

Issues that are mentioned in *Jimmy's Hall*

Slide 2

1. The opening titles mention the 1922 Treaty: This is the treaty that ended the Anglo-Irish war, aka the War for Irish Independence, depending on which side of the border you are on. The key provisions of the 1922 Treaty created the partition of the island into the Republic (called the Irish Free State at the time) and Northern Ireland (formerly Ulster).

2. County Leitrim and the Border Region: County Leitrim is one of six counties of the Republic that border Northern Ireland. Their closeness to Northern Ireland makes them more nervous about social, cultural, and political disturbances. (Incidentally, today the highest percentage of people with postgraduate education live in County Leitrim.)

1932 when Jimmy returns: a new government led by Éamon De Valera and Fianna Fáil (“Soldiers of Destiny”) versus Fine Gael (“Tribe or Family of the Irish”) → final acceptance of the treaty (*not imposed by Britain*). NOTE: De Valera remained politically influential, imposing his view of Ireland on the country by holding various offices, until 1973. Today: Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Sinn Féin each control around 36 seats in Parliament.

3. *Jimmy's Hall* is a **biopic**. Jimmy Gralton was a real person and much of what you will see onscreen is true. Particularly that he was a member of the Communist Party. He is said to be the only Irishman ever to be deported from Ireland.

The first part of the film incorporates flashbacks. The length of Oonagh's hair is one way to sort them into present and past. We see Jimmy open a book by James Connolly, *Labour in Irish History*, which was written from a Marxist perspective.

4. Jimmy's Hall is a Community Hall. These centers of community social and cultural life are still common in rural areas and small towns. The name of Jimmy's Hall is the Pearse-Connolly Community Hall. You may remember from *The Dead* that Molly Ivors left the party to hear James Connolly speak. Patrick Pearse and James Connolly wrote the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, which announced the grounds for the Easter Rising. Pearse and Connolly were leaders of the Easter Rising and were executed by the British. So, in selecting the name of his Hall, Jimmy is making a provocative political statement.

Links: Classes

Yeats poetry; Yeats and Lady Gregory (Mr. Grace's recitation in *The Dead*)

Gaelic revival → Song: “Siúil a Rún” (“Go, my love” about a woman sending her husband off to war)

5. The US Immigration Act of 1924 set quota limits, which were made permanent in 1930. These quotas and the Depression effectively limited the numbers of Irish who could emigrate to the USA. [emigration as a consistent theme: “the American Wake”]

6. Ken Loach: The films of Ken Loach focus on the poor and working class, from a left-wing and social-realist perspective. His protagonists struggle against state institutions as much as against personal antagonists. Consider the force arrayed against Jimmy: consider who is against him and why.

Loach's most recent film is *Sorry We Missed You*, about the gig economy's exploitation of workers. His *I, Daniel Blake*, in which the villains are heartless state bureaucrats, won the Palme D'Or at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival. The award was Loach's second. *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, which is about the Irish War of Independence, won the Palme D'Or in 2006.

Loach's next and perhaps final film, *The Old Oak*, is due out this November. Loach uses *The Old Oak*, the last remaining pub in a village in the Northeast of England, as a way of looking at the social impact of mine closings on the area. Houses are cheap and available, thus making it an ideal location for Syrian refugees.

Slide 3

The Catholic Church in Ireland (1)

[also based on Fintan O'Toole, "Lessons in the Power of the Church" (*The Irish Times*, 6 June 2009)]

The association between the Catholic Church and the people of Ireland goes back to 400 AD, during the Roman occupation of the island. Until the 12th century, Church activities were centered on monasteries; beginning in 1118, a loose organization of independent diocesan bishops and parishes was established. This structure lasted until the mid-19th century, when the onset of the Famine demanded a centralized authority.

The Irish Catholic Church was considerably strengthened by the work of Paul Cullen, who became the first Irish cardinal in 1866. He supported Rome over the previously autonomous diocesan structure of the pre-Famine church. Cullen's "imprint on the Irish church . . . was not seriously shaken until the clerical sex scandals of the 1990s" (Killeen, *Brief History*, K2939).

The 19th-century Irish Catholic Church, as reorganized by Cullen, had three goals:

1. the politicization of the Church hierarchy to secure access to Parliament
2. increasing the numbers of priests and expanding Catholic education and making it a national system to compete with the system of Church of Ireland schools. Because of demographics, by the 1850s most primary schools were Catholic schools.
3. improving the devotional practices of their parishioners through more active participation in the sacraments, especially the Mass, confession, and receiving communion. This effort included the rejection of any beliefs and rituals related to Irish folk practices.

Achieving these goals meant balancing the demands of Rome, London, and the Catholic laity, whose protests in the first half of the 1800s were led by Daniel O'Connell (whose statue at the end of O'Connell Street in Dublin is shown in *The Dead*).

The attachment of Irish Catholics to their religion could be measured by the fact that in the first half of the 19th century 900 churches were built or restored. This number is particularly striking considering the poverty of the country.

An unintended consequence of the assertion of Catholic political clout was the insecurity and alarm among the Protestant community in Ireland, leading to "an increased determination to support and preserve the union at all costs, which they saw as their only safeguard against the Catholic majority" (Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950: The Undoing of a Culture* [Gill & Macmillan, 2004 (pb edition)], xxi).

After partition in 1922, the Catholic Church filled the vacuum left by the removal of British institutions, with the full-hearted support of the new Republican government. The Church's control of education was all but absolute. The schools remained private and charged fees, at a time when other developed countries were establishing systems of free public education, thus keeping poorer children out. Catholic-run schools became not only a way of controlling the hearts, minds, and bodies of young people; they were also good sources of priestly recruitment.

In the early 20th century, when other countries were establishing state-run national health services (e.g., England's NHS established in 1911), the Church worked to prevent those efforts in Ireland. A scheme introduced in the period after WWII was blocked by the Church. A public healthcare system was finally established in 2004.

In general, the Church's stranglehold on religion, education, healthcare, and private morality damaged Ireland's culture, industry, and social equality.

Slide 4

Viewing notes

Slide 5

Cast list

Slide 6

Watch movie

Slide 7

Issues and Ideas

American-Irish influence: the Catholic bond and political clout

Emigration and return: the "American Wake"

Father Sheridan versus Father Seamus

Generational differences

The Big House: O'Keefe as the New Ascendancy?

Land rights

Sheridan's sermon / dance at the Hall the night before

What points does Sheridan include in his sermon?

The End and how it is shown to us

Slide 8

Politics and Polemics

- How could we describe the opposition to Jimmy?
- Does the film play fair?

- The facts of James Gralton's life