

What's in a Film? Teaching British Culture Through British Films Focusing on 'The Crying Game'

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Abstract

When teaching about the culture of another country, one of the biggest challenges is to help students understand what the houses, streets, cities, and natural spaces look and sound like, and how the people behave, their values and preoccupations. Films can approximate, to a certain degree, the experience of actually being in another country. Moreover, films tell stories powerfully and can stimulate the imaginations of students. They can create a great impact and evoke deep emotional responses. When students begin to share the emotions of the characters on the screen, they can begin to appreciate a foreign culture at a deeper level. Furthermore, they can sense the shared humanity that lies beneath the visible differences they perceive.

This paper discusses British films and the British film industry briefly then focuses on the aspects of Britain and British people that have been conveyed to students in Kyoto Sangyo University Foreign Language Faculty through the film "The Crying Game" (Neil Jordan, 1992). The story, which is set in Northern Ireland and London, deals with themes such as IRA terrorism, racial prejudice, friendship, loyalty and homosexual love. Many of these issues are extremely difficult to convey to Japanese students and are, in fact, shocking for quite a few. The way the film was used in and out of class is explained and the responses of 102 students to the story and the characters are analyzed. The writer demonstrates how a comparatively large number of students showed a remarkable degree of awareness and acceptance of the common humanity they share with the characters in the story.

Keywords: British culture, British film industry, Northern Ireland 'Toubles', IRA terrorism, homosexuality

Introduction

When teaching and learning about another culture, we inevitably focus on differences, especially major differences such as religion, systems of government, and social class structures. Information about such aspects of another country is essential in order to begin to understand the values and behaviour of the people of that country. However, it is very difficult to convey to large classes in a lecture room the ways in which these beliefs, systems, and values affect the lives of ordinary people. Films, as a visual medium, can provide students with an idea of what the buildings, streets, cities and countryside look like. They can show the varied ethnicity of countries like present-day Britain.

Film, however, can provide more than an awareness of the appearance of a place. It can evoke a deeper response and contribute to more profound inter-cultural understanding. Alan

Maley explains the power of film in the following way: “The combination of sound, vision, and language engages and stimulates our senses and cognitive faculties simultaneously, creating a total impact that dwarfs other mediums.” (Maley: Foreword)

It is this emotional impact which provides the key. When watching a skillfully crafted film, the audience can begin to share the reactions and emotions of the characters on the screen. By identifying with the characters in British films, students can begin to appreciate British culture at a deeper level. Furthermore, they can sense the shared humanity that lies beneath the visible differences they perceive.

This paper describes a one-semester course on Britain and British films of the 1980s and 1990s. In the first section, there is a brief explanation about the main types of British films made during those 20 years. This is to provide background information about the five films selected for the course. These films were: *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981), *Room With A View* (Merchant-Ivory, 1986), *My Beautiful Launderette* (Stephen Frears, 1985), *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992), *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1995).

The second section explains how the course was structured and how student responses to the films were obtained and evaluated. The third section focuses on one of the films, *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992), as an example of how students were able to empathize with characters and situations which would, at first sight, appear to be totally alien to Japanese youth. This section is divided into 5 parts. First, there is a summary of the plot of *The Crying Game*. The second part explains how *The Crying Game* was financed and made and the reasons why it became successful very slowly. Part three gives background information on the political situation in Northern Ireland at the time the film is set and part four explains changes in attitudes towards homosexuality in Britain. The information in these two parts was presented (in more detail) to the students in class to help them understand the film. The fifth part analyzes the responses of the students to the film.

In teaching a course based on British films, it was essential to get across to the students that British films are representations of Britain. In other words, they provide impressions and experiences of Britain and British people, mediated through the eyes of the director, and to varying degrees, by the financiers and distributors. Nevertheless, through films, students of culture can be shown past eras, places and situations that visitors to Britain would be highly unlikely to encounter. Furthermore, studying British films set in the past, such as *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *Room With A View* (1986), can reveal as much about the values and preoccupations of the time at which the film was made as it can about the era in which the story is set. Interestingly, *Chariots of Fire* was seen by many in Britain as a nationalistic film, inspiring patriotism and a love for one's country when the Falklands War started around the time of its general release. Seen in retrospect, and from the point of view of a great number of the Japanese students who took this course, it is a film about individual integrity and striving for personal goals. Their more objective view is, in fact, closer to the original aims of the film-makers, who were not supporters of the Thatcher government or the war against Argentina (Cook: 368, Richards: 169). Examples such as this show the complexity of the medium of film

and the part British films play in creating and defining an image of the British nation.

