

AFTER THE AGREEMENT:  
CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY  
IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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## ABSTRACT

### **After the Agreement: Contemporary Photography in Northern Ireland**

This thesis utilises Ariella Azoulay's proposition of the 'event of photography' as a critical research method and curatorial framework to explore the affective meanings of photographs in the context of the aftermath of the Troubles signalled by the Good Friday Agreement. It examines the implications of staging the 'event of photography' as a curated research process and dramaturgical methodology in order to explore the political temporality of post Agreement through a discussion of the affective meanings of the work of six photographers - John Duncan, Kai Olaf Hesse, Mary McIntyre, David Farrell, Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert.

The curation of three staged events – *Spectrality and Urbanism*, *Place as Archive* and *Between Memory and Mourning* - attended by a cohort of co-researchers from across disciplines (literature, architecture, law), the arts (curators, writers, visual artists) and communities (loyalist, nationalist) is both the analytical framework and the analytical subject of the thesis.

In making the co-researchers response to the images central, this thesis attempts to explore how the affective meanings of images record the effects and social and cultural conditions of living after the agreement. As an agonistic process it examines the complexities of decentering the memories of the past as the politics of the future, whereby post Agreement is understood as a political project, premise and practice of thinking about the past and the future.

By translating the 'event of photography' into the politics of communities and public institutions this thesis considers how images provide an amenable site for civic negotiation that questions the forms of social identification and cultural enunciation that emerge from the discontents of national longing and belonging.

## DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' followed by a horizontal line.

Dated: July 17, 2015

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I am indebted to the support I received from my supervisor Darren Newbury throughout the process and to the generosity of the photographers John Duncan, Kai Olaf Hesse, Mary McIntyre, David Farrell, Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert and to the co-researchers who gave their time, thought and commitment to the project.

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### Introduction

Post-Agreement in Northern Ireland not only denotes a time, after the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, but also a set of political arrangements and expectations. It also carries with it the assumption of ‘agreement’, which as the text of the Good Friday Agreement makes clear is at best partial and is to be resolved at a later time. This deferral of agreement ushered in by the Good Friday Agreement not only keeps live the contestations of ethno-nationalist claims of identity and belonging, it also sets aside and resets the more troubling questions of reconciliation in the aftermath of violence and the continuing political and social divisions of Northern Ireland.

In titling this thesis *After the Agreement* my concern is with what comes after – how the indeterminacy of living within ‘post Agreement’ is to live within the indeterminacy of the agreement – the political and social agreement that is yet to be achieved.

The Agreement signed in Belfast on 10 April 1998 and agreed through multi party negotiations, the Irish and British governments and approved by referenda in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland provides the legal framework for power sharing in Northern Ireland. Consociationalism<sup>1</sup> as the logic of post-conflict resolution asserts the apparent antinomy of the two communities, nationalist and loyalist - ‘the substantial differences between our continuing, and equally legitimate, political aspirations’<sup>2</sup>. Without this assertion, in the logics of the Agreement there can be no agreement. The conflict, remaindered as cultural

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<sup>1</sup> Consociational theory was first applied to Northern Ireland by Lijphart in the *British Journal of Political Science* - see Arend Lijphart, ‘Review Article: The Northern Ireland Problem; Cases, Theories, and Solutions’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 5 (1975), pp. 83–106.

<sup>2</sup> The Good Friday Agreement, April 10th 1998. For the full text see <http://peacemaker.un.org/uk-ireland-good-friday98>  
For a comprehensive reading of the text see: *After the Good Friday Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland* (eds) Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, University College Dublin Press, 1999

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and political difference, is maintained but pacified through power sharing and the possibility of future referenda to determine Northern Ireland's identity and belonging. Being in common and the processes of reconciliation is therefore analytically divested, since the Agreement affirms and codifies being, subjectivity and mythos as identity, ethos and political aspiration in two directions, from the past to the future and from the future toward the past, from expectation toward memory.

The Good Friday Agreement not only inaugurates and authorises power-sharing it also proposes and agrees upon ethnic identity claims essentialised as political ontology. In this intensely polemical situation the peace process citizen is already accounted for in terms of ethno-nationalist affiliation and political aspiration. The political circumspection of 'our continuing, and equally legitimate, political aspirations' not only warns against overstepping the limits of electoral and party constituency, but also provides in many ways the primal scene of post-Agreement, as it gathers together internal security and desire to delineate between the two communities, nationalist and loyalist. In making the correspondence between community, desire and security coterminous, the two communities are encoded in a settlement which allots political representation only on condition that representation conforms to the ideological register of the Agreement.

The peace process citizen is therefore faced with an abrupt question that submits the writing of history to identification through filiation (a knowing your place and being in and from your place).

This process is enacted and displayed throughout the city of Belfast by the centralisation and minimisation of contact points between the two communities. The city centre reopened as a shared shopping area whilst the outer ring of the city subdivides between residential communities of loyalist/Protestant and nationalist/Catholic (the sectarian/politicised subject). This subdivision is assisted by the proliferation of peace line walls, housing estates that end in cul-de-sacs and the permanence of the misnomer Westlink motorway built in the 1960s and 70s that fortifies the city's history of sectarianism. This double of centralisation of contact and the minimisation of contact along clearly delineated lines of the two communities reorganises the space of the city as a consolidation of the

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interrelations of the people of Belfast around the definitions of nationalist and loyalist. While the material outcome of separation and enclave geography is an inflation of peace walls as domestic borders, it also translates into disorientation for both communities. This politics of identity as the city's ontopology, actively applied and displayed through the conspicuous use of flags and murals and defensible space planning including roads, wastelands, interfaces and overground car parks not only blocks the activity of walking and connection it also regulates segregation, the preservation of conventions and their recovery if breached. Not only do these walls and derelict spaces map community separation as ontopology, they also provide a stark image of the management of peace keeping as fortification, projecting the visual symbolic effects of the divided national imaginary; a division marked by the use of flags as territorial borders and as instruments of deceleration of the historical process which the Agreement initiates.

Whilst the formations of segregation and surveillance have changed since the Agreement – the dismantling of watchtowers, the disarmament of the paramilitaries, the removal of British army and RUC armed checkpoints within the city and at the border with the south - separate and separated residential communities have not ceased to coexist. Indeed the circumstance and management of community separation in Northern Ireland exposes the manner in which the history of the Troubles continues to interpenetrate the features and details of social life.

