

“It’s in your nature”: Race, Gender, and Postcoloniality in *The Crying Game*

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[Abstract]

This paper seeks to foreground the intersection between gender, race and postcoloniality represented in Neil Jordan’s 1992 film *The Crying Game*, thereby attempting to fill a critical lacuna among the discourses of feminism and psychoanalysis regarding the Irish film. This paper particularly questions the shortcomings of the previous readings that focus on Dil’s body and penis, while belittling the problematization of Fergus’s Irish identity. Jody’s parable of “the kind frog and the evil scorpion” illuminates how Irish identity is racialized, informing long-standing colonial ideas and images of the Irish people. Likewise, the conversation between Fergus and Jody on cricket and hurling references the postcoloniality that the two ethnic characters commonly share in relation to British Empire. Also, the romance between Fergus and Dil, unlike bell hooks argues, does not build up a conventional binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized. Rather, it breaks down the cliché by subverting the Western gaze internalized by the Irish character. This is because the drag queen Dil in Neil Jordan’s film defies any racial categories and gender categories, thereby remaining ambiguous even after “her” penis is revealed.

Key Words: *The Crying Game*, gender, identity, postcoloniality, race

I . Introduction

The concept of scopophilia, the voyeuristic male gaze, has been dominant in critiques of Western cinema, especially the genre of psychological thrillers in Hollywood. Good examples include both classics and contemporaries such as Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954), *Psycho* (1960), *Mulholland Drive* (David Fincher 2001) and *Disturbia* (J. D. Caruso 2007). In the films, the female body is subject to fetishization, as “the determining male gaze projects its fantasy” onto it (Mulvey 837).¹⁾ *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan 1992), a critically acclaimed Irish film, is viewed as a unique variation of the genre. While sharing the common notion of “pleasure in looking,” the Neil Jordan film, in fact, has gained popularity with regard to the shocking scene where the male genitalia of an extremely feminine character, Dil (Jaye Davidson), is exposed.²⁾ Not surprisingly, critical debates have generally focused on how the scene subverts or denaturalizes a hegemonic male gaze—how it undermines the notion of the gender binary between masculinity and femininity which is bound to a normative sexual identity.

Indeed, “gender trouble,” informed by Dil's drag performance, is undeniably crucial for *The Crying Game*'s narrative. Regarding Dil's gender, Žižek defines an unconventional romance between the two main characters, Fergus (Stephen Rea) and Dil, as the “ultimate variation of courtly love” (i.e. *amour courtois*)—a subversion of the Western convention (102). Many critics offer a similar analysis focusing on gender and sexuality. Young, for instance, suggests that although the film may be intended to raise national and racial questions, its main focus is more on

"transgressive sexuality" of the male cross-dresser, Dil (144). For Young, *The Crying Game's* racial themes are "so under-elaborated that they constitute a structuring absence" (143), and its narrative is not so political because it keeps "interracial sexual relationships, homosexuality, transvestism and the moral corruption of the judiciary to the realm of the private, individual act and choice" (144).

Such an analysis references the film's seemingly misleading narrative structure involving sort of a MacGuffin. The setting in Northern Ireland, where the presence of IRA is politically significant as represented in the first part of the film, is overshadowed by the length of the second part that highlights the "private" romance between Fergus and Dil.³⁾ The whole narrative begins with IRA cell group members, including Fergus and Jude (Miranda Richardson), kidnapping Jody (Forest Whitaker), a black British soldier serving in Northern Ireland, who they would use to negotiate for an incarcerated IRA fellow. Contrary to the audience's expectation that the film would continue to highlight the political situation, an unexpected twist occurs; Fergus is ordered to execute Jody when IRA's negotiation with England fails, but Jody escapes, and while Fergus runs after him, unable to shoot him, Jody is run over and killed by the British army's tank coming in search of the IRA hideout; in the second part, Fergus (with his traumatic memory of Jody) escapes to London and sees Dil, Jody's "special" girlfriend, with whom he subsequently falls in love. While focusing on the romance between them, the film evokes IRA-England conflict only in a brief scene where Peter Maguire (Adrian Dunbar), the leader of the cell group, carries out the suicidal assassination of an old, corrupt English judge in London.

However, psychoanalysis preoccupied with Dil's transexuality and her relationship with Fergus often obscures the richness that *The Crying Game* brings by intersecting race, nationality, and sexuality. Evans warns against the shortcomings of such types of analysis: "the secret that one of the central female characters in the film was

actually a man became of such overriding importance to reviewers as to eclipse the narrative's preoccupation with race, class and national identities" (202). One should note that the seemingly personal gender issue represented in the second part of the film is better understood through the political, racial background in the first part. The first part problematizes racial, ethnic marginalization in terms of interactions between ethnic minorities, black Jody and Dil and a Northern Irish Fergus. It seems rather intentional that Jody is not a white, but a black Briton, as the first part contextualizes the contemporary Troubles between Northern Ireland and England, a residual effect of the British Empire, to underscore the racial dynamics presented by the film. The first part of the film, where the questions of race and ethnicity serve as the undertones of the latter part, completely excludes white Britons. The same happens in the second part which positions Deveroux, Fergus's boss at a construction site, Dave (Ralph Brown), Dil's ex-suitor, and Col, a bartender of the Metro as minor characters in their territory London, heart of ongoing colonialism. Yet this all goes unnoticed by viewers and critics alike. Also, a simple fact that Neil Jordan has dealt with "the history and complexity of the issues of Irish nationalism and nationhood" (Lockett 294) in his film and writing has been largely neglected. Possibly, *The Crying Game's* unexpected success in America and winning an Academy Award, Best Original Screenplay, have justifiably overshadowed such the political stance the young Irish director took in the early 1990s.⁴⁾

