlike Northern Ireland, was neutral in the war and so didn't benefit from the reconstruction of Europe through the Marshall Plan. The economy suffered as a result.

late 1950s: emigration peaks, including creative people in film and art looking for better opportunities and less stringent censorship. "four out of every five children born in Ireland between 1931 and 1941 emigrated" (McLoone 31).

1970s' inflation → severe cuts in public spending in the 1980s. Emigration increases, especially among young university graduates and professionals

Late 1990s–early 2000s: End of the Troubles and **The Celtic Tiger:** subsidiaries of US multinational corporations moved to Ireland because of low taxation and an educated, English-speaking population. → increased immigration into Ireland.

The collapse of the Celtic Tiger in the late 2000s led to new waves of emigration, especially among young professionals.

Slide 3

Irish-Americans' influence on the Republic of Ireland

Irish-American politicians, a growing power in the Democratic Party, demanded more independence for Ireland and made anti-British rhetoric—called "twisting the lion's tale"—a staple of election campaign appeals for the Irish vote.

De Valera: born in New York City in 1882. Despite his role in the Easter Rising, he was not executed with the other rebels, because he was an American citizen. As head of the Fianna Fáil party, he became President of the Dáil Éireann in 1919. He visited New York to ask for official US recognition of the Irish Republic and to get money to support the government (including the IRA). Served as Taoiseach (*tay-shuh,* prime minister); 1932–48, 1951–54, 1957–59; as President (1959–73). Died in 1975.

US direct investment in Ireland has been particularly important to the growth and modernization of Irish industry since 1980. While Ireland was uncomfortable having strong ties to Britain, ties to the US were looked on more favorably. Some leftist politicians have expressed concern about the "closer to Boston than Berlin" philosophy of the Fianna Fáil—Progressive government.

The US's active involvement in Irish politics caused some trouble during the early 1990s, due to President Clinton's granting Gerry Adams, the head of Sinn Féin, a visa to visit the US. In

August 1994, the IRA called a cease-fire. The US was also actively involved in the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement (10 April 1998), ending the Troubles.

Slide 4

Diasporic Representations of Ireland

Emigration can be recast, not as **Diaspora** (dispersal of a people away from their homeland), but as the establishment of an **Irish Empire**, "broadening and extending the very definitions of Irishness" (McLoone 2). Irish-Americans contributed funds for the IRA, for example.

It also resonates with the idea that Irish national identity is founded in **difference.** Difference from Britain becomes difference from the US.

Focus on representations of Ireland that were produced directly to appeal to Irish-Americans after World War II.

"Due to the importance of Irish-American audiences to the development of the film industry in America, representations of Ireland have not only been a constant feature of Hollywood films from the silent era onwards, but these representations have been structured in ways which have reflected the demands and imaginative positioning of that Irish diasporic audience" (Rains 196).

key = Ireland represented as Home, "with all the connotations of the familiar, the hospitable, and the specific which that implies" (196).

By the 1950s, "there was a substantial Irish-American population who had no first-hand experience of Ireland and, in particular, no experience of post-independence Ireland" (197).

Thus, for those people, fictional narratives and cinematic images become the major source of information about "home."

*** "The negotiation of such Irish-Americans' relationship to Ireland, therefore, becomes one dominated by the concept of a 'home' nation which is not only elsewhere but which is not directly and personally remembered" (197).

These "memories" are filtered through films *and* tourism. *Consider films as a type of tourism.*

<u>Irish-American influence on the Shape of Irish Film</u>

*** Willingness to "engage only with those aspects of Irish culture which confirm the beliefs already cherished in Irish-American communities." E.g., "a nostalgic view of Ireland as traditional, politically simplistic, and removed from the modern, international culture symbolized by America" (Rains 197).

This desire is part of the explanation for the lack of traction that films like *Goldfish Memory* and *When Brendan Met Trudy* were able to get in the US.

Slide 5 photo of Jim Sheridan

Slide 6

Jim Sheridan's Irish films

<u>As Director</u>:

My Left Foot (1989): Christy Brown, born with cerebral palsy, learns to paint and write with his only controllable limb - his left foot. Sheridan and Christy Brown worked on the script. Stars Daniel Day-Lewis

The Field (1990): When a field (which has been farmed by the McCabe family for generations) goes up for auction, the patriarch of the McCabe family will stop at nothing to prevent a rich American from buying it. Co-written by Sheridan. Stars Richard Harris

In the Name of the Father (1993): A man's coerced confession to an I.R.A. bombing he did not commit results in the imprisonment of his father as well. An English lawyer fights to free them. Co-written by Sheridan. Stars Daniel Day-Lewis and Pete Postlethwaite