Section 1: Background information on British films made in the 1980s and 1990s

The film industry in Britain has been overshadowed by the dominance of Hollywood since the late 1920s. This is partly because of a lack of government funding. It was not until the election of the current Labour government in 1997, and the subsequent introduction of tax concessions for low-budget British films, as well as the allocation of revenue from the National Lottery, that film production received financial support from the government (Cooke: 279). Another reason for the limited success of British films has been that American companies control most of the distribution and exhibition structure in the UK. So British films have had to struggle to compete (Cooke: 371). The effect of this situation on the film *The Crying Game* is discussed in more detail in Section 3, Part 2 of this paper. The problem of distribution and exhibition persists, but the last two decades of the 20th century nevertheless produced a far more diverse national cinema than ever before.

Among the most successful genres of British film in the last twenty years have been "quality historical films often referred to as heritage". (Street: 103). *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *Room With A View* (1986) are classic examples of heritage films. They are set in the past and focus on upper class life. Such films are also usually based on historical events or works of literature. With their gorgeous settings, attention to detail in period costume and style, they provide a nostalgic representation of a certain kind of Englishness.

In addition to the mainstream success of the heritage genre, a new kind of film from a new generation of film-makers started to enjoy surprising box-office success. This 'renaissance' (Cooke: 371) started to take place as a result of the introduction of video, cable and satellite services which brought a wider range of topics and choices to audiences. Moreover, advances in technology meant that films could be made on a low budget and many new small production companies appeared. In addition, the BBC began providing technical assistance and money for a variety of film projects. However, the greatest help came from a new independent TV company called Channel 4. Between 1982 and 1997 it sponsored over 200 adventurous, low-budget films which dealt with original and challenging topics (Christopher: 91). These films were notable for their realism, contemporary settings, and lack of special effects. Channel 4 also provided a regular television programme, called "Film on Four", to show its own or other British films. Channel 4 films are well known for their originality and high level of social awareness.

One of the most highly praised Channel 4 productions is *My Beautiful Launderette* (Stephen Frears, 1985). The film is set in suburban London and is about Omar, the nephew of an Asian businessman and Johnny, his white lover. "The film explores themes of racial tension, youth, class and sex, in one of the most highly praised films about British Asian culture." (Christopher: 97) Such films represent a darker, more multicultural and far less familiar 'Britishness' to international audiences.

There was a new wave of British films in 1990s with new, adventurous directors and writers often collaborating closely as a team. For example, the Andrew Macdonald (producer), Danny Boyle (director), and John Hodge (writer) team produced the highly successful films *Shallow Grave* (1994) and *Trainspotting*. These films also featured a new generation of British film stars such as Ewan McGregor and Robert Carlyle. Although *Trainspotting* was financed entirely by Channel Four, it was made for the big cinema screen, not the small television screen. It represents a move away from the strong British film tradition of realism. *Trainspotting* deals with drugs, poverty and squalour, but contrasts strongly with the more orthodox, realist approach of the director Ken Loach and even the rather less orthodox Mike Leigh. There are scenes in *Trainspotting* which are best described as surrealistic. This, together with its humour and catchy *Britpop* soundtrack, have established it as the herald of a fresh approach to film-making in Britain.

Section 2: Organization of the British Film course

Reactions to films are very personal and tastes in film vary widely. How does one go about choosing and using films in a course which involves only 21 classroom hours? Obviously, the films have to be watched by the students mostly out of class time in the privacy of their own home, or in the library or Language Learning Centre on campus. Lessons can then be devoted to explaining aspects of the film which are difficult to understand without background cultural information. For practical reasons, therefore, the choice of films has to be limited to box office successes which are commercially available in Japan and with Japanese subtitles. (The films are used for their cultural content in this course and not as language teaching material.)

Another practical question is how many films can be covered adequately in one semester? Bearing in mind that student tastes and interests will vary, about 5 films of different genres or topics seem to provide a balance in variety and workload. This represents a minimum of 10-12 hours of film viewing as homework plus two reports based on two of the first three films studied. Students answer questions in the final exam on the last two films shown in the semester.

