

# The Crying Game

## Depends on Nothing

The sexual and political aspects of this film have received much critical attention and have been well explored. Rather than crowd the literature further with transbiological theories of gender and identity, this essay will focus instead on a few interesting mythological associations. Special meaning accrues to some of the vocabulary in *Barton Fink*. In *The Crying Game*, watch for words like *perfect* and *absolutely*, for when Jude refers to Peter as *Himself* and for when Jody and Dil refer to themselves in the third person, thus sounding abstract and archetypal.

In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom argues that all literature inevitably results from misreading of antecedent texts. *The Aeneid* derives from and elaborates *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*. *The Odyssey* and *Hamlet* serve as hypotextual influences for *Ulysses*. Similarly, *The Crying Game* may be regarded as descending, at least remotely, from Homeric and Arthurian precursors. In particular, several echoes of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* will be considered throughout this essay. These correspondences could appear somewhat fanciful were it not that writer/director Neil Jordan is himself a novelist and is very likely aware of the cited material. Additional explicit references to Arthurian literature that are to be found in Jordan's film *The End of the Affair* support the appreciation of *The Crying Game* as densely allusive and informed by the sources cited.

Watching the first act, it could hardly be guessed just how much of this film would be retrospectively ironic. The irony begins immediately with the song heard during the titles: "When a Man Loves a Woman." The irony is compounded when this music transitions from the apparently nondiegetic realm to the carnival loudspeakers. Another excellent example of this phenomenon will be found in *Heavenly Creatures*. This song and the bridge displayed in the opening image recall the opening of Jordan's earlier film *Mona Lisa*. The barrel distortion apparent in the curvature of the image of the bridge anticipates the misperceptions of the film's characters and of the audience.

Jody says, "And *that* is cricket, hon." To the extent that this connotes sportsmanship and fair play, it too is ironic. Jody refers to himself in the third person and calls attention to Jude's name, saying that it "suits" her. Even if he does not mean that it recalls the name of Judas and the concept of betrayal, it is through betrayal that she is about to corroborate his opinion. After Jody urinates, he and Jude pass between two men. Both these events will be echoed later. When seen for the first time, Peter spits, as he often will. This purgation imagery matches that of Jody's urination. Peter's walk affords him the same point of view as that displayed in the titles, which thus may have been his. His first distinct, individual line adds to the irony and is an alternative candidate for the film's motto: "The situation is simple." The involvement of the Irish Republican Army provides the film with a postcolonial atmosphere like that reflected in the Arthurian romances, both cases representing Celtic reaction to English colonization. The Arthurian tradition of courtly love will be discussed further in subsequent essays.

One of the characters becomes known as Fergus, a name that figures in poems by William Butler Yeats and was also the name of a man who was one of the five sons of the Irish king Eochaid and who refused to kill a black woman. It is also the name of the first king of Scotland, facilitating Dil's confusion of Fergus's nationality. (Recall the note regarding this possessive construction in the *Barton Fink* essay.)

Like Parzival, Fergus dares to be true to his nature, which is confirmed and authenticated by his sacrifice. His compassionate nature is telegraphed early and often. Fergus is the first to try to engage Jody in conversation when he asks Jody's name. Fergus looks down sorrowfully when Peter speaks of the possibility of Jody being shot. Fergus says, "Give him a cup of tea"; "See if he wants some"; "Have a look at him"; "Go on, have a heart" and "You should eat something."

*Parzival* is a story in which compassion and loyalty are acclaimed as the highest spiritual values, with love being confirmed through loyalty even at the expense of decorum. The hero can only be redeemed through *agape*, which is uncompromising, unconditional, indiscriminate compassion. Any qualification or limitation placed on his compassion disqualifies him, a sentiment soon to be voiced by Dil. This is also reflected in the definition of pity found in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Hypocrisy often thwarts this teaching, transforming the message to "Love thy neighbor as thyself, unless he is one of *them*." Parzival initially fails in his quest because he allows etiquette to limit his compassion. Fergus initially fails because of similar immature adherence to orthodoxy. Jody says to Fergus, "Be a Christian, will you?" If this is an invitation to demonstrate *agape*, then it has come to the right person and will not fall on deaf ears. True compassion is not the result of obedience but of free will, and Peter allows for this when he tells Fergus, "It's your decision." Also, the greenhouse in which Jody is held is a reminder of the proverbial people who live in glass houses.