In considering a methodological framework for research into contemporary photography post Agreement it became apparent that I would need to both provide for the subversion of the consociationalist logic of the 'peace process' and the related lexicons of nationalism and identity politics, whilst at the same time recognise the fragmentation of the city and the bi-communal character of the Realpolitik of power sharing. The question that therefore arises is how a research process might catalyse a being in common as a space of productive dissensus, in order to analyse and assess the scope of photography as a site for dialogue and civic negotiation. Additionally how could this civic negotiation not only subvert the deterministic premise of two traditions, nationalist/Catholic, loyalist/Protestant but also invoke the peace process as a prefigurative political imaginary. This

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appeal to a sense of being-in-common according to what is in-common rather than with some metaphysical essence of the common, is an effort to keep radically open a discursive agonistic space that accommodates agreement and disagreement.

The starting point of my research is a publication produced by Belfast Exposed, a city centre exhibition space and community photography archive and a key institutional partner in the research process.<sup>3</sup>

The title of the publication *Where are the people?* (2010) asks why contemporary photography, or more specifically photography post Agreement is without the representation of the people of Northern Ireland. The essays variously invoke Derrida's motifs of hauntology mapping a spectro-geography of traces, haunting, ghosts and scars. A number of the writers also draw on David Company's definition of 'late photography' from his essay *Safety in Numbness: Some Remarks on Problems of 'Late Photography'* (Company:2003). David Company defines 'late photography' as a new development in the genre of photographic practice. He attributes various features typical of late photography - damaged and abandoned buildings, or other kinds of detritus that attest to something having happened in a particular location before the photograph was taken. For Company their lateness involves the lateness of the arrival of the photographer on the scene, or more accurately the framing of the photograph as post the event of destruction. Company questions what is at stake in the rise of this kind of photograph in contemporary visual culture – what does it disrupt in the easy assumption that the still photograph is closer to the act of memory and that the photograph condenses and simplifies things through its stillness. Company's consideration of 'late photography' assumes a narrative sequence - pre event, the event and aftermath – with the event marking the catastrophe, the point of violent disruption from which everything changes. He achieves this sequential reading through a focus on the destruction of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center presenting how the catastrophic event is televised, with photography relegated to capturing the aftermath – the post-traumatic, the sense of mourning and paralysis. As Company

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<sup>3</sup> The research was supported by an AHRC funded Collaborative Doctoral Award. The institutional partners were Belfast Exposed and Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, Birmingham City University in the initial stages and Belfast Exposed and University of Brighton in the latter stages of the research process.

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observes, these photographs are ‘not so much the trace of an event as the trace of the trace of an event’ (Campany, 2003:129). However for contemporary photography in Belfast to be named late photography necessitates affirming the slogan ‘Belfast is a post conflict city’ and that the event of conflict precedes the taking of the photograph, which is in many ways to understand and name violence only in its form of eruption – the event – restricting an understanding of violence to the immediacy of the event itself, its eventness.

Campany’s theorisation of late photography is reliant on an investment in the photograph as a document of visual testimony. Even as he writes of lateness as the posthumous photography of after the event, he does so by fixing the role of photography in its relation to the event and its documentation of the event, with event understood as the eruption of violence. What is pushed aside in this argument is an understanding that the event of photography does not cease with the photographed event (the taking of the picture) but is continued in the encounter with the photograph, an encounter which is always late to the photographed event which happened elsewhere. This reconstruction of the event of photography to include the encounter with the photographed event reconfigures the ontology of photography, displacing the photographer and photographed subject as the sole signatories to the event of photography. This expanded ontology of photography, that marks the event of photography as both the taking of the photograph and the encounter with the photographed event undermines the possibility of fixing meaning denying what Ariella Azoulay describes as ‘any attempt to terminate it or to proclaim that it has reached its end ’ (Azoulay, 2011:79 ).

Likewise what if the aftermath of violence, what is remaindered is not simply understood as the detritus but the continuation of the events’ violence across time, its living materials and ongoing presences when the sense of urgency is diminished. Defining photographic practice post Agreement ‘late photography’ not only privileges the violence of the Troubles as the evental site of meaning, but also assigns the years post Agreement as the aftermath that is post sectarian, post ideological and post conflict.

The insistence on ‘post’ or ‘after’ and the many qualifying adjectives that announce the period since the signing of the Agreement are attempts to define a

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specifically inter- and trans-generational act of remembrance and/or transfer. Just as the multiple uses of the prefix post have been mobilised to designate and describe the contemporary as a moment of indeterminacy as a neither/nor and equally a both/and, the prefix 'post' of 'post conflict', 'post Agreement', 'post national', 'post traumatic' and 'postcolonial' variously used to describe the current circumstance of Northern Ireland provide repetitions of the same chronological and conceptual uncertainty, that equally speaks to the conditions and circumstance of 'conflict', 'Agreement', 'national', 'trauma' and 'colonial'. The post of 'post Agreement' makes legible this uncertainty and incompleteness, noting neither a rupture or break from what was before, since the Agreement works across time, across a retroactive understanding of the Troubles, proscribing and legitimising comprehension of the past as well as the future direction and desire for both communities. Likewise 'post conflict' in addition to its ideological promise, inscribes not only a critical distance from but also a profound interrelation with conflict and the resonant effects of conflict. These resonant effects operate as a spectre of renewed civil strife, which not only haunts the post conflict body politic, but also constitutes the grammar through which residents articulate their familial, professional, social, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic lives. By temporalising meaning according to the hesitation and risk of the prefix 'post' Belfast city's topography, simultaneously anticipatory and defensive, traces and repeats this risk. Indeed this thesis is caught within this temporality, for even where the desire to escape the antinomy of 'the substantial differences between our continuing, and equally legitimate, political aspirations', when discourse is universally implicative, it is nonetheless locally relational, in so far as it is strategically deployed.

Indeed the questioning title of Belfast Exposed's publication *Where are the people?*, which responds to the absence of people in the photography produced post Agreement makes visible the aporia of post Agreement, the hesitation and risk denoted by the prefix 'post' not only disrupting the epochal and regulative ideas of the peace process constituted through the Agreement but also inflecting the question, *Where are the people?*, with both a melancholic and anticipatory memory and mourning. The temporalising of meaning that post Agreement inaugurates, committing communities, nationalist and loyalist, to a time yet to



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come and retroactively comprehending the past based upon this future, places the present outside time, or more precisely emphasises the present as an action of waiting.

This durational delay and temporal ambiguity of 'post Agreement' corresponds to the paradoxical 'still life' of photography that simultaneously suspends time, while retaining the past, which is not yet passed. It is this aspect of photography that complicates and makes complex notions of lateness and timeliness since photography has the potential not only for permanent renewal but for this to take place in multiple locations, which marks photography with the potential for permanent renewal of meaning. This not only suggests photography as an amenable site for civic negotiation and dialogue, but also proposes photography as a space that actualises speech and action, sight, hindsight and foresight. These considerations of the event of photography form the logic, the methodological design and the core of my research process into contemporary photography post Agreement; assembling a group of co-researchers, across disciplines (literature, architecture, law, visual arts) practice areas (curators, writers, visual artists) and communities (loyalist, nationalist) to consider the work of six photographers post Agreement John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse; Mary McIntyre and David Farrell and Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert.

