

Bloody Sunday: the truths behind a terrible event

History Frank Hanover

After Bloody Sunday: Representation, Ethics, Justice By Tom Herron and John Lynch Cork University Press, /39, 140pp

BLOODY SUNDAY is the single most iconic atrocity perpetrated against the nationalist and Catholic community by a British state apparatus. It's iconic because Lord Chief Justice Widgery under the conservatism of his and Ted Heath's ideological casuistry concerning union and army conceived a whitewash twisted in its "official" corruption.

This year, Tony Blair-appointee Lord Mark Saville is expected to go public with his delayed report into the shooting dead of 13 unarmed civil rights marchers.

But whether the 'truth' emerges remains to be seen. But from the vantage afforded by this book, a slim yet astoundingly intense academic study, one gathers the truth-telling significance of the films, plays, murals, poems, installations, graphics and annual commemorations about Bloody Sunday and also its creative, commemorative, political and ethical legacy.

Lecturers Herron and Lynch, whose expertise resides in literature, cultural theory, media studies and visual art, are analytically savvy and philosophically astute about representations as diverse as the Guildhall hearings' graphic mechanism created by Michael McDaid of Derry that shows the drastically different Bogside as it existed 36-years ago alongside the Thomas Kinsella poem 'Butcher's Dozen'. Written in the aising or dream vision poetic style and ostensibly inspired by Thomas Merriman's 'The Midnight Court' it was published in pamphlet form in April 1972, the same month as the Widgery report came out.

Elsewhere evocations like the much later Paul Greengrass film *Bloody Sunday* or the Bogside Artists' mural depicting a moment from the television coverage shown on 30 January, 1972 are examined and both are aptly critiqued and contextualised for their dramatic attempt to portray an evidently terrible truth.

Therefore, divided into an introduction and six chapters what the reader acquires from *After Bloody Sunday* is a condensed and well interpreted overview of the cataclysmic events and the aftermath culturally, judicially and politically of what the British Army euphemistically entitled Operation Motorman.

Herron and Lynch couch in a philosophical, media-reflective and fastidious language a diverse creativity that ultimately reflects the human responses that outsiders and people from Derry conceived to memorise the tragedy. But this powerful work also takes pains to show that the British government alienated many nationalists and Catholics from a civilian movement's desire for basic rights into, what became in Sinn Fein and the IRA's own iconography, a liberation ideology and the internecine fact of daily life for decades. The sweep of ideas around memory, remembrance and the tender mercy of people's will to forget in this excellent Cork University Press hardback are guaranteed to prompt further questioning. Why, for example, isn't the non-Catholic humanitarian William McCrystal, who tried with fellow Christians to bring the dying Jackie Duddy to safety, depicted in the Bogside Artists' mural and why don't we better know the Coleraine Protestant NICRA March organiser Ivan Cooper?

Regardless, Herron and Lynch are to be congratulated for a thoughtfully argumentative work of philosophy, intelligent insight and reasoning into an aspect of Irish history that still needs resolution despite the advances of the peace process.

<http://www.tribune.ie>

Subscribe to [Tribune.ie](http://www.tribune.ie) and discover why the Sunday Tribune is Ireland's quality Sunday newspaper. © All contents copyright The Sunday Tribune 2008.