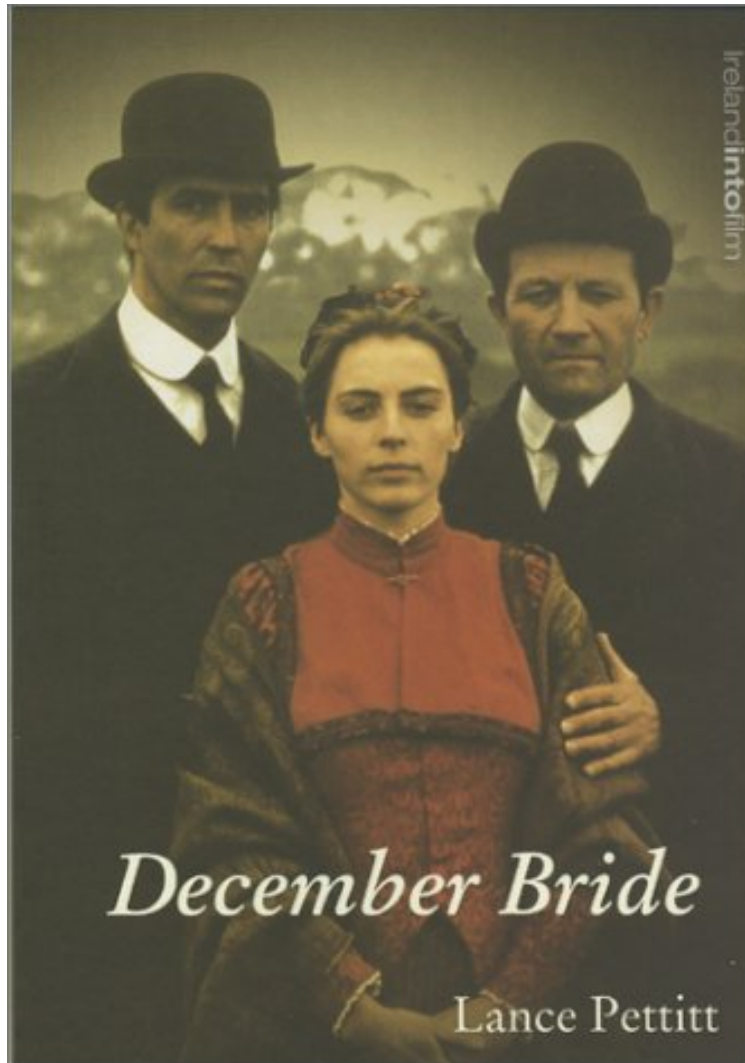


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December Bride (Ireland into Film)

Lance Pettitt

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Lance Pettitt : December Bride (Ireland into Film) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised December Bride (Ireland into Film):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Study of how a book became a film, full of modish theory. By darragh o'donoghue Although it doesn't proclaim itself as such, Lance Pettitt's study of the Thaddeus O'Sullivan film 'December Bride' is the perfect text for teachers and lecturers of cinema. Using the film as a starting point, it deals with such topics as cinematic adaptations of literature; the concepts of national and independent cinema; the funding and marketing of non-Hollywood films; and the collaborative process involved in making films and the validity of the auteur process. Pettitt employs (very selectively) various theoretical frameworks, from Barthesian structuralism to

feminism to new-historicism to post-colonialism, and the film becomes an extended case study with which to test them. The book is part of the 'Ireland into Film' series, which seeks to examine representations of the auld sod in the cinema. With syllogistic predictability, Chapter 1 deals with Sam Hanna Bell's source novel (a background to Irish history as context for book and film; Bell as an Ulster Protestant, as a regional writer, as a Scottish emigre, as a socialist hostile to the bellicose Orange bluster hijacking Protestant identity; his efforts as both writer and broadcaster to record the culturally marginalised Protestant ways of life; the novel's importance as a way of understanding and revealing Protestant experience); Chapter 2 charts the film's production process, from turning the novel into a script to acquiring finance (potted histories of the director and screenwriter (playwright David Rudkin); a valuable discussion of the process of literary adaptation; the importance of creating a sense of the landscape, consciously avoiding the banal tourist-trap romanticism of most films about Ireland); Chapter 3 analyses the film itself (the omissions from and compressions of the novel, and the making 'radical' its apparently less progressive elements; a look at key scenes; the thematic and aesthetic influence of European directors (Varda, Truffaut, Axel, Dreyer, Bergman), employed to avoid the clichés of Irish, British and American cinema). Throughout, Pettit is eager to show that literary adaptations in film are not necessarily diminutions; he concludes that the film is a 'creative commentary' on the novel, an 'echo', a remembrance of reading it, all located in its own 'historical moment' of the late 1980s. He sees its creative and commercial heterogeneity - a novel by a Scotsman, made by two Irishmen living in England with British money and European personnel, marketed as a 'European' art-film, but concerned very much with Irish themes - as a way of breaking and critiquing tired old images and conceptions of what it is to 'be' Irish (this apparently bothers some people). The *menage a trois* at the centre of the film is turned into a metaphor for Northern Ireland, squeezed between the attentions of Ireland and England. This is all very well, and the book is informative enough. But its reliance on hoary old, half-digested 'frameworks'; its recourse to jargon, buzzwords and critical inanities; its often clumsy style and lack of any real empathetic passion for the cinema; its preference for the politically correct over the aesthetically inspired (works that fit the theory rather than those that resist it) is all very dispiriting.