As "a symptom of history," *The Crying Game* discloses and responds to Irish history and colonial and postcolonial Caribbean history (McGee 86). This paper thus explores how the relationship between Fergus and Jody and that between Fergus and Dil represented in the movie references such a historiography—how homosexual undercurrents between the characters are closely linked with racial and ethnic representations. It is my contention that in this cinematic postcolonial narrative that

foregrounds people of color, the discourse of race and ethnicity is as much subversive as that of gender and sexuality. These aspects do not brush each other off. Likewise, the romance between the "white" male character and the black "female" character unsettles such a conventional binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized. Through the phallus of the androgynous character, Dil, which works as a site where colonial mimicry occurs, the postcolonial narrative of the Irish film effectively subverts the gendered Western gaze of mainstream audience in Britain and the United States who often associates one's racial identity only with skin color.

II. "What the fuck do you know about my people?": Problematizing Irish Identity

Both feminist and psychoanalysis critics view Fergus's role in the romance between him and Dil as something reaffirming white male subjectivity; Fergus is a privileged and mystified *white* male hero who remains intact simply because his penis is hidden until the end (Handler 32, Young 146). Black men in *The Crying Game* are, Young asserts, "serviceable Others created in order to form a setting against which Fergus may explore his personal and political dilemmas" (146). This view draws from bell hooks's seminal, sharp reading of *The Crying Game*. She claims that in Hollywood cinema interracial sex is traditionally represented as doomed to fail and as tragic, and the Irish film is no exception (61). For hooks, the (homo)sexual relationship between the black people, Jody and Dil, and the white man Fergus is rather straightforward—the binary between the black colonized subjects and the white colonizer. Fergus is in a quest for a black body represented by Jody and Dil: "In keeping with a colonizing mind set, with racial stereotypes, the bodies of black men and women become the

location, the playing field, where white men work out their conflicts around freedom, their longing for transcendence” (68).

The world bell hooks finds in the Irish film neatly falls into a simple binarism between the white colonizer and the black colonized. She goes onto assert that the “paradigm” that Fergus develops an intimate relationship with Jody in the IRA hideout, and after his death, with Dil in London, “offers a romanticized image of the white colonizer moving into black territory, occupying it, possessing it in a way that affirms his identity” (69). For her, their relationship does not disrupt the conventional representations of power, of subordination and domination (69). The way hooks interprets the dynamics compels us to consider colonial discourses *The Crying Game* contains. Nevertheless, she does not look into the interplay of multi-layered identity issues that presents Fergus's Irishness as something more complicated than it seems. She simply assumes that Fergus is an intact white man, or that his identity is never problematized in the movie. But is *The Crying Game* a typical “Hollywood” film that represents a conventional white man?⁵⁾ Does Fergus have a complete hegemony over the black Others that Jody and Dil embody so that their agency is simply erased? Does *The Crying Game* represent how Western male subjectivity is secured by rendering the black Britons subservient to the white Irish? While unable to answer the questions, hook's analysis runs the risk of obscuring the historical specificities of the Irish in relation to the British Empire that the film carefully references. Seeing Fergus as a whole white male subject may not fully recognize the ambivalence of his racial identity.

Drawing a parallel between the blacks, Jody and Dil, and the white, Fergus, *The Crying Game* demonstrates that neither the “colonizer” nor the “colonized” are homogeneous categories. Given his racial identity as an Irish in the colonial history of the Ireland, Fergus is a subject dealing with double consciousness—not only as a

colonizer who, as bell hooks asserts, *figuratively* invades "black territory," but as a colonized subject whose territory was *actually* invaded and taken over by the British. Thus, though biologically white, Fergus is not really white racially and ethnically. As a white Irish, Fergus's identity resides in-between the center and the periphery in terms of Ireland's colonial status that characterizes both the self and the other at once. On the one hand, as one of the "Western" countries Ireland was familiar to white world; on the other hand, it was marginalized as the first modern colony and as one of the last remaining ones. Similarly, Dil and Jody, though nationally British, are the racialized Others both in Northern Ireland and London simply because they are neither biologically nor racially white. The black people or their "bodies" become the objects of desire by white men, Fergus, Dave and others, yet Fergus too becomes an object of bias and oppression.

Before looking into such an aspect, it is necessary to briefly examine how the first part of the movies is linked with the second part. As Neil Jordan states in an interview, "everything that happens in the second part is a mirror image of what happened in the first part" because he "wanted the second part to reveal all sorts of implications about the first part" (Chua and Jordan). Jody's penis, which is central to the first part, serves as a foreshadowing for Dil's in the second part, drawing a parallel between the Fergus-Jody and the Fergus-Dil homoerotic relationship. For instance, in the urination scene involving Fergus and Jody during Jody's captivity, Jody seduces Fergus to engage in intimate contact with him. He asks Fergus to free his penis because hands are tied so that he can urinate. To persuade the reluctant Fergus, he bluntly but grinningly utters, "it's just a piece of meat. ... it's got no major diseases." Fergus finally helps Jody urinate by taking his penis out and even laughs with Jody about it later, saying, "the pleasure was all mine," as if he enjoyed the unusual moment of the contact between men. The homoerotic undercurrent of the

sequence makes audience realize what Jody's gender identity is when it comes to the shocking revelation of Dil's "secret" later in the second part.