In order to find out what students had learned and how they had responded to each film, they were required to write a guided summary of the first film (*Chariots of Fire*). They could choose one of the next two films shown (*Room With A View* or *My Beautiful Launderette*) for the second summary, which they wrote with minimal guidelines. Questions were set in the final exam on the last two films (*The Crying Game* and *Trainspotting*). A third kind of exam question was designed to get an overall picture of their reactions to all five films. They had to say which film, scene, or character(s) best fit each category below and explain the reasons why (marks were based on the quality of the reasoning, not the choice of example).

- a) The most difficult film for Japanese people to understand;
- b) The most interesting story;
- c) The most shocking scene;

- d) The most moving scene;
- e) The most heart-warming relationship;
- f) The female character you admired the most;
- g) The most fascinating male character;
- h) The film which seems most British.

62 students sat the exam in 2002 and 40 in 2003. Interestingly, there was little variation between the overall pattern of the students' responses in 2002 and 2003. In their opinion, the most difficult films for Japanese people to understand were *Trainspotting* (28.4%) and *Chariots of Fire* (26.4%). *Trainspotting*, set in contemporary Scotland and London, is the story of a group of young heroin addicts. The reasons it was difficult to understand were mainly the fact that drugs like heroin were unfamiliar to most students in the class. In spite of being difficult to understand, it was, in the opinion of a clear majority (76%), the most interesting film. Students thought the film represented modern British youth well and they could identify with the protagonists' feelings of anarchic rebellion and understand the attraction and dangers of hard drugs. They enjoyed the fast pace, the surrealistic humour and the music.

The reasons why *Chariots of Fire* was difficult to understand were that it deals with values and ideologies which were unfamiliar to the students. The story, set in the 1920s, is about two British athletes, one Jewish and the other a Scottish missionary, who competed in the 1924 Olympic Games. Many themes were new to students, such as the history of Jewish people in the UK and the racial prejudice they have experienced. Christian beliefs, especially the importance of observing the Sabbath, also provided new insights for many of the class. Yet many could identify with and admire the willpower of both athletes in their determination to live by their principles. Moreover, this film was perceived by a large number (45%) to be the most British. With its setting in Cambridge University, the Scottish Highlands, the pride and patriotism expressed by the characters, it conformed to their image of Britain and British people.

It is therefore not surprising that *Room With A View*, set at the turn of the 20th century, was popular with a large number of students for similar reasons. 42% chose it as the most interesting story because they enjoyed the romance and the happy ending. 23.5% considered it the most British film mainly because of the settings, costumes, attitudes and behaviour of the characters. 12.7% found it difficult to understand mainly with respect to the attitudes to social class and the role and expectations of women at that time.

The film which the students found the most difficult to relate to overall was *My Beautiful Launderette*. Set in London during the Thatcher government, it is about Pakistani immigrants and second generation British Asians, unemployed white punks and homosexual love. It was chosen because it represents a very different side of Britain to that shown in heritage films. It was, inevitably, far more difficult for students to relate to immediately. Many expressed shock at seeing scenes of men kissing, but this provided a good opportunity to explain how, since the 1980s, Britain has become far more open to and accepting of homosexual relationships.

The reasons why I have chosen *The Crying Game* as the main focus of this paper are that, firstly, it deals with important British issues such as the political situation in Northern Ireland and the aims and activities of the IRA. Secondly, it reintroduces the theme of racial prejudice, this time expanding it to include Caribbean immigrants to Britain. Furthermore, it explores the themes of friendship, loyalty and homosexual love. Judging from the frankness of the students' responses to this film, it clearly had the strongest overall impact and brought home to many that, below superficial differences of skin colour, religious or political affiliation, and sexuality, Irish, British and Japanese people share a common humanity.

Section 3: Focus on *The Crying Game*

Part 1: Summary of the plot of *The Crying Game*

A black British soldier (Jody) is captured by a small IRA terrorist gang and held hostage for three days. The terrorists plan to exchange him for one of their group who is being held prisoner by the British army. One of the terrorists, Fergus, befriends Jody while guarding him. Unlike the other members of his group, Fergus is sensitive to the fear and needs of their prisoner. Jody, a shrewd judge of character, appeals to Fergus' humanity and gains his trust. The two men grow very close and can even laugh together in spite of the highly tense situation. When the British army refuses to exchange captives, Fergus is ordered to shoot Jody. However, just as Jody is about to escape from Fergus, the British army launches a violent attack on the IRA hideout and Jody is knocked down and killed by a British armoured vehicle. Most of the IRA gang are killed, but Fergus gets away and goes to London, where he assumes a new identity as Jimmy, a construction worker, to evade capture by the British army and fellow IRA members.