In so doing my research responds to and addresses the question where are the people? through the encounter with photography, a research process that treats seriously and treats as primary the event of photography as the encounter with the photographed event. In proposing a research strategy and methodological framework of relational enquiry the research is an endeavour to dramatise Azoulay's proposition of the 'event of photography' as a dialogical practice that opens the photographed event to the effect of the spectator. Each exploration of the photographed event includes the photographer as artist and therefore does not refute the prerogatives of authorship or the specificity of the photographers' intention or agency. The research conceived as a talk series, exhibition of photographs and publication of transcripts foregrounds an active, generative and creative engagement with photography to question what forms of knowledge are catalysed through a collaborative enquiry and experience of photographs.

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As I've noted this process does not imply the dissolution of artistic agency but instead that the question of agency, its attribution and negotiation, is located as a creative praxis, what Azoulay refers to as the civil act of 'watching' photographs as a complex operation of political, cultural and social registers of meaning and meaning production. This emphasis on a collaborative approach to photography denaturalises not only a particular system of photographic theory but also research into photography proposing a more substantive engagement with photography that attests to the mobility of photography both in terms of its political and social representation and signification. This mobility, which for Azoulay constitutes the 'civil contract of photography' refutes the possibility of fixing a photograph's meaning with neither the photographer, curator or the spectator enabled to seal off this effect of mobility and determine a photograph's sole meaning.

With this in mind the research into six photographers' practice post Agreement necessitated a methodological framework that provided for an understanding of photography as a site of discursive production. While interviews with photographers have a long established history, research based on both the photographers and spectators engagement with photography, implies a paradigm shift from the primacy of the photographer as artist toward the act of 'watching'. Consistent with this intention to elaborate on the 'event of photography' the use of the term 'watching' directly imported from Azoulay's *The Civil Contract of Photography* references not only the mobility of photography as noted earlier but also and equally the critical contestation involved in viewing images that opens out into a broader examination of issues of territory, place, identity and subjectivity. The research strategy of convocation, the assembling of co-researchers in destabilising and challenging the artist/photographer, audience/spectator dichotomy reframes Azoulay's 'event of photography' as not simply that which deterritorialises photography but activates a more complex and agonistic enquiry into photography. It is in this seeking of a renewed contemporary role for photography and the marking out of an ethical terrain for its study that the 'event of photography' is staged.

In adopting this research strategy to consider the 'event of photography' in post Agreement Belfast my research is an endeavour to explore the ideological promise

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of 'post conflict' and account for the various social, sensory and political engagements with photographs that are actively entered into by the communities of Northern Ireland who are themselves the subject of the peace process. The research enquiry is an exploration of how photography post Agreement questions the conditions of the current reality as defined by the Good Friday Agreement in ways that stress representational, spatial, temporal and situational indeterminacy and over-determination. When read as a historicist phrasing of contemporary Northern Ireland, 'post-agreement' contains this double of indeterminacy and over-determination. In elevating the term post Agreement as the designation of the contemporary, effectively functioning as a new Master-Signifier, is to consider how 'post Agreement' not only introduces a new order of intelligibility into the confused multiplicity of historical experience, but also governmentality. While seeking the ending of armed conflict, this conflict is quelled with the quasi-philosophical proclamation - 'our continuing, and equally legitimate, political aspirations' - which provides an affirmation of threat, forcing the reminder of a past and a future which it agrees it cannot agree on. The effect of this conjunction is a radical flattening out of time, a bracketing out of the violence of the Troubles. It is to some of the implications and consequences of this emergency that this thesis attends.

In seeking to elaborate both literary and visual arts theory it could be argued that this thesis puts at risk the photograph as the primary concern of this study. However my hope through staging the 'event of photography' is to enhance the reader's understanding of Northern Irish photography by identifying levels of meaning and expression that otherwise might remain buried beneath the surface of taste, representation and reference. If anything my desire here has been to decentre the notion that photography is singularly the province of visual arts, something removed from other modes of storytelling. While the manifest subject of these conversations is photography, the latent subject is the political orientation and possibilities of post Agreement.

The photographers John Duncan, Kai Olaf Hesse, Mary McIntyre, David Farrell, Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert were settled on primarily for the range of concerns and complexity that they demonstrate in naming a Northern Irish

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photographic tradition. This thesis is therefore not an attempt to chart a subject field of Northern Irish photography between the work of these photographers, not least because among the six photographers selected two neither live or work in Northern Ireland, but instead to consider how photography of and about Northern Ireland speaks to the double voiced concept of cultural nationalism and memory, where ambiguity and distinction are equally charged politically and socially. It is also important to acknowledge that this thesis in locating the contemporary as 'post Agreement' recognises how photographs signify upon other photographs in both motivated and unmotivated ways and it is to some of these representations and revisions, both as critique and refiguration that this thesis looks to uncover. It is equally about how the co-researchers' response to the photographs, the conversations and disputes that emerged, directly engaged in meaning making proposing photography as the site and sight of memory that reaches beyond the story told at the centre of the photograph to a critical reflection on 'post Agreement'. The co-researchers speech is in the loose sense, personal: turning up the volume on an ongoing interior monologue, and it is also professional in that it attempts to do what all research seeks to do, which is to put pressure on a particular idea, image or word to see what it yields up. The emotional dimensions of the conversations are by no means ancillary to this thesis, but placed in the wider research context of post Agreement take on a political, rather than a privatised, register. In many ways this thesis can be read as a theoretical prologue to the publication *After the Agreement*<sup>4</sup> – the transcripts of the conversations generated at the three events: Spectrality and Urbanism; Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning and the diversity of meanings ranging from the typological, allegorical and the literal, that points to the complex achronicity/anachronism of photography and 'post Agreement'. In short it is an attempt to shift the focus of theoretical attention away from the identities Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and loyalist as repositories of cultural value, to the process of cultural classification that the Good Friday Agreement seeks to stabilise and regulate.

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<sup>4</sup> The separate publication refers to the transcripts of the events with a preface written by Dr Mick Wilson see: *After the Agreement – Contemporary Photography in Northern Ireland*, Black Dog Publications, 2015 (pending).

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This thesis is perhaps best understood as an extended enquiry of the conversations generated by and through the photographs of John Duncan, Kai Olaf Hesse, Mary McIntyre, David Farrell, Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert. The three densely layered events of place, emotion and situation re-engage with the conflict of Northern Ireland, textured as possession and deprivation, economic dogmas, the racialisation of religion, nationalism and unequal power and a restless apprehension of what is 'post Agreement'. The three events signal photography as a site of collaboration and contestation, a space for elaborating strategies of selfhood, the exchange of values and meanings, which despite shared histories of conflict are not always dialogical.