But *The Crying Game* goes further to show that this intimate relationship triggers a rather unlikely debate between Fergus and Jody on the "nature" of Irish people in which Fergus's complex racial identity comes into focus. Because as a "racial ideology" essentialism is "the initial impetus for the action of the movie" (Lyons 92), the term "nature" suggests how Fergus's masculinity, subjectivity, and identity as an Irish nationalist and a Catholic are contingent on one another. When Fergus suggests to Jody that the IRA cell group will free him if their fellow is released from a British prison, Jody contends that Fergus cannot let him go because it is not his "nature." Here, Fergus asks angrily, "What do you know about my nature?" and the exchange continues. When Jody replies, "I'm talking about your people, not you," Fergus shouts, "What the fuck do you know about my people?" Jody replies, yelling, "Only that you're all tough, undiluted mother-fuckers and it's not in your nature to let me go!" It may seem unclear at this point which group identity Jody chooses for Fergus in this scene—white, Irish, or IRA (Lyons 95). However, Jody's word choice, "nature" and "people," sound collective enough to reference all the identities at once.

Jody's characterization of the Irish evokes long-standing stereotypes of IRA with regard to the Troubles between Northern Ireland and England. Indeed, there has been "a long tradition of representations" of two types of the IRA man in films—the cold and emotionless killer and the fundamentally "decent" IRA man who is not sure about his violent acts (Edge 178). On the one hand, *The Crying Game* seems to follow the old notion. Fergus is seen as a decent IRA man, while his fellows are portrayed as violent and pitiless, affirming the stereotype of IRA fighters. Jude, who once tempted Jody, now relentlessly hits him in the face with a gun; Fergus's apologetic remark after Jude hits Jody, "She can't help it," ironically approves Jody's

stereotyped idea of the Irish which Fergus has internalized himself. Indeed, Jude plays within both the stereotype of IRA fighter and that of femme fatale. At the point of their encounter in London in the second part of the film, Jude's appearance changes with her hair dyed black that makes her look colder and sharper. "I was sick of being blonde. Needed a tougher look," Jude tells Fergus. Certainly, it was her "tougher" look that pervaded many of the advertisement of the film; Jude embodies the Hollywood stereotype of the beautiful but evil terrorist. Peter, the cell group leader, is also consistently violent in how he treats Jody in the hideout and how he carries out the assassination of the judge himself in Fergus's place without hesitation.

On the other hand, Neil Jordan's movie evokes the origin of such stereotypes. Jody's idea based upon the Manichean dichotomy between "good" and "evil" informs the colonialist discourses of "Irishness" in the age of the British Empire in which the England is represented as the Self and the Ireland the Other, which underlines the hegemony and superiority of the white Anglo-Saxon over the Celtic. The Irish were represented as an innately violent, uncivilized and uncontrollable race. In 1797 Scottish historian John Pinkerton wrote that the Irish Celts "have been savages since the world began, and will be forever savages; mere radical savages, not yet advanced even to a state of barbarism" (Curtis 95). The image of the Irishman on the cartoon, magazine, pamphlet and newspaper in the 19th century was a wild ape or monster and an evil Caliban or Frankenstein, whereas the English were always portrayed as a good gentleman and an angel (Curtis 103). Such propagandas became consolidated in England and Scotland in the nineteenth century when the people were also identified with American Indians who were portrayed as savages by Europeans. Meanwhile, scientific and biological hypotheses of race and ethnicity were also employed in attempting to demonstrate that the Irish are non-white or "white Negroes" (Curtis 72).⁶ Equivalences were drawn between Irish American and

African American typologies to degrade the Irish; according to the typologies, “the ‘Celt’ and the ‘Negro’ [weigh] in identically on the scales of civic merit” (Jacobson 4).

This is not to reiterate the cultural, historical background, but to suggest that this notion of Irishness was still dominant in the 1970s and 80s when the Troubles between the IRA and Britain were climactic. The construction of hypothesized Irish nature or temperament has been ideologically used to explicate both the historical and contemporary use of violence by the Irish, which indicates the birth of “new-racism” against them (Garner 225-33; Hedetoft 78-82). This new-racism serves as a sociopolitical backdrop of the idea about the “nature” of the Irish that the black Briton Jody proposed in *The Crying Game*. Indeed, Jody further develops his notion of the nature of the Irish. In the next sequence when he feels too much heat in the hood, sweating a lot, Jody asks Fergus to take the hood off and cries, “I can’t fucking breathe, man. Be a Christian, will you?” Given that the Irish are Catholics, this request not only relates to the previous debate on the Irish’s nature but also conveys a rhetorical statement of being a Good Samaritan. Here Jody’s rhetoric makes Fergus listen to “the parable of the kind frog and the evil scorpion” that Jody tells him. The tale describes how a scorpion suicidally stings a frog that is carrying him across a river, and articulating the scorpion’s final words, Jody emphasizes the term “nature” again:

Jody: I can’t help it. It’s in my nature.

Fergus: So what’s that supposed to mean?

Jody: Means what it says. The scorpion does what is in his nature. Take off the hood, man.

Fergus: Why?

Jody: ‘Cause you’re kind. It’s in your nature.