Prior to the advent of subtitled DVDs, the published screenplay proved a valuable aid in dealing with the occasionally challenging accents. What sounds like "per her" turns out to be "poor whore." As will be noted in the essay on *Heavenly Creatures*, such authenticity provides a foundation with which more mystical elements can contrast.

An editing pattern that does not quite carve the dialogue at its joints ("It was a / job.") is employed at this point and will recur. It recalls the fade-out/snap-back pattern that repeats in *Howards End*. Kant Pan received an Oscar nomination for editing this film.

For the second time, Jody urinates while holding someone's hand. With an emphasis that recalls his saying, "And *that* is cricket, hon," Jody says, "Now, *that* is worth waiting for." He then observes, "It's amazing how these small details take on such importance." This applies to the gender issues addressed later and would make a suitable alternate motto. It also contrasts with Dil's dismissive comment about "details."

Often, Jody is framed centrally, while Fergus is framed eccentrically in his countershot. As they share a laugh after Jody's urination, the images of Fergus and Jody are brought closer together when the camera dollies. This happens more than once in the film. Likewise, the word *pleasure* has been used about half a dozen times at this point.

In *Mona Lisa*, George tells a story about a frog. Jody echoes this with his story of "the scorpion and the frog." It alleges a determinism that holds one hostage to one's nature. It is noted in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* that "it was in the character of a thief to steal." Jody has already spoken of Fergus's nature. The hero is the one who can live authentically out of his own nature. Gawain recognizes the right of his wife Dame Ragnall to such authenticity, which is what launches Fergus on his adventure at the end of the first act. Parzival is a noble knight by nature. Such a noble heart acts out of compassion, not lust. Parzival gives his horse

free reign, yielding to the will of nature. (This is also one possible interpretation of some imagery found near the beginning of *Dances with Wolves*.)

Recognizing and ignoring the irrelevant will be crucial to this story. Fergus hints at this when he says, “Doesn’t matter where.” He suggests and puns Peter’s name when he speaks of “Having a pint in *The Rock*.” It is this very pun on which Christ built His church (Matt 16:18). A dolly shot again brings the images of Fergus and Jody closer together.

Several factors allow Jude to appear to strike Jody without causing actual injury to actor Forest Whitaker. First, the hood is made to extend far out in front of Jody’s head. Second, the pistol could be made of some soft, flexible material. Third, the foley effect contributes to the impression of a violent impact. Jody hints at the film’s “surprise” when he says, “Women are trouble. . . . Some kinds of women are. . . . Dil, she was no trouble.” Fergus says of Jude, “She can’t help it.” It is apparently “in her nature.”

Jody pleads, “Present tense! Please! Please!” Myth must operate in accord with one’s culture and knowledge. As Homer said to his muse, “Sing for our time, too.” There is something to be said for *West Side Story* compared to *Romeo and Juliet*. Joyce wrote to Carlo Linati regarding *Ulysses*, “My intention is to transpose the myth *sub specie temporis nostri*.” Native American myths typically have no past or future tenses, but occur in a perennial present.

Jody is understood to be speaking in the first person when he says, “Love her. Whatever she is.” However, the elision of the personal pronoun allows this to be taken as imperative and, specifically, a prescription for *agape*. (The word given as *Whatever* in the screenplay is subtitled as *wherever* on the collector’s edition DVD issued January 2005.)

This film occasionally teases with the possibility of an impending cliché. It is momentarily feared that Fergus will be sent in search of Dil with only her picture and will have to show it around to strangers in order to obtain information. Instead, Jody directs Fergus to Millie’s Hair Salon. This instruction, coming from a British soldier, could be imagined to be a ruse to trap IRA members.

In pursuit of his goal of guarding the prisoner, Fergus follows the rules and requests permission. Peter observes, “You’re a good man, Fergus.” Though Jody does not smoke, having a cigarette just seems somehow appropriate, recalling the spontaneity required of Parzival. Like Elmer Gantry and, more to the point, Johnny McQueen in *Odd Man Out*, Fergus quotes I Corinthians 13:11, which is part of St. Paul’s discourse on love. “Not a lot of use, are you, Fergus?” asks Jody, who is “always right.” Fergus admits, “I’m not good for much.” This opinion notwithstanding, every ordinary man embodies universal potential.