The force of the questions that initiated this enquiry, where are the people and who are the people, are borne out by the series of crises that form the backdrop to the period of this research – the 'flag' crisis, the Twadell Avenue loyalist protest camp, the referendum on Scottish independence and its attendant meaning for Ulster Scots and unionism, the evacuations of Belfast city centre in response to bomb threats, the failed Haass talks, the ongoing searches for the Disappeared and the recovery of the Brendan McGraw's remains in a bog in Oristown on October 1, 2014 - crises that not only reveal the persistence of 'dissident' histories but also expose that the jargon of our times, encapsulated by the phrase 'post Agreement', when limited to a celebration of the ending of armed conflict is a profoundly parochial concept, which has its own history of political expediency. But this is also to note the multiple reverberations of the question who and where are the people during the Troubles that also speaks of the silences, muted speech and non-presence of 'the people': the internment of 'suspects' without trial, codenamed Operation Demetrius, from 1971-75, the trials without juries of the Diplock courts established in 1973, the formation of the British Army Military Reaction Force (MRF) and the broadcasting ban that forced the dubbing of actors' voices over the speech of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness from 1988-1994. Refracted through these judicial, military and media abuses, who and where are the people is situated not only as the pervasive question of the conflict but also as the prelude to thinking the social as coordinates that bind and unbind identification and belonging. However to be clear this study is not oriented toward the disclosure of the abuses which took place, instead the situated ethics of this research is precisely

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to make complex ethical norms in order to consider the pre-mediation of ethics, which authorises and discharges both violence and forgiveness.

To undertake this enquiry into the complex and multi-vocal questions where and who are the people through photography proposes the use of a photograph beyond the purely illustrative or observational. It does so by reclaiming the liminal space of a photograph as a critical site which can throw into relief the sectarianism that prevents a sense of shared cultural contemporaneity and as a critical space from which to negotiate and signal new forms of post Agreement identity in the act of defining a future Northern Irish society. It is hoped the publication of the transcripts, *After the Agreement*, is understood not simply as a snapshot of a place and time, but as a conversational process produced in the articulation of cultural difference exposing how the language of ‘community’ which has its roots in commonality has become a byword for segregation. In this, it seeks to map responses to photography that resists the pre-emptive closure on historical complexity which the binary of ‘our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations’ depends on and likewise rejects the stabilizing synthesis of community or ‘we are the people’, since both formulations are vulnerable to chauvinism; a vulnerability exposed by the far right’s recent acquisition through the Munich patent and trademark office, of the slogan we are the people, that precipitated the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989.<sup>5</sup>

As a research project which looks to explore how destabilising cultural identity might presage political change and the difficulties of this task when memory is caught within the polarities of a divided social imaginary of nationhood, necessarily means that this research refuses the ambition of any totalising logic. Theoretically and politically pushing at the space of division to challenge the supposed transparency of meanings inhered in the terms Catholic and Protestant, loyalist and nationalist it is an attempt to understand how these polarities might be eluded, to explore what Homi K Bhabha has productively described as the ‘Third Space’, where we ‘emerge as the other of ourselves’ (2004:56). In doing so this thesis mixes a broad range of theoretical and literary texts as starting points from

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<sup>5</sup> See: Fascists Claim We Are the People Slogan <http://www.thelocal.de/20130503/49519> (accessed Jan 2015)

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which to pursue an investigation of photography to chart how a photograph's effectivity is more hybrid and fluid in its articulation and imaging of cultural differences and identities than a binary structuring of social antagonism. It therefore displaces any assumption of a photograph's relation to the real to explore how a photograph's meaning is negotiated through personal, social and visual affiliation and how photographs can be understood as potent affective and discursive spaces of translation.

In the narrative ensconings of the following chapters I have attempted no general theory, but have sought instead to productively map the tensions and complexity of the language that the photographs activated in the events. The three events, Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning when understood as fragments of an endeavour to bear witness to the past and make sense of the present explore the ways in which the affective experiences of the Troubles informs Northern Irish photography for practitioners and audiences.

The three events which shape the content of this thesis are presented here as a group of related studies rather than a consecutive narrative. In selecting the themes, articulated by the chapter/event headings, I have been conscious at times of writing against the prevailing orthodoxies of post Agreement and post conflict, bringing together those people who lived through acute social and civil disturbance and those who have lived with its aftermath. If I have shown insufficient understanding of the Troubles, I nevertheless hope that this thesis will be seen as a contribution to an understanding of the continued contestations over the present past and actively demonstrates how the context within which a photograph is placed frames explanation and description, which is also to note that a different contextualisation would produce a different explanatory description. In each event there is the intermingling of economic and political themes with photographic history alongside the social occasion of the event, including the procedural formalities of introductions.

This thesis is an attempt to describe and analyse these processes of definition and debate about Northern Irish photography and the manifold ways the Troubles shape contemporary realities and ways of seeing that provokes and features both moments of insight and myopia, reflecting not only a range of critical distances

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from the event itself but also the afterlife of trauma. Again I should make clear that the research process and this thesis is not presented as a kind of Freudian working through, but rather a reconstruction in the moment and discourse of the present that describes the temporal disjunction of post Agreement as a time between a projective past and a prophetic future. In many ways the texts produced through the events resemble a diasporic narrative, caught in the ambivalence and vacillation of time and representation and marked by the inveterate scars of the Troubles, that speaks of photographs not in terms of their mimetic resemblance but as scenarios for critical reflection on the Troubles as the future anterior of the present of Northern Ireland.

The following chapters seek to address some of the issues that would appear to have no clear resolve, those issues which are seemingly contradictory and paradoxical in an effort to reach beyond and behind the invidious narratives of nationalisms that contour and mark the boundaries of the lived and the imagined. But equally I do not mean to over exaggerate, and in so doing inadvertently ‘glorify’ the histories of conflict, however I do want to make graphic how these contested histories are managed as a form of coercive conditionality in the definitions of self and other. Again this is not to condone by silence the profound abuses of law that were causal and symptomatic of the Troubles, but to explore how photography might usefully decentre place and the restless apprehension of who and where are the people. As such, phrases such as ‘I don’t see that’ are understood as encrypted narratives of the continued division, partitioned pasts and the enmeshment of sight and site.