(Fergus walks toward him and pulls off the hood.) (197)⁷

The sequence clearly shows how the notion of "nature" rooted has a certain impact on Fergus' mind and deed. Though ambivalent, Fergus begins to treat Jody kindly, which "reflects his desire to escape this essentialized, prescribed identity" (Lyon 95). Fergus has now transformed, from a violent IRA man who kicks Jody in the head when kidnapping him at the beginning, into a compassionate one. So when Jody reaffirms that "I was right. ... It's in your nature" after the Irish takes off his hood, it sounds quite ironical, for the black Briton takes a position that "inscribes the white man into a paradigm of collective identity" (Lyon 95), as did the British Empire to the Irish.

All along, *The Crying Game* shows how Fergus's complex gender and racial identity is linked with his consciousness of the "nature." This motif recurs in the second part of the movie where Fergus searches for Dil and falls in love with her in London. "'Cause you're my friend. And I want you to go to the Metro," Jody says right before dying. Thus, Fergus's quest in London is motivated by his feeling responsible for Jody's traumatic death and last wish. Upon realizing Dil's real sexuality, Fergus vomits, feeling disgusted by the fact that Dil actually is a man. Nevertheless, he maintains the relationship with Dil and tries to be good to him/her, though reluctant to be her lover. His action is seen as rather self-conscious as evidenced when Dil asks Fergus to kiss him/her and says, "Jody was a gentleman. You can always pretend." Dil's remark matters since she unwittingly suggests that Fergus is able to perform as either homosexual or heterosexual whenever he wants. Then, Fergus replies, "That's true. Your soldier knew it, didn't he?" When Dil replies, "Absolutely," Fergus reluctantly says, "I can't pretend *that much*" and briefly kissing her in front of her house (emphasis added). Interestingly, this scene draws a parallel with a scene in the first part in which Fergus treats Jody kindly after the

debate on the “nature” of the Irish.

Fergus carries on with his racialized identity and is kind to Dil to the extent that he takes Dil's murder of Jude on himself. In the last scene, in which Dil visits Fergus in prison where he is serving a six-year sentence, Fergus tells Dil “the kind frog and the evil scorpion,” the same story from Jody. Fergus's recounting the story shows how he is conscious of the essentialist term, “nature,” presented by Jody, and how it operates as one of the motivations for his sacrificing for Dil. It is also plausible here that Fergus's good deed originates from (heterosexual) love for Dil that he had before knowing who she really is. But after the revelation, Fergus refuses to be called “honey,” “darling” or “light of my life” by Dil who says that there is “no greater love,” a remark indicating her firm belief that Fergus's sacrifice for her was generated from love. To Dil who urges him to “tell [her] why,” the heterosexual white man simply replies, “it's in my nature.” Indeed, it is arguable that Fergus uses “nature” as an excuse to keep himself from having a homosexual relationship. In any case, the character of Fergus as Irish is seen as strongly tied to the aged colonial discourse. Fergus, McGee correctly notes, “cannot cease to be Irish any more than Dil can escape being identified as a homosexual” (150-1). Evident is Jude's assertion, “You're never out, Fergus,” in response to Fergus's claim that he is “out” of the IRA activities when they encounter in Fergus's hotel room. Fergus is an unfortunate colonized subject with little agency.

III. Cricket, Hurling and Drag Queen: Performing Colonial Mimicry

In *The Crying Game* all of the main characters including Fergus are represented as

interlopers. They are seen as "dangerous" immigrants or minorities, or "dirty white negroes," a group of people that registers the Irish, the working-class, and prostitutes including drag queens. In London, the heart of the colonizer, Dil, Jody, and Fergus are all Anglicized subjects that are expected to perform Englishness and whiteness. Yet, at the same time, they are discriminated and exploited by and excluded from the mainstream society. In this sense, Jody's ironical death by the British Army at the end of the first part of the film symbolizes how the black Britons and the Irish are all in the same position under the dominance of Britain. The camera closes up on Jody's crushed body to stress the traumatic unexpected death of the black Briton. The IRA fighters are represented as completely powerless in their resistance. The raid of British army, by contrast, is represented brutal as it completely blows out the small and less-armed IRA hideout without negotiation or warning. Jody and the IRA men represent the same colonial experience as they are commonly killed by the colonizer.

As interlopers, Dil, Jody, and Fergus represent, in Bhabha's words, "a subject of a different that is almost the same, but not quite," a subject that informs a colonial mimicry (Bhabha 122). Bhabha proposes colonial mimicry as a site of the possibilities of discursive and performative resistance where a colonized subject can renegotiate the terms of colonization and thus moves beyond the identity constructs that have been created around him or her. Mimicry always generates a slippage between the Anglicized mimic men and British colonial authority. The power of mimicry comes from the hybrid nature of colonized people who imitate and take on the culture of the colonizers.⁸⁾ Mimicry is thus seen as performance that exposes the artificiality of all the cultural norms of the colonizer, which attempt to determine the race, gender, sexuality and thus identity of the colonized.⁹⁾ In short, because it uncovers the falsehood of the civilizing mission, colonial mimicry poses "at once resemblance and menace" (123).