The threat of another cliché occurs the following morning when Jody’s presumed position is not immediately revealed, allowing for the possibility that he may have already escaped. He has not. Fergus yields to compassion by not shooting Jody and yet Jody dies. Jody is only the first and not the final test for Fergus. Having passed the trials of race, nationality and politics, Fergus has merely proved himself worthy of initiation and of the next level of trial. As with Barton Fink, purification is required before revelation is earned. Fergus must still establish a claim on his destiny. But optimism is warranted because the herald appears and offers opportunities only to the psyche that is ripe for transformation. Inner readiness is met by outer circumstance. One qualifies for testing because of one’s potential, to which the severity of the ordeal will be proportional. Also, outer appearance belies inner beauty. Fergus will prove to be “the handsome one” in spite of being “no pinup.”

The hero rejects outer doctrine for the inner call because heroism occurs only when local, parochial cultural limits are transcended. Both the carnival and the farm are in some sense

removed from the ordinary world. But now Fergus will leave his home country and “go across the water.” This may be seen as the crossing of the first threshold between the normal and special worlds, which typically occurs at the end of the first act. This involves the death of one’s old character in preparation for the heroic quest. It is akin to the symbolism of crossing such rivers as the Rubicon, Jordan and Stix. Fergus says, “Need to lose myself for a while.” As was discussed in relation to *Barton Fink*, self-annihilation is the fundamental problem of mysticism. Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus must escape not from Ireland but from his own ego. Fergus now embarks on an Orphic journey of recovery.

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With Jody having died and Fergus having crossed the waters to England, the start of the second act may be inferred. Fergus is discovered with shorter hair and white cement dust on his face. He seems to be reminded of Jody by the site of cricket being played. The shot of Fergus walking in the street exhibits even greater barrel distortion than earlier. Fergus locates Dil, who resembles Simone in Jordan’s *Mona Lisa*. The hero is typically initiated by the female. Fergus yields to Dil and undergoes a kind of baptism. She then misreads his accent. “Who is she?” asks Dil, which could be taken as one of many third-person self-references.

Watering holes, like Rick’s Cafe in *Casablanca* and the analogous venue in *Star Wars*, are often where exotic characters congregate and consort. *The Metro*, being a synonym for the subway or the underground, suggests the underworld. When Odysseus travels to the underworld, he meets Tiresias, the blind prophet who spent seven years as a woman. Dil is blind to Jimmy’s true Irish ethnicity and thinks that he is Scottish. Tiresias is the androgyne who transcends the duality of gender. As a transvestite (or transgender person), Dil partially accomplishes this same epicene transcendence. Visionaries are often those whose insights have been won by sacrificing some outer experience and who, according to Robert Donington, “are often half-blind with regard to external affairs.” Samson and Wotan gain strength and wisdom, respectively, following the impairment of their vision. Blindness may also symbolize castration, consistent with Dil’s androgyny. Parzival’s half-brother Feirefiz Angevin (*vair fils*, the “pied son”) is of mixed race, as Dil may well be. Parzival’s mother is The Black Queen, a title that might apply to Dil.

With Col as interlocutor, Fergus and Dil speak of each other in the third person, as Jody earlier spoke of himself. Parzival changes his identity to that of the Red Knight. Fergus identifies himself as “Jimmy.” The name James is from the Hebrew Jacob, meaning “outwitter.” St. James the Greater was the first Apostle to be martyred. Dave now intrudes. The screenplay refers to him as “the burly man,” accidentally recalling *Barton Fink*. Fergus withdraws, Dil follows him, and they and Dave exit. Outside, Dave and Dil walk on the left side of the street (the side of heterodoxy), while Fergus walks on the right (the side of orthodoxy).