This understanding raises a pertinent question that equally presses on the methodological and the analytical design of this research. Namely if the Good Friday Agreement presents indeterminacy and a wavering between the vocabularies of (Catholic) nationalism and (Protestant) unionism how then does it simultaneously maintain a political rationality for the competing nationalisms? In other words how does the Good Friday Agreement assure its pedagogical value by locating two versions of nationhood within a narrative of historical continuity? This question not only points toward which ‘events’ are awarded privileged



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visibility and interpretation but also to those 'events' which are conspicuously awarded less attention.

But to address this question as simply an account of state power on the one hand and its utopian inversion of nationhood as a radical cultural memory on the other hand, would be to remain within the claims of historical continuity. With this in mind the three curated events Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning seek to explore the visual, figurative and narrative strategies and metaphoric displacements in order to move in and between the traditions of loyalism and nationalism to make historically present the hybrid and the dissonant.

In the context of the contested histories in which Northern Ireland is mired, this study is an attempt to counter the prevailing sense of loss in an effort to speak of the complexities of decentring the memories of the past as the politics of the future. It does so in full acknowledgement that numerous issues of the past remain unresolved, whether in terms of the Historical Enquiries Team, local agencies of transitional justice or the psychic and physical scars of conflict. Decentring the past and place is not to propose a moral equivalence to the political expediency of a cover up, but rather the uncovering of the ways in which the inheritance of the traditions of loyalism and nationalism are produced as a pedagogy of authenticity.

In the separate publication *After the Agreement*, the transcripts of the conversations and the publication of the photographs provide parallel narratives about Northern Irish life, which, while relying on each other's immediacy in interpretation, require different encoding and decoding processes for the reader. In this thesis I have sought to undertake that process, while also accounting for my own curatorial methodology and the intercut across disciplines in the negotiated conversation of the co-researchers. In curating each of the events I attempted to move away from the singularities of nationalist/republican/Catholic and loyalist/unionist/Protestant as narratives of ordinary subjectivities in order to focus on moments of overlap and the displacement of difference across institutional, disciplinary and geo-political location, gender and age while providing for an exchange of values and meanings that are not always dialogical or collaborative. In the chapter that follows, The Event of Photography - A

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Methodological Approach I present in more detail some of the research questions alluded to in this introduction, including curation as a form of critical cultural production in an effort to consider how staging the ‘event of photography’ both produces acts of affiliation and critical difference that speaks of and to the temporal complexity of images and post Agreement. Each of the three events staged are then critically assessed in the individual chapters that follow.

For reasons of dialectical method this thesis as a whole attempts to understand what post Agreement means in practice and how it functions as an interpretation of the contemporary. It is hoped that this thesis, and the separate publication *After the Agreement*, uncovers how the rhetoric of ‘the substantial differences between our continuing, and equally legitimate, political aspirations’ is an analytic key to understanding the psycho-political strategies of continued residential segregation – which haunts the double question of who and where are the people. In doing so it proposes the ways in which photography provides an imaginary spatial distance from which to examine ‘post Agreement’ and an interstitial space that allows for an epistemological braiding of the arts, social sciences and politics. As such this research process translates the ‘event of photography’ into the politics of communities and public institutions in order to consider what forms of social identification and cultural enunciation emerge from the discontents of national longing and belonging. At the same time I have sought to respect the difference between personal identity as an intimation of social reality and the problem of identification which in Northern Ireland always presses on the question of the subject – who and where are the people. Within this broader context, part sociological and part psychological, the photographs are understood as sites of ambivalence that are neither present nor fully absent. It is from this border between presence and absence, representation and repetition, that this research is pursued in order to connect photography to the shifting boundaries between self and other and otherness within identity, in order to see if the pathos of post Agreement might be reclaimed as a strategy of political subversion. In short it is an attempt to trace through photography how the political project of republicanism migrated to nationalism, a migration which not only registered at the level of internecine contestation but also registered at the level of a failed imaginary of the social and the political. As such this research revisits the ideas of republicanism,

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as a re-visitation of questions of the public and publicness, where the political and social project of seeing again is understood as a spectral promissory note from the past to the future and from the future to the past.

**Chapter One**

**The Event of Photography: A Methodological Approach**

This research sets out to consider how an images' disruption of the chronology of past, present and future might invoke a more fluid and disjunctive reading of post Agreement beyond the claim and demand of 'our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations'. From one perspective the primary research context of this thesis can be clearly defined - the field of study is contemporary photographic practice and the primary constellation of references for this study are the contributions made by the co-researchers at each day long event. By naming the invited audience co-researchers my intention was to provide an important theoretical and political corrective to the idea that an image's meaning can be defined. This emphasis on a collaborative approach to photographs sought to understand how meanings are socially and culturally produced and therefore can, in part, be understood as contextually specific. While this articulation of the thesis carries forward an assertion that contemporary photographic practice as a form of cultural production and provocation might allow for a discussion of Northern Ireland post Agreement it does so without presupposing that this provocation is the result of photography's function as a privileged form of evidence and record.

Naming the invited audience 'co-researchers' is therefore intended as an emphasis on the collaborative nature of the research enquiry and as an emphasis on conversational praxis as an open ended research process. In drawing these two concerns together through the description of the audience as 'co-researchers' is also to make clear the centrality of the invited audience in shaping and directing the research since it is through the relational and social dynamic of the three events that the affective meanings of the images are uncovered and mobilised.

This research process utilises Ariella Azoulay's concept of the 'event of photography' (Azoulay, 2012:21), which unlike the photographed event pays

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particular attention to the viewers' interaction with images, an interaction which Azoulay names 'watching'. In referring to this as the 'event of photography' Azoulay proposes that an images meaning and affect is produced by the act of 'watching' images, making the viewer an active participant in photography.

The decision to stage the 'event of photography' as a methodological and curatorial approach was in part a response to the archive of Troubles photography housed at Belfast Exposed, a city centre photography gallery<sup>6</sup>. In examining the archive images which document the Troubles in Belfast in the 1980s, what became apparent is how the urgency of the conflict produced a photographic practice whose representational logic was aligned to keeping apace with events in order to provide visual reportage. Additionally its perspective constructed from the point of view of the nationalist community leaves undocumented the lived experience of the loyalist community in Belfast. Notwithstanding the value of the images as a record of nationalist communities in Belfast in the 1980s, the representational logic of the archive images assumes a speed of documentation, of photographs as 'eye-witness' accounts as the most capable calculus from which to understand the lived temporality of conflict.