Before Jody's death, Fergus had promised he would find Dil, Jody's attractive black girlfriend. Jody wanted Fergus to tell her that he had died thinking of her and that he loved her. Fergus finds Dil but is strongly attracted to her. He is shocked and confused to discover that she is, in fact, a man. However, when two of his former IRA comrades, Maguire and Jude, find Fergus and order him to assassinate an important judge, he is concerned about Dil's safety and realises that he cares for her, and the memory of Jody, very deeply. He persuades her to let him cut her hair and dress her in Jody's clothes so that she looks like a man. But when he confesses to her his role in the IRA and the death of Jody, she is angry and confused and prevents him from carrying out the assassination mission. Maguire is killed when he tries to shoot the judge by himself and Jude comes to find Fergus. Dil realises the truth that it was Jude who lured Jody into being kidnapped and shoots her. Fergus tells Dil to leave and takes the blame for the murder of Jude. The final scene shows Fergus in prison and Dil visiting him. She wants to continue the relationship and is waiting for his release. Fergus' feelings towards Dil are still ambiguous. Neil Jordan, who wrote and directed the film explains the subtext in the following way. "The lover became the focus for the erotic subtext, loved by both men in a way they couldn't love each other. And the story ended with a kind of happiness. I

say a kind of happiness, because it involved the separation of a prison cell and other more profound separations, of racial, national, and sexual identity. But for the lovers, it was the irony of what divided them that allowed them to smile. So perhaps there is hope for our divisions yet." (Jordan: Introduction)

Part 2: Difficulties in the financing and commercial success of *The Crying Game*

Neil Jordan first wrote an outline of the story and part of the script for this film in 1982. It was to be called "The Soldier's Wife", but the project was rejected by the new independent British TV channel, Channel 4.

Jordan started work on the project again in 1991 but it was hard to get financial backing because the film dealt with 3 difficult themes: Northern Ireland politics, race, and sexuality. Eventually, a package was arranged with many organizations contributing, including Channel 4 and a Japanese film distribution company called Nippon Development. It was made with a low budget of 47 million US dollars. (Kochberg: 37)

Filming started in November 1991 in Northern Ireland, then moved to London after a week. The film was completed by April 1992 and opened in the UK in October 1992. It was not accepted at the Cannes Film Festival but was shown at the Venice Film Festival that year. Usually, films with a low budget and no famous stars are shown first in special cinemas for a long time to build up their reputation by word of mouth. However, this did not happen with *The Crying Game*. It was shown in regular cinemas around the UK after only a few weeks. Unfortunately, this coincided with an IRA bombing campaign in Britain, which made the topic of the IRA unpopular. This, together with poor marketing, resulted in little box-office success in spite of the good reviews it received in newspapers, magazines and on TV.

In the spring of 1992, Miramax started distributing the film in the US. Miramax used a clever marketing strategy. They persuaded both the media and audiences to keep the 'secret' of the film and advertised it as an action thriller with a secret. They used the slogan "The movie everyone is talking about, but no one is giving away its secrets." Miramax also built a steady Oscar (Academy Awards) nomination campaign for the film through 1992-1993. The film was gradually shown in more movie theaters around the US and received 6 Oscar nominations (best film, best director, best screenplay, best actor, best supporting actor, best editing). This greatly increased the box office success of the film. In the end it won only the Academy Award for best screenplay. However, its success in the US improved its box office success in Britain later, where it became the most profitable film of 1992.

Part 3: The origins of the conflict in Northern Ireland

In order to help students understand the political situation in Northern Ireland and the ideology of terrorist organizations such as the IRA, basic historical background information was taught in class. Part of that information is shared below to elucidate the responses of the students.

At the beginning of the 16th century, Ireland was an independent country. The people were

Catholic and followed a Gaelic way of life and spoke the Gaelic language. English Protestant rulers (Queen Elizabeth I and King James I) wished to take control of Ireland and sent Protestant settlers from England and Scotland. The settlers took land from the Catholic Irish and by 1690 they controlled both the productive land in the north and the government of Ireland. Most of the Irish people were still Catholic and they rebelled but were not strong enough to defeat the British army or the Protestant rulers.

