Challenging ‘Imperialist’ Cinematography: IRA Attacks on Dublin Cinemas, 1925-1939

Abstract

In mid-November 1925, the Masterpiece cinema in Dublin was called upon by armed men, who seized seven of its eight copies of the First World War film The Battle of Ypres. Shortly afterwards, on 20 November, it was reported that the showing of its remaining copy was enough for the IRA to explode ‘a powerful landmine in the wide entrance to the Masterpiece cinema in Talbot Street’. This marked the beginning of a series of attacks upon Dublin picturehouses. The 1920s and 1930s witnessed sustained denunciation of war cinematography in republican publications such as An Phoblacht and Irish Freedom, as well as occasional violent assaults upon cinemas. This was part of a broader ‘Boycott British’ movement, and an IRA campaign against what it saw as cultural imperialism. Drawing on state intelligence files, such as the Crime and Security papers of the Department of Justice, contemporary newspaper reports from both the mainstream and separatist press, and the
archives of leading IRA figures such as Chief of Staff (1926-1936) Moss Twomey, this article demonstrates the manner in which the republican movement attempted to impose censorship on the Dublin cinema industry. It examines the manner in which several war films were selectively censored and amended before they were presented to the Irish public, indicating the fears of the authorities regarding potential political assault.

The copyright of any individual submission resides with the contributor. Submission to the journal is taken to mean that the contributor is allowing the journal to publish and disseminate the material (online and in paper copy). Submitted work must not be published elsewhere or be considered for publication elsewhere either in printed or electronic form. Contributors must have obtained and enclose all necessary permissions for the reproduction of any copyright works (including artistic works, e.g. illustrations, photographs, charts, maps, other visual material, etc.) contained in their article.

Open Access: The journal is freely available online immediately upon publication, without subscription barriers to access. Contributors are free to lodge accepted drafts in repositories at their home institution.

The person using the online journals may view, reproduce or store copies of articles comprising the journal provided that the articles are used only for their personal, non-commercial use.
The article element represents a section of content that forms an independent part of a document or site; for example, a magazine or newspaper article, or a blog entry. On a page with a single piece of content, a single element can be used to contain the main content and set it off from the rest of the page. On a page with multiple pieces of content (a blog index page, a search results page, a category page, a news feed), multiple elements can be used to contain each individual piece of content.