In response I was keen to explore an approach to photography that would slow down this sense of urgency and would equally direct attention to the relationship between post Agreement photography and the preceding decades of the Troubles. But in making this decision I was then uncertain about who would I interview and moreover for what purpose, and how a series of individual interviews would convey something of the incommensurability announced by the Good Friday Agreement doxa of 'our continuing and equally legitimate, political aspirations'. Similarly I was concerned that in approaching the research through a series of interviews I would run the risk of displacing photography as the subject by proposing myself as the interviewee and interlocutor. This triad of concerns – slowing down the urgency of conflict, the incommensurability of communities and

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<sup>6</sup> The 'archive' is a collection of images from the 1980s and 1990s by community photographers, dating from 1983 when Belfast Exposed was founded as a community photography project - for an overview of the organisation's development see: Pauline Hadaway, "*A Cautionary Tale – The Experience of Belfast Exposed*", Printed Project, Oct 2008, pp.10-20. For the digitised archive see: [http://www.belfastexposed.org/browse\\_the\\_image\\_archive](http://www.belfastexposed.org/browse_the_image_archive)

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proposing photography as the subject – informed the decision to stage the ‘event of photography’ as the most capacious way through which this triad of concerns could be addressed and tested. As a curated research process it also provided a framework for making ‘ways of seeing’ (Berger, 1972) a mode of cultural criticism that not only reveals how knowledge is produced but also how subject positions are negotiated, taken up, or refused. In one sense this coming together of the co-researchers to engage with photographs was proposed as an open ended process insofar as the conversations that emerged through the co-researchers’ exchange proceeded from an ethos of attentiveness to the images shown and an attentiveness to the social dynamic of the ‘event of the photography’, but equally it was shaped by the curatorial framework and the nature of day long events.

It was the initial intention of the research design to retain the same co-researchers for each of the three events in order to test more fully the sociality implicated in the shared task of looking at and responding to photographs, however this was impractical due to the resources of time and money. In consequence three day long events, Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning were staged with a different group of co-researchers, assembled in response to the curatorial theme and the photographer’s work. This construction of the ‘event of photography’ as a collective encounter not only sought to foster a dynamic of interaction and dialogue, shaped by the overarching frame of each event, but also to enable the emergence of disagreement and critical questions which, in turn, informed and re-oriented the dialogical process of listening and speaking. Each ‘event of photography’ staged was therefore preceded by the curatorial actions - theme, the selection of two photographers, the assembling of co-researchers, the choice of venue and hospitality.<sup>7</sup>

In pairing the photographers for each event I was interested in staging points of contrast and complementarity in order to put pressure on the address to the themes – spectrality and urbanism, place as archive and between memory and mourning. Consequently John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse were paired to open a consideration of Belfast’s redevelopment from a local and international

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<sup>7</sup> The specific curatorial actions that preceded each event are explored more fully in the following chapters of the three events – Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning

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perspective; Mary McIntyre and David Farrell were paired to broaden a consideration of land as a repository of memory and belonging and Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert were paired in order to consider both the physical and psychic scars of conflict.

The series of events in shifting between levels of emotional intensity in the difficulty of living with the past without being entrapped in the past, charts three distinct political terrains – the politics of redevelopment, the politics of land and the politics of memory. Political terrains which are enfolded within established discourses and frames of photographic reference from the post-industrial, the sublime, the journalistic, the biographic and the post-conceptual that discloses how photographs ‘serve as perfect illustrations of what [...] conventional analysis has constructed’ and ‘also deposit much more in their excessive particularity’ (Pinney, 2007:19). A doubling of the illustrative and the particular which is revealed in the response to individual images, in the cross referencing between photographers’ work and in the exchange between the co-researchers assembled at each event.

Of the total 28 co-researchers who participated some expressed initial reservations about what they could offer the process, reporting a lack of specialist knowledge on photography and a consequent uncertainty: ‘I am not sure whether I could offer you what you are looking for, as I am not a specialist in photography or visual arts but work in contemporary (Northern) Irish literature and drama and any contributions I could offer would be mainly within this remit’ ; ‘I am a community activist, it’s unclear to me how I could say anything about photography and what role I could fulfil as part of this project’. These responses were arguably shaped in part by the professional and personal anxieties that attend public speaking, since the three events would be audio recorded and the transcripts independently published. But from these responses it was also clear that something I was saying in my approach to the invitation was missing its mark, failing in the first instance to assure that the conversation proposed was open to contestation and to not knowing. Moreover, these responses mirrored my own contradictions announced in the original invitation, which shifts between the denial of ‘abstract discourse’ and desire for ‘civic exchange’: ‘Rather than develop a theorised vision of

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contemporary photography post the Good Friday Agreement that might simply reproduce an abstract discourse on photography the event will look to activate photography as civic exchange<sup>8</sup>.

It is also made apparent how the invitation to participate centred on a tension between photography as the subject and object of investigation, and professional and institutional expertise. A tension that on the one hand foregrounds the challenges involved in speaking to the uncertainty of knowing materially, in a way that makes the instability of knowledge matter and on the other the challenges involved in transforming a sense of exclusion from the professional discourse of photography and visual arts into a productive site of engagement, without this sense being obscured by the uses of professional, disciplinary and institutional difference. Moreover this uncertainty about contribution revealed the sense of not belonging properly to the audience of photography, more than an uncertainty about how to respond to the meanings and values ascribed in the term 'post Agreement'. But it also became clear that the co-researchers wanted to know – that they were drawn in despite their professional modes of curiosity to participate in a conversation that blurs institutional and disciplinary boundaries mediated by the slower temporality and agonistic deliberation of day-long events, rather than reactive accounts that respond to the crises of the 'peace process' in the terms in which these crises are given and made. As such the interest to participate was generated by the opportunity to reconceive the conflict of the Troubles as a legacy that has both set the conditions for the understanding of the past and future expectation, where the Good Friday Agreement is rendered a substitution of violence for something deemed more acceptable and the limit experience of the identities nationalist Catholic and loyalist Protestant whose critical yield is the continuation of political, social and cultural division.

It is a curation which in establishing a context for the 'act of viewing' gives rise to a critical question concerning the methodological design – how the specificity of time and place and the social dimension of the interplay and exchange of arguments among the co-researchers and photographers limits the analytical reach of this research. It is a question which points to a wider difficulty in extrapolating

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<sup>8</sup> This phrasing was used as an invitation for each of the three events – see appendix for full wording of the invitation



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a more generalizable consideration of photographic practice, since the conversations prompted by the images are shaped by the specificity of the social, the personal and the institutional.

It is this inflection of the social, temporal and the curatorial which this chapter will seek to address, insofar as the arguments produced in the three curated events would alter in the changed circumstance of place, time and people. As such this chapter will explore some of the theoretical and political implications in making synchronic post Agreement as an experience of time and place and as a frame of judgement in the act of viewing, where recognition and non-recognition in the encrypted temporality of the three events takes on a political and symbolic register.