In 1801, Ireland's Protestant controlled parliament was abolished and Ireland became part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Irish politicians were sent to London to represent Ireland in parliament there. The Catholic majority in Ireland were treated very unfairly and they wanted to be free from Britain. They were called Nationalists because they wanted Ireland to be an independent nation. The Protestant minority wanted Ireland to remain part of the union of England, Wales and Scotland (the UK) and so they were called Unionists. They did not want Ireland to be controlled by the Catholics because they would lose all their economic and political privileges.

In 1905, a new political party was formed called Sinn Fein, which means 'Ourselves Alone' in the Gaelic language. Together with other Nationalist parties, they put pressure on the British government to allow Irish "Home Rule" (self-government). However, the start of the First World War delayed this. Some Nationalists grew impatient and organized a rebellion in 1916, called the Easter Rising. The rebels knew they did not have a chance of winning, but the British reaction was far more brutal than expected and hundreds of Irish rebels, as well as innocent bystanders, were killed by British troops. Most of the rebel leaders were executed without a trial. All this increased support for Sinn Fein among the Irish people and the party won all the seats in the 1918 election, except in the north of Ireland where most people were Protestant.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was set up in 1918 following the election success of Sinn Fein. The soldiers (who didn't wear uniforms) carried out guerilla attacks on the British army. Both sides committed a lot of violent crimes. The fighting continued until 1921 when both sides agreed to work out a peace settlement. The Irish people, eager for peace to be restored, agreed that Ireland should be divided into two parts. The north, where the majority of people were Protestant Unionists, would remain part of the UK and be known as Northern Ireland, or Ulster, its Irish name. The south, where most people were Catholic Nationalists became the Irish Free State, and later, in 1949, it became the Republic of Ireland, or Eire, its Irish name.

However, many people were not satisfied with this arrangement and Sinn Fein and the IRA have been fighting for a reunited, independent Ireland. They have been opposed by Protestant Unionist political parties and guerilla groups similar to the IRA who want to keep Northern Ireland part of the UK. Both sides have carried out a violent terrorist campaign.

In Northern Ireland, during the following 20 years, the Catholic minority were seriously discriminated against in employment and housing. This led to a civil rights movement and eventually fighting broke out between Catholics and Protestants. The Northern Irish

government was unable to keep control and so British soldiers were sent in 1969 to try to restore and keep the peace there. The IRA split into two sections around this time. One was called the Official Wing and used non-violent means to make the British army leave Northern Ireland. The other was called the Provisional Wing (or Provos) and used violent methods such as bombing or shooting soldiers and police to achieve the same aim. They carried out terrorist attacks not only in Northern Ireland but in England too. This is the situation at the start of *The Crying Game* when a British soldier is caught by a group of IRA Provos in Armagh, Northern Ireland.

Although the opposing groups in Ireland are usually identified by the name of their religious denomination, the conflict is political rather than religious. It is a struggle for power between people with different political ideas which are based on different cultural identities: the originally Gaelic speaking Irish Catholics and the English speaking Protestants.

Part 4: A brief overview of attitudes to homosexuality in the UK

A second major theme addressed in class was attitudes to homosexuality in the UK. Although men and women who have sexual relations with members of their own sex have always existed, the word 'homosexual' is quite modern. It was created by a Swiss doctor in 1869, but was not commonly used in the English language until the 1890s (Jones: 309).

In Europe, from the medieval period, same-sex relations were seen as unnatural and sinful. In Britain, it was a criminal offense, punishable by imprisonment, to have sexual relations with a member of the same sex. However, during the Second World War, when large numbers of men and women were living close together in same-sex barracks, many people became aware of homosexuality on a personal or social level. This led to an increase in the number and size of communities of homosexuals and lesbians in the cities of Europe and North America in the 1950s.

At the same time, governments tried to prevent such a development because most people considered homosexuality to be socially harmful and the common images of homosexuals were very negative. They were seen as effeminate, weak, or dangerous to innocent young boys. Lesbians were not seen to pose such a threat, but were considered unnatural and sick. Nevertheless, the homosexual and lesbian communities grew and films showing the erotic and positive sides of homosexuality started to be made and shown in film clubs and festivals. By the 1960s they began to be seen by a wider audience and it was during this period that the word 'gay' started to be used to describe a male homosexual person in a positive way.