Fergus has his first vision of Jody. Parzival, also, has a distressful dream. The phenomenon of mentors appearing in the form of personified images from the unconscious will be dealt with more explicitly elsewhere in these essays. The mole on Fergus’s right side would not in itself recall Christ’s wound were it not for other cues to come. Jody appears in his cricket clothes, and cricket serves as the bridge to the following scene of the construction site where Fergus works. The boss there is Tristram Deveroux, a name that recalls the lover of Isolde and the possible lover of Queen Elizabeth I, respectively. (The latter reference will be explained below.) Following in Jody’s footsteps, it is now Fergus’s turn to endure ethnic slurs like “Pat” and “Mick.” The phrase “not at Lords” sounds like a denial of transcendence.

Retrospectively, as Dil sings “The Crying Game,” the lady doth gesticulate too much, methinks. This is one of several easily overlooked hints about Dil’s biological gender. Similarly, prior to the revelation of “the secret,” the patrons of *The Metro* do not appear to constitute a particularly biased sample of the population. As discussed below, the film plays with subjectivity in various ways, including the demeanor of Dil’s portrait of Jody. Col and Dil say of Fergus, “Persistent.” “Good thing in a man.” “An excellent quality.” It is Parzival’s persistence that changes God’s law, thus allowing him to achieve what was thought to be impossible. Col says, “Who knows the secrets of the human heart.” The sentence is printed in the published screenplay without a question mark. This may be a simple typographical error, but it also resembles a subordinate clause. One may take the liberty of adding something like “He triumphs” to the beginning of the line or “will triumph” to the end.

In his fight with Dave, Fergus defends Dil in a way that recalls Parzival defending Condwiramurs against a rival suitor by placing his knee on the chest of Kingrun the Seneschal. Dil misperceives yet again. She says, “See, they all get the wrong idea.” This ironically includes Dil herself because when Fergus says to Dave, “What was that?” Dil repeats *her* line, “They all get the wrong idea.” This metaphorical deafness is another echo of the blindness of Tiresias. Fergus and Dil kiss and then agree to meet the next day.

Earlier, Fergus and Dil simultaneously walk parallel to each other along opposite sides of a street. Now, after eating at an Indian restaurant, they walk together in the middle of the street. This is foreshadowed when Jody and Jude pass between two men as they leave the carnival. The middle path, like that taken by Jason when sailing between the clashing rocks (Symplegades), or that of the Hebrews thanks to the parting of the Red Sea, typically symbolizes the transcendence of duality (see the essay on *Heavenly Creatures*). Wolfram von Eschenbach analyzes the name *Parzival* as “*Perce à val*,” piercing the valley, going between the pairs of opposites. In *Parzival*, the grail is brought to earth by the neutral angels (one of whom is portrayed by Jason Lee in *Dogma*). Polar disputes such as those between God and Satan are beneath them.

For Jung, the self is symbolized as a union of opposites. Robert Donington observes that the reconciliation of opposites leads to transformation. Dil represents a kind of hermaphroditic union of opposites. Joyce’s placing of the crisis in the exact center of his novels is modeled after Dante’s *La Vita Nuova* (The New Life). As Fergus and Dil walk down the middle of the street, the sign on the building behind them says “NEW LIFE.” The laserdisc offers insufficient resolution to allow this to be legible, but it is just barely discernible on the DVD issued January 2005 using the zoom function. This is also an echo of the sign “HOPE ETERNAL” seen by another walking couple in Jordon’s novella *The Dream of a Beast*. (Another tenuous link with Joyce is the fact that the song “Michael Finnegan” is sung in Jordan’s *Mona Lisa*.) When forced from this position by the car, they move to their left as Fergus says, “Jesus Christ” and Dil says, “Jesus.”

The neutral angels in *Parzival*, as well as Parzival’s name, symbolize the transcendence of duality, which is also seen in Dil’s androgyny. Heracles dressed as a woman, as did Thor. Alchemical marriage involves the death and hermaphroditic rebirth of the King and Queen. Also to be considered is the transcendence of the gender polarity of elements of the psyche and of the distinction between self and other.

Fergus goes home with Dil and discovers the photos of Jody. When Dave calls from the street, Dil again invokes Jesus. She advises Dave to return to Essex. Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex (1566-1601), was, at the very least, a particular favorite of Elizabeth I. He was made lieutenant and governor-general of Ireland and suppressed an Irish rebellion. Dil

throws Dave's Teddy Bear out the window, forming a rhyme with the Teddy Bear that Jody gives to Jude at the carnival. His fish also harmonize with their mentions of Christ moments earlier.