The representation of Dil's rather ambivalent, dramatizes such a subversive quality. Dil is not merely a drag queen who often reinscribes normalized ideas of "femininity" through cross-dressing and exaggerated makeup, but a black individual with his/her light skin who smoothly crosses the boundary between genders and races. It is through this drag queen that Neil Jordan's film urges us to question the norms of femininity and gender, challenging our essentialist ideas of one's identity. For instance, the Metro, a gay pub in London where Dil performs a drag show, powerfully visualizes this aspect. When entering the space for the first time, Fergus does not realize that it is a transvestite pub. But when he revisits the place after discovering Dil's secret, he scrutinizes the people as the camera panoramically scans the dusky, neon-lit pub from his perspective. Then, Fergus, a "white" heterosexual man, suddenly realizes some of the imposing "women" he had seen before as men. This cinematography highlights the artificiality of commoditized feminine appearance, now questioning the gender and sexuality of *all* the people in the Metro that Fergus (and many in the audience) once took for granted. The Metro is a sort of the "third space" where the validity and authenticity of established colonial idea and identity is called into question.¹⁰⁾ Gender binary is disrupted in this space, for "the negotiation of incommensurable differences" between subjects is likely to occur (Bhabha 312). Therefore, Fergus's response matters in that he enters the space and becomes part of it, though still ambivalent, rather than dismissing the bar as the space of the Other, as a prohibitive boundary that must not be transgressed.

Indeed, the unexpected phallus of the "female" character Dil, revealed in the second part of *The Crying Game* disrupts aged colonial notion that appropriates the colonized subjects as something feminine desired by the colonizer. Rather than serving as Other, the "secret" deconstructs the normative status of heterosexual desire maintained by Fergus. Dil *looks* so effeminate that despite his knowledge that she is

a not a "girl," Fergus, a heterosexual man, is still protective of and attracted to her. He stays around Dil, while not being able to have sexual intercourse with the girl. For Fergus, Dil represents what is "almost the same but not quite." The Irish man winds up desiring that which is not attainable (i.e. vagina) where there exists what cannot be expected (i.e. penis). He is trapped between his notion of heterosexuality and his desire to transgress the forbidden boundary of homosexuality. Fergus, again, is not in control. Nor can the Irish man fulfill his desire as a typical "white" man or a "colonizer."

Meanwhile, Dil's racial and sexual identity renders the movie's narrative concerned with the concept of "passing" as a white or a man. As noted, the trope of passing is most often associated with a light-skinned black person who can pass as white. Whether racial or sexual, passing registers something radically potential which avoids any defining norms and undermines "the privileging of visual proof and knowledge" (Young 140). At the same time, passing does not always indicate "convention-breaking notions" because men passing as women usually assume "the excessively 'feminine' external signifiers" such as false eyelashes, heavy amounts of colored eyeshadow and so on (ibid.). In the case of Dil, she does not (have to) assume such signifiers, for she is performative enough to trick many in the audience. In reality, the African American actor Jaye Davidson who acted Dil can pass as white; he is mixed blood with a Ghanaian father and an English mother. The casting of him may have not only to do with his androgynous look, but with his racial ambiguity as well. As a postcolonial subject that is situated in-between the center and the periphery, performing an "English" woman, Dil stands for two kinds of Otherness (Lockett 299).

This Otherness creates a site of subversion that disrupts the arbitrary power of a Western gaze. The white English employer, Deveroux, for instance, recognizes Dil

only as female when she comes to the construction site to see Fergus after the revelation of her true biological sexuality. Here, the English boss calls Dil “a tart.” Then Fergus playfully remarks, “She’s not a tart.” When the boss scornfully states that Dil must then be “a lady,” Fergus retorts, “No, she’s not that either.” Fergus’s ironic response shows that Dil is “biologically male and culturally female [but] her real identity is neither one nor the other but the relationship between the two” (McGee 142-43). Here, a typical white man’s gaze (i.e. Deveroux’s) which attempts to project his desire to fixate a colonial female subject (i.e. Dil) as an identifiable entity is disrupted. Since the drag queen continually produces a “slippage” between her appearance and her penis, he/she is a subject that cannot be “successfully essentialized in any way” (Lyon 96). Evident is the ending of the movie that shows how Dil defies Fergus’s attempt to define her identity. Dil, still as a “girl” in a mini skirt, visits Fergus in prison, and when Fergus says, “Dil, the thing is, you’re not a girl,” she playfully replies, “Details, honey, details.” Fergus’s statement simply reflects the biased idea of one’s gender based on biological sex, an idea that is unable to present specific arguments against one’s chosen gender identity. Like colonial mimicry, which opens up an opportunity for the non-identity of the colonized to assume their own historical agency, the character of Dil ultimately remains resistant to the dominant ideology, bordering on both homosexual and heterosexual relationship with Fergus.

In fact, Neil Jordan foreshadows a similar subversion in the first part of the movie through the character of Jody whose gender identity is taken for granted. When tempted by Jude as the bait at the outset of the film, he is seemingly portrayed as heterosexual. He attempts to make love to Jude, even if he fails to do so because of the interference of Fergus and Peter who kidnap him, which seems to reinforce the racist idea that a black man “can’t help it,” when allured by a blonde white woman

like Jude. Here the audience sees that Jody only performs heterosexuality. Since Jody passes as heterosexual so well, Fergus as well as many in the audience never realize what his "real" sexuality is until they get to Dil's secret. Now captured as a hostage, Jody tells Fergus that he "didn't even fancy" Jude and claims, "She is not my type." Later, he expresses his disgust toward her, shouting, "Bitch!" and "She is dangerous!" which foreshadows what we later come to realize through the shocking revelation of Dil's genital—Jody was homosexual or bisexual.