Homosexuality was legalized in Britain in 1967, but attitudes towards homosexuals have been changing only very slowly and there are still a lot of deep-seated prejudices preventing complete acceptance of homosexuality. One reason for this is that before 1967, open discussion and dramatic representation of homosexuality in films, on stage, and on TV was virtually taboo. It was censored by the British Board of Censors and so there was a great deal of public ignorance about homosexuality.

Consequently, gay liberation did not take place immediately after 1967 in Britain. Some clubs

opened and some pubs became centres of gay culture. There were some late night discussions on TV, and reviews of relevant books appeared in some newspapers, but it wasn't until the 1970s that real activism began. This came about because of many incidents of violence, and police discrimination, and alarm over AIDS. Gay publications enabled activists to network and fight for new laws guaranteeing their rights. Also, support groups were formed, such as Outrage! (1990), to publicize the large number of homosexuals holding positions in government and the church and who had been keeping their sexual orientation hidden.

There had been stage plays and films which included homosexual themes and characters before 1967, but for reasons explained above, they were not mainstream productions. One of the ironies of the mainstream success of *My Beautiful Laundrette* is that, at the time it was released, the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher was trying to pass legislation to prevent local governments from introducing policies which might seem supportive of gay and lesbian relationships. The success of this film seemed to prove that "a substantial number of people disagreed with this particular attempt by Thatcher to turn the clock back to a pre-permissive, more homophobic era." (Cook: 370) Realistic and sympathetic portrayals of homosexual relationships have been shown increasingly in mainstream British film productions since the 1980s, which can be seen to reflect a growing acceptance of homosexuality in British society or, at least, a wish by a number of film makers to create greater acceptance.

Part 5: The responses of students to *The Crying Game*

In view of the subject matter of this film, it is surprising that only 6 students (5.8%) said it was the most difficult film for Japanese people to understand. The three main reasons why they consider this a difficult film for a Japanese audience are:

"If we don't know the background of the movie, it is very difficult to understand why they fight. I think that many Japanes* people don't know about the 'Trouble' in Northern Ireland. So, maybe they cannot understand completely."

"Because Japan is not controlled from other countries, and the terrorists is not known around Japan. Besides, I think that few men love a man who pretend to a woman."

"... because people who are homosexual are very openly*. In Japan, many people like to try to conceal, I think."

(An asterisk* denotes a student's non-standard use of a syntactical or lexical item.)

The number of students who chose this film as having the most interesting story was 17 (16.6%). Some of the main reasons are:

"... there are a lot of themes, for example, IRA, discrimination against the black people,

homosexual*, and love.”

“... Fergus kidnapped Jody, but they understood* each other. Then Fergus met Jody's girlfriend Dil to perform* his promise.”

“The story is great because there are some secrets in the film that we never expect. The best one is that Dil is not female.”

“... I thought Dil was a very beautiful lady. But she was a beautiful man! It's amazing.”

“... it is exciting to see if Fergus will love Dil or not.”

This film clearly was the one that shocked most students (55.8%). There were four scenes which students said were shocking. The most shocking for 28 students (27.4%) was the scene where Fergus and the audience can see that Dil is actually a man. Here are some of the comments the students made:

“... I think many people were also shocked the scene which Dil's lower part of the body appears. I was shocked about the story as I thought he was a woman and about it appeared clear.”

“... The British soldier's lover, Dil is a man in truth. His appearance is beautiful and sexy. And Dil loves men. It is very shocking for me.”

“... when it was found out that Dil is not a woman. I've never seen this type of movie, and story. So, I imagined that Jody's lover was a woman. I was surprised.”

“... I was shocked when I found out Dil was a man in fact. Further, Jody knew this fact already. I was really shocked! But I think Fergus was more shocked than anyone else.”

The last comment shows the extent to which this student was able to empathize with the character of Fergus. Interestingly, almost the same number of students (25.4%) found the scene of Jody's unexpected and violent death as shocking as the revealing of the sexual identity of Dil. The extent to which these students perceived the irony and the tragedy of the situation, can be seen from their comments below:

“... Jody is hit by the car of British army ... Though British army is friend of Jody who is a British soldier, he is hit in accident. It's ironic.”