Dil asks the inadvertently compound question, "How'd he drive with his neck in a brace?" The screenplay says, "The photograph above them seems to smile." A similarly but less subtly behaving portrait is to be found in the Coen brothers' *The Ladykillers*, as is a character named Gawain, which may be of Arthurian interest. Jody's photograph is one of several production elements that reflect a certain subjectivity to be discussed shortly.

Wagner's Parzival resists seduction by thinking of the wounded Amfortas. It is during an ecstatic moment of seduction that Fergus has a second vision of Jody. When Fergus recognizes that Dil misses Jody, she says, "You say that like a gentleman." "Do I?" he replies. Fergus is unselfconsciously "concerned," compassion being in his nature. Dil also calls him, "A real gentleman." Authenticity is the solution to the wasteland problem of inauthenticity.

Back in *The Metro*, Dave again meddles and Dil speaks of herself in the third person. A critical exchange begins when Dil says, "The thing is, can you go the distance?" Fergus responds, "Depends what it is." "Depends on nothing," declares Dil. This is a proclamation of Arthurian standards of authenticity already discussed. If it depends, then the aspirant is disqualified. *Nothing* is also Elizabethan slang for female genitalia, as when Hamlet refers to "nothing" as "a fair thought to lie between maids' legs." This also factors into one interpretation of the title *Much ado about Nothing*. Gender identity and Fergus's love might naively be thought to depend superficially on this "nothing."

In *Wings of Art*, Joseph Campbell discusses the image in chapter 1 of *Ulysses* of the three fried eggs in the frying pan representing the three personalities of the holy trinity in one divine substance. In *The Hudsucker Proxy*, Amy Archer has a Pulitzer Prize for her story on "the reunited triplets." Dil thus expresses consubstantiality with Fergus when she says, "In one." Dil claims to be "superstitious" and says cryptically of Jody, "He looks after me." After the "secret" is revealed, Dil observes that "the way things go" is "[n]ever the way you expected."

Gender need not be strictly biological. As a psychological category, it can also be construed as a malleable cultural construct. (And even in terms of genetics, the activity of the gene DAX1 can make a person phenotypically female in spite of the presence of a Y chromosome.) Dil's biological gender, which she will dismissively refer to as "details," is not a pivotal issue, as physical union is much less significant than psychic union in an Arthurian context. Further, it is the standard practice of deconstruction to undermine traditional dichotomies, as Derrida considers Western thought to be based on false polarities. Also, mythical women are not real, but represent the anima. Dil is not a "real" woman even within the story, further facilitating a symbolic interpretation. In this capacity, like Ariadne for Theseus, Dil acts as a guide for Fergus in the underworld of the unconscious. Incidentally, given the tradition in mainstream cinema of gay characters meeting tragic ends (see *The Celluloid Closet*), Dil comes through this story remarkably well.

In retrospect, the name Dil is ambiguous, possibly being short for the feminine Dilys or the masculine Dillan, Dillon (both being variants of Dylan), Dillus or Dilwyn, all of which are Celtic. It also recalls Dill in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a character based on Truman Capote. Similarly, Col could stand for either Colin or Colleen. With hindsight and with informed expectations, one wonders how one could have failed to notice or assign more importance to such features as Dil's narrow hips and large hands and feet. The point is that Fergus does not. His third vision of Jody pays off. Each of these visions is accompanied by music somewhat similar to *The Unanswered Question* by Charles Ives.

Subjectivity continues to be explored. Not until Fergus observes with altered expectations are the patrons of *The Metro* portrayed as looking unusual. A similar example of subjectivity and the power of suggestion occurs in *The Spanish Prisoner* with respect to a document masquerading as a membership application. It is also demonstrated in the comic strip *Calvin & Hobbes*, where all but Calvin see Hobbes as an inanimate doll. As discussed in the introduction, perception is an inferential, interrogative, constructive activity, and as much decision as discovery. It is influenced but underdetermined by environmental data. The subjective character of an object is conditioned by the idiosyncratic assumptions, predispositions and expectations of the observer.