Sam Hanna Bell's debut novel (1951), about life in a tight-knit Presbyterian community in turn-of-the-century Northern Ireland, was adapted for the screen by David Rudkin and directed by Thaddeus O'Sullivan in 1990. Both as a novel and as a film, *December Bride* is a remarkable combination of passion and politics set against a rural backdrop of communal constraint and individual action. Visually and thematically, the film is a timely reinvestigation of Ulster Protestant history and culture, and in particular reclaims a tradition of radical independent thought exemplified by the work of Sam Hanna Bell. Drawing on previously unpublished archival material and new interviews, Lance Pettitt explores the intricate relationship between novel, screenplay and the wider film culture. *December Bride* is a consummate and provocative challenge to the politics of Irish society, its cinematic representations, and to the very process of film adaptation itself.

of the Ireland into Film series: "Each writer has also done an impressive amount of new archive research, which greatly enhances the series' value as film history and film research. The volumes give full production details and where possible, contain good background interviews with writers and directors. Each volume is lavishly illustrated so that as well as providing good detailed information on the films and an engaged debate about adaptation in general, the series is also an excellent value for the collector." (Cineaste) "Handsome in design and including sensible stills, each of the three volumes provides a lengthy and insightful essay, full credits, and notes. This series is a splendid model for other national film institutes. All film collections." (Choice) This title has been reviewed jointly with "This Other Eden," by Fidelma Farley," and "December Bride". "These three concise monographs initiate a collaboration between Cork University and the Irish Film Institute and a series titled "Ireland into Film." In his brilliant study of John Huston's last film (1987), an adaptation of James Joyce's last short story, "The Dead" (1907), Barry analyzes the film's tripartite structure of repetition and variation, the serenity that derives from its mix of apprehension and irresolution, and both its fidelity to and its "strong misreading" of the Joyce source. Barry attributes four major changes to the unforeseen Irish national narrative of independence, the development of the Hollywood classic style, Huston's own auteurship, and the advent of Joyce criticism--that is, Huston's changes sensitively adjust to the intervening history and the shift in medium. Though the other two volumes focus on less-known--and lesser--films, they approach the standard Barry sets. Analyzing the politics of Ulster Protestantism in Thaddeus O'Sullivan's 1990 film of Sam Hanna Bell's novel *December Bride* (1951), Pettitt considers Bell's own stage and radio adaptations and David Rudkin's screenplay, the plot's source, and the film's afterlife on television and home video. Pettitt's primary focus is the historical context of both the novel and its processes of adaptation. Farley examines how Muriel Box's 1959 film provides a comedic treatment of the legacy of the Civil War and Michael Collins's death and how the film anticipates the Irish cinema's major themes of 20 years later--oppression, emigration, the power of the church, nationalist martyrdom, illegitimacy, anti-English hostility, and national identity--noting that the film mocks the Irish while depicting British romanticizing of the Irish." (Lance Pettitt) About the Author Lance Pettitt is Senior Lecturer in Irish Studies at St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, London and is the author of *Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation* (2000). Keith

Hopper teaches Literature and Film Studies for Oxford Universitys Department for Continuing Education and for St Clares International College, Oxford. He is general editor of the Ireland into Film series (2001-2007).Grinne Humphreys is image editor for the Series. She is Head of Education at the Irish Film Institute.