“... the scene which Jody was ran* over by the British army's armored car. It was the most

tragic scene for me.”

“... Jody was run over. Then I was shocked. Jody is innocent of guilty.”

“... Jody are* knocked down by a car is the most shocking one. I never expected that Jody died in such a cruel way.”

A total of 17 students (16.6%) described scenes from *The Crying Game* as the most moving. In the case of the other four films, it was easy to predict which scenes would be considered moving. However, a surprising number of different scenes from *The Crying Game* were mentioned, as can be seen from some of their responses below:

“... Fergus and Jody become friendly gradually. I will not do judge a person by his appearance.”

“... Jody asked Fergus to meet Dil and tell her he loved her if he was killed. Jody knew his fate and believed* Fergus.”

“... when Jody was* died, I was moved.”

“... Fergus enters the prison instead of Dil. This shows the kindness and nature of Fergus. If I were him, I couldn't enter the prison instead of Dil. So, I was moved.”

“... Fergus covered up for Dil and he went to jail. He kidnapped Dil's best friend with his partners, so he atoned in different way of different situation.”

“... Fergus pretends that he shot Jude, although in fact Dil did it. And in prison Dil meets him over the wall she promises that she is going to wait for him getting out of the prison for 2335 days. This long eternal love is really moving scene to me.”

A surprisingly large number of students (27.4%) chose the relationship between Jody and Fergus as the most heart-warming from among all five films. Their remarks show a strong awareness that human relationships can overcome differences of nationality, political ideology and duty.

“... Jody and Fergus. Although they were enemies each other, they came out of their shells gradually.”

“... Fergus and Jody accept each other gradually by talking. Maybe, Fergus had not malice to Jody at last.”

"... Jody and Fergus. Because even though Jody is a hostage of IRA, they have friendship. And Jody believes* Fergus."

"... Because we think terrorists are all heartless, but Fergus is very kindness against Jody. They spent a few days, but they bounded* each other by tie of friendship."

"... Fergus, an IRA terrorist and Jody, a hostage by IRA made a friend for a few days. Then, Fergus tries to carry out a promise with Jody hard*."

A smaller number of students found the relationships between Fergus and Dil (6 students) and Jody and Dil (4 students) heart-warming. Although they were few in number, their acceptance of and open-mindedness towards such unusual relationships is revealed in their comments below.

"... Dil is a man so Fergus can't love him like he loves women, but he loves Dil as a human and tries to protect him in* behalf of Jody."

"... after realizing that Dil is man, Fergus' attitude toward loving people never changed."

"... When I saw Fergus at first, I thought he was a cold person. But when I found he is kind through the relationships with Jody and Dil, I became* to like him."

"... Jody loves Dil though he knows Dil is a man. I think he loves him as a human and a lover."

"... The relationship between Jody and Dil is wonderful. Dil knows that Jody died. But she (he) fix* memory of him. And he (she) trust* him that he is a only person that would never betray her (Dil). They trust each other."

"... Jody and Dil in "The Crying Game". Dil was in fact a man but Jody loved him (her) with understandind* that."

"... I think their love is great."

In view of this level of acceptance, it is not so surprising that as many as 10 students (10.2%) chose Dil as the female character they most admired. The character of Lucy in *Room With A View* was the most admired woman of all (chosen by 55%), but Dil was clearly the second most popular choice with six other female characters receiving between one and four nominations only. Here are some of the reasons the students gave for choosing Dil.

"... ? I admire Dil in "Crying Game". 'Cos she's the very girl I want to become! She has sincere love."

"... Dil is exactly* male but his mind is not male but female. I haven't fell in love deeply. Therefore, she is enviable person for me."

"... Dil if I can regard her as female. Her positive thinking is admiring* for me."

"... She is male actually. But I want to admire Dil the most. She looks like really woman. I think that she is cool and strong, good looking. And she can sing a song very well."

"... She waits for coming back of Fergus forever."

"... Dil is very pretty, she is man, but she has woman* hart*."

"... Dil ... because she was beautiful and had strong mind but truly she was weak, tender, and delicate. I think she is more feminine than other women."

A similarly small but significant number of students selected Fergus as the most fascinating male character. The first choices of the vast majority of the students were the handsome, passionate lover George in *Room With A View* (19.6%) and the dashing, modern young man who kicks his drug habit, Mark Renton, in *Trainspotting* (16.6%). The heroic athletes of *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell and Harold Abrahams, were the first choices of 13.7% and 8.8%, respectively. The 11.7% of students who chose Fergus admired his kindness, courage, integrity, and above all, his humanity.