The Boxer (1997): Young Danny Flynn is released from prison 14 years after "taking the rap" for the IRA and tries to rebuild his life in his old Belfast neighborhood. Co-written by Sheridan. Stars Daniel Day-Lewis and Emily Watson

In America (2002): A family of Irish immigrants adjust to life on the mean streets of Hell's Kitchen while grieving the death of a child. Written by Jim, Naomi, and Kirsten Sheridan. Stars Paddy Considine and Samantha Morton

The Secret Scripture (2016): A woman keeps a diary of her extended stay at a mental hospital. Co-written by Sheridan. Stars Eric Bana and Rooney Mara

Peter O'Toole: Along the Sky Road to Aqaba (2022): Reflecting Peter O'Toole's theatrical legacy, this feature documentary is structured into four acts, each introduced by a quote about O'Toole that encapsulates his life during a specific period.

<u>As producer</u>
Some Mother's Son (1995); also writer
Agnes Browne (1999)
Borstal Boy (2000)
On the Edge (2001)
Bloody Sunday (2002)

<u>As writer</u>
Into the West (1992)

In America
Slide 7 Cast List

Slide 8

Sheridan and his family moved to Hell's Kitchen in NYC in the early 1980s. Hell's Kitchen, also known as Clinton, is a neighborhood on the West Side of Midtown Manhattan. It is considered to be bordered by 34th Street to the south, 59th Street to the north, Eighth Avenue to the east, and the Hudson River to the west. Hell's Kitchen has long been a bastion of poor and working-class Irish-Americans, though significant demographic changes have occurred especially from the late 1970s to early 2000s and present, as the neighborhood gentrified. Home of the Actors Studio, and adjacent to Broadway theatres, Hell's Kitchen has long been a home to fledgling and working actors.

The film, quoting Sheridan, is "a view of Manhattan as an island of dreams that helps a family discover deep bonds." Like the family in the film, the Sheridans came into the US from

Canada on a holiday, but stayed seven years, presumably undocumented. Sheridan appreciated the neighborhood's diversity; he wanted to interact with people from all over the world.

Irish immigrants, unlike other groups like the Italians and Jews, didn't have a lot of culturally specific things to cling to. They already spoke English as a first language, for example. No ethnic theater or newspapers, though Irish music stood out. Sheridan comments that the Irish were politically adept. Despite their having little opportunity to wield political power in Ireland, they became quite good at it in America. The American Irish, quoting Sheridan, "became masterful politicians and were able to control their destinies" in America. The Irish love America because, despite early anti-Catholicism and nativism, the Irish have been accepted in America in ways that they haven't been by the English.

In America is a celebration of the Irish-American encounter and the strength of the Irish family unit.

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Key elements in the film

Christy's VO, like Francie's in *The Butcher Boy,* is addressed directly to *us.*

Christy as a **seanchaí** (shan na key) = traditional Irish storyteller

Christy's camcorder: pictures of dead people; all films are pictures of dead people

Magic; folklore; three wishes

Go to the movies for the A/C; see *E.T.* with the clip from *The Quiet Man;* Sarah watches *The Grapes of Wrath* made by the Irishman John Ford

Slide 9: Watch the movie: 105 minutes

Slide 10

a constant dilemma for all immigrants in America involves **finding a balance** between holding onto their birthright nationality and then standing out as strangers versus integrating and assimilating to American life.

Stages in the children's assimilation: Christy calls "cool" disgusting; Halloween Trick threat, Fall, not Autumn. Johnny objects to the girls' wanting to be like everybody else. "What makes them different is what makes them unique," he says.

In *In America* this dichotomy is **neatly articulated by the symbolic use of food and language translation.** E.g., colcannon served to Mateo.

America = optimism, opportunity, multiculturalism, magic, and progress

Ireland = loss, death, and the "emotional wounds of past sorrows"

The character of Johnny: The Irish have no tradition of "the strong, functional father figure," unless he is a violent drunk. The typical father of Irish fiction is disempowered. The doll scene at the carnival: Johnny can't stand for his kids to see him lose. Quoting Sheridan: "They're smart, educated people, and now he's driving a cab, his wife is working at an ice-cream parlor, and the family is living in a slum. . . . He needs to win that doll to keep his dignity around the kids. Fathers are supposed to win."

The character of Mateo: Sarah tells Mateo that the Irish word for a black man is "fear gorm" (literally "blue man"), whereas "fear dubh" (literally "black man") means evil man.

His otherness is softened by his interactions with Christy and Ariel. Their kindness to Mateo, giving comfort to a stranger, brackets a key tenet of Christianity with conventional Irish friendliness.

Brereton: "Sheridan—more than any other Irish director—uses family, race/otherness, and Americana, in general—to dramatize Ireland's affinity with its 'next parish' in the New World" (45).