Neil Jordan's character goes further to inform his hybrid cultural identity regarding the complex link between his race and his nationality. Unlike Dil's, Jody's origin is clearly presented as Antiguan, which positions him in a postcolonial context. One of the hideout sequences in the first part of *The Crying Game* where Jody voices his reluctant commitment to army service indicates the aspect. Jody asks himself, "What the fuck am I doing here?" When Fergus mimics that question, "What the fuck were you doing here?" he answers, "I got sent," and says that once he "signed up," he can't say no. Also, when asked, "Why did you sign up?" Jody answers, "It was a job. So I got sent to the only place in the world they call you nigger to your face." This reveals the complicated geopolitical reordering of colonialism that makes Jody, a black Antiguan, enforce white Britain's control over Northern Ireland, one of the last remaining outposts of empire where racism against black people is still prevalent. This draws on "both the affinity and differences between two colonial subjects under an absent colonizer" (Dahlman 131). At the same time, the black Briton, like Fergus, is "an imperial subject who is himself a member of a postcolonial culture" (Lockett 302).¹¹⁾

Evidently, Jody's status as a British soldier does not indicate his willing to assume martyrdom for "his" country. He left his homeland to fight for money as a mercenary. It is his ethnic and social status that made him join the British army. As

Paul Gilroy notes, the British national identity is often formed within “a memory of imperial greatness” that underscores the national community and “authentic” forms of Englishness, and in this discourse, where “the limits of the nation coincide with the lines of ‘race,’” non-white Britons are simply excluded (60). Thus, bearing “particular political weight,” Jody’s soldier identity also “personalizes, on a sexual level, the expropriating oppressiveness of British colonialism, the alienating, coopting power of which is intimated by Jody’s position as himself a colonized, working-class West Indian” (Grist 19).

A long dialogue between Fergus and Jody on the British and Irish national sports, cricket and hurling, highlights the postcolonial backdrop that the two subjects share.

Fergus: And you play cricket?

Jody: Best game in the world.

Fergus: Ever see hurling?

Jody: That game where a bunch of paddies whack sticks at each other?

Fergus: Best game in the world.

Jody: Never.

Fergus: The fastest.

Jody: Well, in Antigua cricket’s the black man’s game. The kids play it from the age of two. My daddy had me throwing googlies from the age of five. Then we moved to Tottenham and it was something different.

Fergus: How different?

Jody: Toffs’ game there. But not at home.

(*Fergus looks at him.*)

Jody: So when you come to shoot me, Paddy, remember, you’re getting rid of a shit-hot bowler.

Fergus: I’ll bear that in mind. (191-92)

This unlikely dialogue between a guard and a prisoner implicates that Jody and

Fergus share a common colonial past in which the binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonized becomes blurred. Jody's emblematically English traits—his London accent, his fondness for cricket—mark his inclusion within this exclusionary identity, thereby questioning its “limits.” Here, cricket and hurling are described as powerful symbols of patriotic sentiments and national identity that defy the British colonial dominance. Indeed, cricket is an international marker of Englishness as it helped to facilitate the colonial culture over the world, especially in West Indies. But the status of cricket also registers postcolonial irony because, like Jody argues, it has now become “the black man's game” in the Commonwealth. Black West Indians' playing style is itself a form of social resistance against British colonialism. As Fletcher proposes, fashions, models, and even some important rules in the game are “seldom replicated exactly as intended,” and “instead they are invariably adapted to suit parochial needs and traditions (often delineated in defiance to the hegemonic structures of white 'Englishness')” (21). The fact that the character of Jody is played by an American actor (Forest Whitaker) pushes these limits further, questioning to what extent nationality is a performance. Embodying a multicultural, multiethnic Britain, Jody breaks down the superficial association of nationality with race and ethnicity. On the other hand, hurling is a national symbol of Irishness, as British or Protestant players have not been accepted in hurling teams in Northern Ireland. The conception of Britishness, Irishness, and Blackness as mutually exclusive identities is broken down in this context where Fergus and Jody are situated together as postcolonial subjects transgressing lines demarcated by race or skin color.

In this regard, it is significant to reconsider the sequence where Fergus brings Jody out of the hideout to execute him and chases after him who suddenly starts to run away *only* to be crushed under a British armored car. Some critics interpret the sequence in terms of homosexual connotations implied in the idea of variation of

courtly love proposed by Žižek. For instance, in her article, “The Revolution of Traversing the Fantasy in Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game*,” Hyunjoo Yoo asserts that the two men in the scene are now represented as “lovers” flirting with each other while running; Fergus does not shoot Jody because he loves him now and wants his lover to safely run away (697). Of course, given Fergus's gun pointing toward Jody as a phallic symbol, the homoerotic undertone in the scene should be appreciated. However, viewing the scene this way belittles the implications of a dialogue that the two men have before and during their running:

Jody: Hurling's a fast game, isn't it, Fergus?

Fergus: The fastest.

Jody: Faster than cricket?

Fergus: Cricket's in the halfpenny place.

Jody: So if I ran now, there's no way I'd beat you, is there?

Fergus: You won't run.

Jody: But if I did... you wouldn't shoot a brother in the back.

(Jody suddenly sprints, and, loosening the ties on his hands, then freeing them, he is off like a hare. Fergus screams in fury after him.)

Fergus: Jody!!!

(Fergus aim, then changes his mind and runs.)

Fergus: You stupid bastard—

Jody: What you say, faster?

Fergus: I said you bastard—stop—

Jody: Got to catch me first—

.....

Jody: Used to run the mile, you know four times round the cricket pitch
what was that game called?

Fergus: Hurling—

Jody: What?

Fergus: Hurling-(204-5)

Here, the insinuation of the race and nationality of the two men, which is expressed through the repeated words of "cricket" and "hurling," is powerful enough to neutralize homosexual undertone. This renders their running ambivalent; if they are able to engage in a romantic flirting in this critical moment of execution, it is only through their mocking of the ethnic sports. Also, Jody seems to be exploiting Fergus's sympathy toward him in order to escape, employing the word "brother" to stress the comradeship that they share as postcolonial subjects.