During the acrimonious exchange between Fergus and Dil, Dave, the brace still around his neck, lurks in the background. Dil remains angry with Fergus and leaves with Dave. Then, after getting an apologetic note from Fergus, Dil appears at his construction site. In spite of occasional misperceptions, she avoids superficial distractions and senses Fergus's fundamental compassion, saying, "And even when you were throwing up, I could tell you cared." Fergus and Tommy speak of being "wise" at the end of act one, and now Fergus and Dil speak of it at the bottom of the elevator. Fergus's "Whenever" sounds noncommittal, but is properly without qualification, as an Arthurian hero's compassion must be. He has already acknowledged the irrelevance of the particulars of place and now he comments similarly with respect to time.

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It was the absence of a Mrs. Wilcox that was used to define the second act of *Howards End*. Jude's reappearance now allows the second act of the present film to be defined by her absence. The protean Jude alters herself for her sojourn in the special world, as did Fergus. She speaks of escaping by "the skin of our teeth," which is the title of a play by Thornton Wilder in which Joseph Campbell found some 400 correspondences with Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Jude is framed with Fergus using the same tilted "Dutch angle" used earlier with Fergus and Jody when the latter was the captive of the former. Jude is now in the position of advantage. Earlier, Jody asks, "You know a funny thing?" and Fergus replies, "No. What's a funny thing?" This is now echoed when Jude asks, "But you know what the thing is, Fergus?" and Fergus replies, "No, what is the thing?" The tables are now turned, with Fergus being the captive.

After saying, "Need to lose myself for a while," Fergus becomes Jimmy and is now said to have become a "Mr. Nobody," just as Odysseus, lost in foreign lands, calls himself No Man. (The self-referential Coen brothers based their film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* on *The Odyssey* and cast George Clooney in the Odysseus role. They subsequently featured this same actor as a member of an organization called N.O.M.A.N. in their film *Intolerable Cruelty*.) Fergus characterizes Dil in the same way ("She's nobody. She likes me.") and comes close to saying, "She's like me." Hannah Arendt warns, "The greatest evil perpetrated is the evil committed by nobodies, that is, by human beings who refuse to be persons."

After stalking them for a while, Jude confronts Dil and Fergus in *The Metro*. Dil feels betrayed and leaves. Robert Donington observes that the anima objects to such infidelity. Fergus independently reconfirms himself in his mission by repeating the drinking ritual.

In contrast to the protean transformations of Fergus and Jude, Peter (the rock) does not change. In imitation of Christ, Fergus becomes stigmatic when the back of his hand is burned by Peter's cigarette. Dil may be "nobody" and "just a girl," but when Fergus is asked if he is in love, he adheres to the Arthurian standard of love without compromise and replies, "Absolutely."

Flirting with another cliché, Peter initially seems to give Fergus a second chance arbitrarily. Peter turns out to be trying to achieve the literal death of two metaphorical birds with one stone by sending Fergus on a suicide mission. Jude acknowledges what she takes to be Fergus's nature by saying, "You were made for this." His nature is instinctive and he is not self-conscious about it, so he replies with, "Was I?" To which Jude responds, "Perfect."

Fergus asks Dil, "You'd do anything for me?" She responds, "Afraid so," but then reconsiders, explaining, "A girl has to draw the line somewhere." Finally, as she herself has said, "Depends on nothing." Dil, like Tiresias, experiences the transformation from man to woman to man. Fergus explains, "Want to make you into something new. That nobody recognizes." He is already "Mister Nobody." In addition to the superficial benefits of anonymity for Dil, this resembles an initiation ritual to divest Dil of her secular character in preparation for entry into the divine realm. Fergus had wanted to lose himself, and Dil now says, "Don't recognize myself." Back at Dil's flat, Fergus dresses Dil in Jody's cricket clothes to produce an ersatz boy. Even before this, their various changes of appearance archetypally qualify Fergus, Dil and Jude as tricksters.