In one sense this research is clearly concerned with history insofar as it sets out to explore through photography the varied disjunctures, paradoxes and contradictions of the lived experience of Northern Ireland. But this emphasis on time and place is not to suppose that this research demonstrates the photograph as a source for historical research but to claim its contrary - the photograph as a source for debate on time and place mediated by the act of viewing. As such this research does not seek to either validate or discredit individual interpretation, or to propose a new unitary way of reading photography post Agreement, but seeks to consider how the flow of arguments is both an inquiry into images and a contextualisation of post Agreement which both raises issues about the past and the future and is equally situated within the history it seeks to read. It therefore runs the risk of staging in substitutional form the violence of the Troubles, thereby dissipating rather than affirming interpretation - insofar as the range of interpretations are in historical not merely aesthetic conflict contoured by the symbolic and political register of us and them, them and us which are to varying degrees prohibitive of one another. It is a risk which not only touches on the ethical and political implications of the methodological design, but also how this figuration of identity enfolds political difference within social and cultural practices and ways of seeing. It is an aspect which also holds good at the level of the images, where the photographs of John Duncan, Kai Olaf Hesse, Mary McIntyre, David Farrell, Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert arguably re-present the historical blockage

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of seeing the other, where us and them rather than polysemy structures the social and political discourse and visual life of the present.

The framing of each event, Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning formulates in advance a reading of the photographs, providing a frame of reference to the discussions that emerged. As such the curation performs an interpretative argument and grounding to the discussions, which arguably foreclosed the debate and instituted a way of responding to the images. It is therefore a curation which is neither neutral nor supplementary to the events, but is instead performative insofar as the event 'titles' in captioning the co-researchers' speech precedes and exceeds the strategic intentions of the speakers. But while the curation proposes a certain theoretical argument and a way of seeing, it does not in itself guarantee that the collective and diffuse nature of the three events constitute an acceptance of the curatorial framing, since the events are ostensibly concerned with a dynamic of recognition and non-recognition. The three events are therefore, in part a critical scrutiny of the curation, where the titles of Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive, Between Memory and Mourning are not only tested for their inclusivity and translatability but are also reworked to encompass the range of meanings which the images generate. This is not to exempt the curation as structure or as an interpretative discourse since to do so would be to forfeit analytical responsibility, but is instead to suggest the curatorial as a form of invitation and conjecture that is knowingly incomplete in order to prepare the way for the 'role of viewing [...] responsible for the always unfinished nature of the event' (Azoulay, 2012:25).

In titling the three events Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning 'the politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations' (Derrida, 1994:xix) is both summoned and called into question by what is seen and what is not seen; at times corresponding to the prescribed identities of Catholic and Protestant, of positions being marked out, enabled or prevented and at other times expressed as a disorientation of perspective and a reflexive acknowledgement of the norms of recognition. While the titles of the three events are distinctly posed in response to the work of the photographers they are also underpinned by an iterative insistence on thinking through the past as a

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way of thinking of the present in its constituent temporalities. It is a past inflected in the language of spectrality, archive, memory and mourning and a past that is modified by an insistence on urbanism, place and transition. As such the curation attempts to explore how the Good Friday Agreement despite its avowedly historical status has thus far been unable to satisfactorily address the Troubles and its legacy or its own meaning beyond an interim status and when conceptualised as a break with the past nevertheless elides critical distance between what has been and the present. In so doing it proposes the Agreement as a meta-critical theory of the social which projects the impossibility of translation and supposes an 'epistemic barrier' between nationalist and loyalist that maintains the ever present possibility of antagonism as the inner and public life of Northern Ireland.

It therefore considers how post Agreement operates as future expectation and a political calculation of the past that underpins the continued and pervasive binarism of Protestant and Catholic and the continued residential segregation where each other is glimpsed only in representational effects and rarely 'in person'. In this respect the dramatisation of the 'event of photography' which is at the core of this research enquiry attempts a reconsideration of photographic meaning and post Agreement by locating interpretation as a nexus of the political, epistemological and critical.

While the images are central to this study I am aware that the methodological approach somewhat counterintuitively runs the risk of relegating the images to the background, since in placing audience at the dramaturgical centre this research is caught between a prevailing demand to make sense and the indeterminacy of meaning that is given shape in the multi-vocality of the three events. It is an indeterminacy of meaning which reveals that whatever consequences may be drawn from the discursive effect of photography, whether moral, political or aesthetic, none are able to definitively secure or stabilise a photograph's meaning. But it also reveals a certain interiority between what is seen and what is said where the particular discursive registers on Northern Ireland are translated into a description of images, and particular discursive registers on photography affirm a point of view on Northern Ireland. As such the 'event of photography' not only catalyses strategies of interpretation, but also indicates how these strategies of

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interpretation productively function in a conceptualisation of photography and post Agreement.

As a research process it is indebted to Benjamin's theorisation of image as 'dialectics at a standstill' (Benjamin, 1999:463) where the past present of images express the tension between time as chronology and time as presence. It is this past present of historical and lived time which plays out in the conversation amongst the co-researchers where the effort to make the disjuncture of post Agreement cohere not only reproduces the narratives of nationalism and loyalism, but on occasions does so at the most fundamental level of practices and discourses of socio-political and personal life. The dialectical structure of this research therefore, event and not synthesis but 'standstill' poses a particular problem for analysis. In part, it is a problem of reading the afterlife of the Troubles in as much as it is the inveterate scars of the Troubles that have to be examined, and in part it is a problem of reading the historicity of post Agreement, where the polysemic is grounded in the transactions of us and them, them and us as a violence of recall - where memory is not necessarily the antidote of violence but a part of it, legitimised in discourse and in the symbology of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist. The three events therefore not only thematise the circumstance of post Agreement but are also involved in it, insofar as the political and representational axiom of Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and loyalist is a part of the interpretative frame of reference deployed as historical understanding, retrospective tradition and future meaning.