Cricket serves as a central symbol in the second part of *The Crying Game* when we are shown montages of Jody bowling a ball on a cricket pitch in his white clothing, which symbolizes Jody's performance of Englishness. In the following sequences after Fergus escapes the British army raid, *The Crying Game* combines the motif of his "passing" and the rich metaphor of cricket through various images that highlight the symbolic white color. After moving to London, Fergus works at a construction site. Here, the camera shows a glimpse of a cricket game and its players with very white uniforms through the hole in the wall that Fergus drills, which indicates that his workplace is on a cricket field house. At the moment, the camera focuses on Fergus's "white" face appearing from the opposite side of the wall—a face covered with asbestos, that is, in a sense, facetiously white as if he was wearing an excessive makeup. The series of short scenes may be too transitory to notice, but it is not random. Juxtaposing the white cricket uniforms with Fergus's face, the camera keeps focused on the color white. Moreover, Fergus now gazes at the cricket match, and through this gaze he "implicitly questions his identity as either an imperial or a national subject," opening himself to "something new" (McGee 134). The Irish man a "stranger," as Jude calls him so, taking on a complicated identity both as a "white" man and as a low-class Irish.

This representation of Fergus's identity transformation alludes to Irish immigrants' social status in the late 20th century Britain. As mentioned earlier, colonial racism stemming from Anglo-Irish relations and the construction of the Irish as a historically significant other of the English/British have formed the experience of the Irish in Britain. Despite their "vital role" in developing Britain's infrastructure in the 20th century, working as navigators, coal miners, and factory and house builders and despite their "white" skin color, they have been regarded "colonial others" inferior to British gentlemen (Ghail 138). They have thus become "invisible" as an ethnic group in both public spaces and in "official discourses" (Hickman 6). For Fergus, this circumstance in London offers a contested ground where he has to negotiate with his identity as a racialized colonial subject. Fergus in London trades places with the now-dead Jody, who was in Northern Ireland where the Irish calls him "nigger," "enduring unabashed discrimination as an Irish worker at the hands of an English employer" (Lyon 99).

It is in the cricket scene where the Irish man is aligned with Jody in his ethnic oppression. Coupled with a cricket game, the symbolic color white repeatedly appears in the second part of *The Crying Game* to demonstrate such a racial issue in the context of the postcolonial world. The scenes where Jody in a white cricket uniform appears in Fergus' dream at every turning point constantly evoke the conversation of cricket that the two men had in the IRA hideout. In a sense, after watching a cricket game at his construction site, Fergus awkwardly, but seriously attempts to mimic the batting of the players, this demonstrates that he remembers what now-deceased Jody said back in Northern Ireland and understands "the black man's game," keeping his promise to the British soldier, "I'll bear that in mind." Meanwhile, the image of the cricket symbolizes Fergus' performance of colonial mimicry; in a brief scene, while working, he mimics the batting of the cricket, and Deveroux, his English Boss,

criticizes him for that. After Fergus knows about Dil's secret, "Black" Jody with the "white" cricket uniform reappears in his dream, laughing at him. Jody's laughing suggests Fergus's embarrassing realization that he got tricked by Jody's and Dil's sexuality. Therefore, the scene where Fergus has Dil wear Jody's white cricket uniform to protect her from his IRA colleagues shows their gendered race. In other words, the camera work juxtaposing the white color of the cricket uniform worn by the two black characters demonstrates the culturally and sexually hybrid identity.

Unlike the two black Britons, Fergus is performative more as white than as homosexual in London. The scene in which Fergus and Dil meet in Dil's beauty-shop is indicative of this aspect. Dil asks Fergus about his nationality, cutting his hair, "Are you an American? Are you not an English?" Dil's question implies that for her, Fergus is not a total "stranger," as labeled by Jude, but just another "white" man. It is significant to note that Fergus equivocally replies, "I'm Scottish," which reveals his self-consciousness; while concealing his Irish identity, he, as an IRA fighter, does not want to pass as "English"; since he feels guilty of Jody, he hides the fact that (as an IRA fighter, again) he is responsible for the soldier's death. That Fergus has Dil call him "Jimmy" affirms the complicated disguise. This shows his awareness of the sociopolitical environment in Britain where the Irish continue to be degraded as inferior, alien Others. With his identity continuously changing, Fergus too is "almost the same, but not quite" like Dil's performance in London.

IV. Conclusion

The Crying Game is subversive because the Irish film engages in redefining the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized through vividly racialized characters. In the film's careful representation of the postcolonial subjects in Northern Ireland and London, the themes of gender and sexuality and those of race and nationality are intertwined with each other, and are inextricably linked to postcoloniality. In particular, the racial, sexual performance of Jody, a black British soldier from Antigua, and Dil, drag queen from nowhere, can be viewed as colonial mimicry that undermines the white normative gaze that attempts to fixate a racial and sexual identity of the colonized subject. Not only that, Neil Jordan's film also problematizes Irish character, Fergus, who bears a racial identity complicated by Ireland's colonial history. Fergus's relationship with the two black Britons, which is easily structuralized and criticized by feminist analysis, complicates and thus questions a long-standing colonial binary between the colonizer and the colonized. Fergus's identity is characterized by Ireland's colonial dual status that existed both at the center and the periphery.