Condwiramurs (*conduire amours*, the guide of love) says that Parzival has earned her and must be her lover, but not necessarily her husband. She changes her hair to a shorter style to signify their union, which does not involve clergy, and they then spend two consecutive platonic nights together in bed. In the *Tristan* of Thomas of Britain, Brengvein and Caerdin spend two consecutive nights together platonically before consummating their marriage. Fergus cuts Dil's hair and then the two enter a hotel as Fergus tells Dil, "Look on it like a honeymoon." They then spend the next two nights together in bed platonically. Again symbolizing the union of opposites, this is a mystical marriage of the hero with a goddess who transcends such material properties as gender. Dil's haircut is also like the death of Beatrice and the start of a "New Life."

Jude follows in Dil's footsteps and visits Fergus at work. In order to receive the "tools of the trade" from Jude, Fergus literally descends to her level when he climbs down the ladder. As neither the scorpion nor the frog can change its nature, Dil says, "Can't help what I am." With a kiss that is compassionate rather than erotic, Fergus assures her that she needn't. Jody's picture now smiles approvingly. The bandage on Fergus's hand again indicates his stigma as Dil says, "Knew you had a heart." According to the story now told by Fergus, Jody is held hostage for three days, as are Jonah in the whale and Jesus in the tomb. Fergus admits his role is Jody's death. Confession makes the Hero worthy to undergo the final ordeal of initiation by walking a further mile in Jody's shoes. Fergus has already experienced ethnic slurs, as did Jody. Now, after he and Dil spend their second platonic night in the same bed, Fergus finds himself bound, as Jody had been. His confession is also the truth that sets him free, at least from Peter and Jude, who both ultimately die as a result of his detention.

One shot of the sleeping Fergus involves foreshortening like that in *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ* by Andrea Mantegna, suggesting martyrdom. Meanwhile, as Jude puts the gun in her bag, it is clear that she really knows how to accessorize! The SOUTH KENSINGTON STATION sign make an excellent formatting test pattern. When Peter says that Fergus is "dead," Jude differs, saying, "No, we are." Peter has not forgotten that the job is suicidal, but he feels pressure from above and cannot afford to leave the job undone. After extracting pledges of love and devotion from Fergus, Dil says, "I know you're lying." Fergus replies, "I'm sorry," though he is not lying in any important sense.

In a scene reminiscent of the climax of the film *Aliens*, an unorthodox variation on the cat fight is played out. The scene also recalls Odysseus killing the suitors. Note too that near the end



of *Mona Lisa*, Simone shoots someone who then slides down a wall, and then Simone turns the gun on George. Dil displays a particularly feminine attitude when saying, “Tell me what she wore.” She cannot bring herself to shoot Fergus because of Jody’s influence. Just as it seems that this will be another example of a desperate person being told to put a gun down and complying for no apparent reason, Dil attempts suicide. Now, however, Fergus takes over Jody’s role and it is Fergus, not Jody, who stops her.

Three police vehicles arrive with *DA*, *SV* and *TA* painted on their respective roofs. Even if this “detail” is accidental, it is still fair game for subjective interpretation. Of course, even such minor particulars are often deliberate. For example, on a commentary track for the *Slacker* DVD, the intentional planting of the number 709 in that film is acknowledged. A similar admission is made regarding the planting of names in *The Winslow Boy*. *Ta* is a British way of saying “thank you,” so this could conceivably be an acknowledgment of people with the initials DA and SV. Allowing for anagrams, DAVTSA suggests Davidson, the surname of the actor portraying Dil.

Fergus apostrophizes Jody by way of the latter’s smiling photograph, saying, “You should have stayed at home.” Parzival’s devotion is tested. Likewise, Fergus falters in his commitment to the Irish Republican Army, but he volunteers to go to jail so that Dil may be spared. He sits, not exactly in the *bhumisparsha* posture, but nevertheless demonstrates the Buddhist principle of *akshobhya* (“steadfastness”).

As mentioned in the *Barton Fink* essay, heroes are sometimes allowed to visit the abyss or the home of the dead and return alive. Fergus rescues Dil from the underworld of *The Metro* as Orpheus rescues Eurydice, but Fergus gets stuck, at least physically, in jail, where Dil reciprocates by visiting him. The situation is characterized in biblical terms as Dil refers to John 15:13 and Fergus equates Jody with Jesus. The film then concludes with the appropriate irony of Lyle Lovett singing “Stand by Your Man,” though not until more than a decade after something similar was done in *The Blues Brothers*.