zations are open access to abortion (not to mention divorce) and among these national traditions are the idealization of women’s role and the revolutionary romance of the Irish language. Harkin’s ideal of Northern Ireland is clearly one closer to a unified Europe than a great Gaelic motherland, and she uses Goretti’s story as a microcosm of just how far Irish culture has yet to go in order to achieve that vision. On the whole, Ireland (again, both the republicans in the North and the Republic itself) has been happy to join the European Union, with its promise of help in improving infrastructure and its presence as a check against British hegemony. Nevertheless, the national culture is at odds with much of the rest of Europe, and this continues to create friction, both in Ireland and abroad.

Hush a Bye Baby, then, is a document of a culture in a crisis of transition. The nationalist Derry imagined by Harkin is a place where political struggle is gradually giving way to unified national and continental projects, and traditional authoritarianism is gradually giving way to more progressive understandings of the role of women in society. These kinds of transitions come with much pain, however, and she uses Goretti as a receptacle of a lot of that pain, showing how unnecessary and regressive such martyrdom is. Despite the film’s skeptical eye towards nationalist struggle it is clearly anti-colonialist, showing the unjust and disruptive nature of British militarism in the North. Harkin refuses the easy pieties, however, interrogating romantic notions of Irish culture, demanding recognition of the struggles of Irish women, and insisting on the centrality of their experience to Irish life. It is a critically political film seeking to expose the structures that tenaciously hold both a nation and a gender in a colonial situation.

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References


ANN BRENNA... Documentary

Oh you Aran Islanders your courage haunts
Shawled and stoic women knitting family crests into sturdy sweaters
If brother lover son is lost beneath the waves his body washed into some strange tide-pool
They know who to send for by the pattern knit into his warm wool sweater

Ann Brennan is a heritage artist who has travelled across Canada speaking to Canadians about their rich history. She is the author of *The Real Klondike Kate* (Goose Lane Editions, 1990), which chronicles the eventful life of Katherine Ryan, who joined the Yukon Gold Rush in the winter of 1898. Her writing credits also include several historical plays.

Winona Baker has published four volumes of poetry; her most recent is *Behind the Lighthouse* (Oolichan Books, 1993). In 1989 she won the Foreign Minister’s Prize in Haiku. She has lived on Vancouver Island for the past 40 years.