Indeed, the subversiveness of *The Crying Game* lies in the way “a performative sexuality gets played out against an ingrained and fundamentally gendered nationalist tradition” of the Irish in twentieth-century (Lockett 294). The black Britons and the Irish man, in this sense, share a common ground of class, ethnicity, and identity. Jody's parable of “the kind frog and the evil scorpion” and dialogues between Fergus and Jody on cricket and hurling informs how the problematic relationship between the ethnic minorities is situated in the context of a postcolonial world. For Fergus, Jody's assumption of Irish “nature” highlights the colonial stereotype of the Irish that he internalizes and struggles with throughout the film. Seen in this way, Fergus,

unlike feminist critics' assertion, is not a typical white hero who simply claims a black body. He is a powerless subject without an absolute control over himself and the blacks. The white man invades a black territory (as suggested by bell hooks) *only* to find himself trapped in-between the normative ideas of gender and sexuality and his racialized "nature" as an Irish.

Notes

- 1) Famous example includes Norman Bates, the psychopathic serial killer in *Psycho*, who peeps through a hole on the wall as a female hotel guest undresses.
- 2) The box office success that *The Crying Game* garnered in the US is partly due to a marketing strategy by the film's distributor, Miramax, regarding Dil's penis which is revealed when Fergus undresses "her." Miramax had both film critics and viewers involved in keeping the secret that the man, Dil, with whom Fergus falls in love, is actually a woman. This strategy was so successful that the "secret" quickly filled every review. In the text decorating the video jacket, *The Crying Game* was promoted by a slogan, "the movie everyone is talking about, but no one is giving away its secrets" (Kochberg 219).
- 3) For the entire running time of the movie, the first part is only 38 minutes of total 110 minutes, yet the second part is almost as twice as the first part, 72 minutes.
- 4) Neil Jordan made *The Butcher Boy* (1997), a movie adapted from Patrick McCabe's same-titled novel, which represents Ireland's postcolonial status in the 1960s and 70s. Also, the filmmaker deals with Irish nationalism in his early films such as *Angel* (1982) and *Michael Collins* (1994), and in his novel, *Sunrise with Sea Monster* (1994).
- 5) For comparison, bell hooks takes some Hollywood movies such as *Jungle Fever* (Spike Lee, 1991) and *The Bodyguard* (Mick Jackson 1992). Undoubtedly, *The Crying Game* shares the common theme of interracial romance. The Irish film, however, still differs from such typical American clichés not only because of its genre difference but also because of its geopolitical context through which the troubled relationship between Fergus and Dil is developed.
- 6) Many influential race theorists who believed that hair and eye color is a key to ethnic and racial identity developed a specious formula called "the index of nigriscence," which was used to prove that the Irish were darker and more Negroid than the English (Curtiz 72).

- 7) All of the book quotations are from the printed script for *The Crying Game* included in *A Neil Jordan Reader* (1993).
- 8) Bhabha's conception creates a new subject position defined by hybridity, as hybridity is "the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority)" (159).
- 9) Bhabha describes mimicry as an ambivalent expression of colonial power. When Bhabha writes, "the colonial presence is always ambivalent," he means that since the colonial discourse has a "split between its appearance ... and its articulation," it becomes contradictory and inevitably reveals itself as self-disruptive (153).
- 10) The "third space" is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new possibility. This hybrid space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no "primordial unity or fixity" (Bhabha 55).
- 11) The origin of various communities of Black people in Britain traces back to the slavery of Jamaicans and West Indians by the British Empire (Hedetoft 95-101).

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국문초록

**“그게 너의 본성이야” :
『크라잉 게임』에 나타난 인종, 성, 그리고 탈식민성**

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본 논문은 닐 조던 감독의 1992년 영화 『크라잉 게임』에 관한 페미니즘적, 정신분석학적 비평 사이에 발생하는 간극을 탈식민주의적 읽기로 보충하려는 시도이다. 이를 위해 필자는 『크라잉 게임』이 전반적으로 재현하는 아일랜드 식민주의 역사에 얽힌 정치적 배경과 드래퀸 딜의 몸과 남근의 재현에 집중해온 기존 비평에서 소외되었던 IRA 테러리스트 퍼거스의 인종적 정체성을 조명한다. 또한 안티구아 출신의 영국 흑인 병사 조디가 복합적으로 재현하는 성적, 인종적 정체성의 문제를 분석함으로써 이 영화에 젠더 담론과 탈식민주의 담론이 교묘하게 엮여 있음을 논증한다. 예컨대 조디와 퍼거스의 대화에 등장하는 “친절한 개구리와 악한 스콜피온” 우화는 IRA뿐만 아니라 아일랜드인에 대한 오랜 인종적 편견과 식민주의 담론을 담고 있다. 한편 안티구아와 아일랜드의 국민 스포츠인 크리켓과 헐링에 관한 대화는 제국의 문화에 대한 탈식민적 저항담론으로 읽힌다. 퍼거스와 조디의 관계가 보여주는 이러한 성적, 인종적 문제는 영화 후반부가 집중적으로 조명하는 퍼거스와 딜의 로맨스를 젠더 담론 일변도의 분석으로부터 구해낸다. 퍼거스와 딜의 로맨스가 영화 전반부가 재현하는 퍼거스와 조디의 관계의 연장이라면 그 역시 성적, 인종적, 역사적 관점 모두를 포함하는 복합적인 것으로 이해해야 하는 것이다.

주제어: 『크라잉 게임』, 젠더, 정체성, 탈식민성, 인종

논문접수일: 2017. 09. 15

심사완료일: 2017. 10. 07

게재확정일: 2017. 10. 10

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