"... He is kind because he take out Jody's bag on the his* head, and talk to him. Fergus runs a risk which he was seemed* (seen?) Fergus's face."

"... He is an IRA terrorist but he is kind and he keeps his word. I like his character."

"... He has kindness to Jody and takes full responsibility for Dil's crime finally. He is a good man."

"... Because he accept* Dil and he was sent to prison substitution of Dil."

"... Because he was very kind as human. He helped Jody and Dil. Also he was very strong."

"... Because he is different from other members of his group. He is humane."

Perhaps the most fascinating point about the students' perceptions of this film and its representation of Britain and Britishness is the fact that out of 102 students, only one said that *The Crying Game* was the most British film and this student gave no reason for this choice. Was this simply because this film conformed least to their preconceived images of Britain? Or was it because the characters in the film are shown to go beyond the barriers of race, culture, and gender? This is an intriguing matter which merits further investigation.

Conclusion

The modern world is dominated by the visual image, and in particular by the moving image. Alan Maley points out that: "The written word has, to a large extent, ceded its pre-eminence to visual representations of the world, which in turn has created the need for us to make sense of this visual rhetoric." (Maley: Foreword) Films can be used to provide students with vicarious experiences of other cultures, such as Britain. Moreover, they can give them insights into situations, places and people that they would not normally have access to when visiting the country. Films cannot replace first-hand contact with other cultures, but they can provide an initial contact and powerful, memorable images.

The role of teachers of culture who use film is, as Maley says, to help students "make sense of this visual rhetoric". Guiding students to an awareness that films are representations of Britain is an essential first step. Secondly, providing them with factual information is necessary to help them understand in greater depth the central issues of the films they watch. Encouraging observation of cultural differences is a third element. I would argue, however, in view of student responses over the last two years, that it is important to encourage students to focus beyond these differences and to look for a shared humanity. This can be achieved through a combination of the following factors: a judicious selection of films for study, asking questions which stimulate inner reflection, and providing students with the opportunity to think and express their ideas. The lecture course and exam format described in this paper is not the ideal means, but has served as a point of departure for further explorations into the opportunities that films provide to a teacher of culture.

With the increase in funding for the British film industry, and a rising new generation of writers and directors with their fresh and exciting approaches, I'm looking forward to sharing the kaleidoscope of vicarious experiences that these new British films will provide our students, and the sense of closeness that this can bring us all.

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映画から何が分かるか。イギリス映画を通してイギリス文化を教える。 'The Crying Game' に焦点をあてて

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概要

外国の文化を教える際の最大の難問といえるのは、学生たちに、家々の様子、通りや町の様子、そして自然の様子を見、聞きさせ、また、人々がいかに行動するか、人々の価値観や偏見を知らせることである。映画という手段は、限界はあるが、別の国にいる実感に近いものを与えることができる。さらに、映画はストーリーを力強く語ることができる。それにより、学生の想像力をかき立て、非常に大きな影響を与え、また、奥深い反応を呼び起こすことができる。学生たちが映画の登場人物たちの感情に共感し始めると、そこには深いレベルでの外国の文化への理解が生まれる。そして、目に見える表面の違いの下にある共通の人間性を感じることができるのである。

本稿はイギリスの映画と映画産業について簡単に解説した後、映画“The Crying Game” (Neil Jordan, 1992) を通して、京都産業大学外国語学部の学生たちに示されたイギリスとイギリス国民の諸相に焦点をあてる。この映画は、北アイルランドとロンドンを舞台とし、IRAのテロリズム、民族差別、友情、忠誠心、同性愛といったテーマを扱っている。こうしたテーマの多くは、日本の学生にはたいへん理解しにくいものである。事実、かなりの学生が、この映画を見てショックを感じている。本稿では、この映画を授業時および授業外の課題としていかに使用したかが説明され、102名の学生のこの映画と登場人物への反応が分析されている。多数といえる数の学生たちが、物語の登場人物とともに、驚くほどしっかりと共通の人間性に気づき、それを受け入れた様子が、本論文で示される。

キーワード：イギリス文化、イギリス映画産業、北アイルランド「問題」、IRAテロリズム、同性愛