In proposing that the 'event of photography' produces the 'now of particular recognisability' (Benjamin, 1999 :463) encoded in the social relations of the co-researchers, there is nonetheless the question of how the images of the six photographers underwrite the signifying practices of Catholic and Protestant and/or unsettle these practices by contesting dominant representations. It is a question which not only disrupts the assumptions that underpin the Agreement's 'our substantial, continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations' but also indicates how the dialectic of identity and difference is constructed as representation, whose visual tropes and effects are embedded in the social life of Northern Ireland. It is a 'now of particular recognisability' which therefore cuts

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across three dimensions of presentness - the presence of the present, past and future: 'For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal one, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical... The image that is read - which is to say the image in the now of its recognisability - bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded' (Benjamin, 1999: 463, N31)

While Benjamin's description of an image-based historical sensibility as a mode of historical interpretation in the Arcades Project fails to critically differentiate between the past and 'what has been' and between the present and 'now' it nevertheless provocatively sets out how the readability of an image, its affective meaning, is shaped by an accentuated awareness of time as context. It is this complex interplay of past and present that is legible in the conversational exchange of the three events - in the memories provoked, the futures anticipated and in the descriptions of the present.<sup>9</sup>

Over the three events these different perspectives sometimes complementary and at other times contestatory not only point to the continued difficulties of speaking of Northern Ireland but also to a continued investment in photography as a representation of the real and its use in current political arrangements - since an iteration of photography's relation to the real can supply a visual supplement to the bifurcation of 'community'. It is this consideration of community which is enacted in the actual of face to face exchange, in which the details of what is said is addressed both in response to the images and to one another. It is a 'framing of sincerity' (Ellis, 2012: 51) which arguably repositions the methodological approach as documentary and as such inevitably encounters and provokes some of the criticisms and questions that attend the genre as an embodied form of storytelling, where documentary is understood not simply as a 'discursive construction but also as a constructing discourse' (Cowie, 2011:5). It is reasonable therefore to question to what degree recording the co-researchers' speech impacts on what is said and what remains unsaid, and while it is question without

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<sup>9</sup> Benjamin's concept of the 'dialectical image' is pertinent to this research as a process of thinking in images. For critical accounts of Benjamin's Arcades Project see: Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989 and Michael Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

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determinate answer it nevertheless extends a consideration of the ‘framing of sincerity’ by bringing into view the framing of each event, thematically and structurally in the assumption of inter-personal response to images that would make intelligible what is seen in narrative form.

There is thus a dimension to the ‘event of photography’ as methodology which in directing attention to what is seen in the images likewise calls into question whether what is seen is not already, in part, a production of the visible, insofar as the field of the visible is already mediated within a sectarian schema. This is not to suggest that this schema as the context of time and place of the three events prevents the breaking with this context – but rather to indicate how post Agreement ‘confers recognition through a set of norms that govern recognisability’ (Butler, 2005:25) where the citation effects of Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and loyalist not only dissembles a shared history but reproduces this dissemblance as history. Moreover this question of context as time and place mediated as both a critical and a decisively historical engagement at each ‘event of photography’ foregrounds the network of the co-researchers, where the range of disciplinary and political perspectives is intercalated with the images under discussion. It is therefore a curatorial framework which attempts to situate the agonistic in an effort to ‘brush history against the grain’ (Benjamin, 1968: 257) by staging how images are apprehended by ‘the sedimented reading habits and categories developed by [...] interpretative traditions’ (Jameson, 1983:x).

In this foregrounding of interpretation the images under discussion become a ‘problem-space of dispute’ and ‘of rival views’ (Scott, 2004:4) which vacillate between personal and historical memory, inlaid with uncertainty about what the future might be. However this emphasis on time and place is not to suppose that this research demonstrates the photograph as a source for historical research but to claim its contrary - the photograph as a source for debate on time and place, cathected by the act of viewing defining both content and affect. As such this research does not seek to either validate or discredit individual interpretation or to propose a new unitary way of reading photography post Agreement, but seeks to consider how the flow of arguments is both an inquiry into images and a contextualisation of post Agreement which both raises issues about the past and

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the future and is equally situated within the history it seeks to read. But just as the story may not be ‘worth telling in the context of a new present’ (Scott, 2004:51) staging the three events with different co-researchers would lead to a different conversation since ‘the event of photography is never over. It can only be suspended, caught in the anticipation of the next encounter’ (Azoulay, 2012:25).

While the conceptual idiom of ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) implies that the ‘event of photography’ as research design risks limiting the scope of the research, whereby the theoretical localism hinders more generalizable statements about the relationship between post Agreement and photography, it also arguably defines and uncovers the act of viewing as distinctly social, political, cultural and material. An uncovering of Benjamin’s ‘imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded’ which reveals not only the religious and political conflict of Northern Ireland but also the networks of global consumption, control and communication and the wider connotations of the impossibility of a non-excluding consensus on conceptions of nation, nationhood and the national.

In reading across the three events, from the closing question of Spectrality and Urbanism asked by the co-researcher Declan Long ‘where does this questioning take place - does it take place with picturing or conversations like this?’, to the retracing in Place as Archive of the route walked by the forensic teams in a field in Wilkinstown where the bodies of the Disappeared, Kevin McKee and Seamus Wright, are alleged to be buried, to the final question of Between Memory and Mourning asked by Colin Graham ‘what stage of mourning are we at?’, the cumulative effect emphasises the complex and uncertain memory of the present hindered by the irresolution of the past. Despite this, it would be mistaken to read the ‘texts’ produced by the events as either indeterminate or uncertain since in many ways the ‘texts’ are precisely historical, defined by the time and place of the events and prompted by the ‘now of particular recognisability’ of the photographs discussed. Nevertheless the closing question of the first event in charting a choice between picturing and conversation directly puts pressure on the principal design of this research, which is to ask what level of interdependency there is between what is said and what is seen. It is a question which not only highlights the moments when the images cease to be the overt point of reference but also how

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this speech extends the photographed moment in terms of a narrative both speculative and specific, as the following exchange in the second event, Place as Archive, generated in response to the David Farrell's image *The Swallowing Tree* demonstrates:

David Farrell: In 99 and 2000 you'd see the excavation of these sites on the news in the South yet when people started to get to know that I was making this work people would ask me how's your work in the North going. I always thought do you not listen, I mean one of these places is in Wicklow, two are in Meath, so we're not talking border counties. But it's as if it was psychologically pushed up to North of the border. I found that interesting and in a certain way it mirrors the whole experience of the Troubles in the South, being at one remove from it, even though you were affected by it and implicated in it.

Mark Hackett: I was born in 67 and growing up in the 70s and 80s there was always this feeling you might run into someone. While nothing happened in my area in Northern Ireland there was this persistent subtext that something could happen, an anxiety about who you might run into. There was very little criminal activity in the countryside during the Troubles because criminals going around up to no good were highly likely to be stopped. So that's one of the reasons why this would have happened in the South, because of the level of surveillance or the feeling of surveillance and control which was fairly palpable everywhere in Northern Ireland. Back then every time I left Northern Ireland I would feel like a huge weight lifted from my shoulders but much of that weight was actually just this feeling that nobody was going to be watching you or potentially stopping you.

John Byrne: Because the place was so policed from so many sides, State and non-State.



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David Farrell: And you noticed it in reverse. On the few occasions when we went North as a child you would notice that tension as you reached the border and that's the one thing that is very significant with the new motorway you barely notice a change, you just sail through travelling at speed.

Mark Hackett: Yes before it was so obvious not just with the change in road markings but with all the watchtowers on the hills

As this exchange indicates the photograph of *The Swallowing Tree* (Fig 1.1) is re-situated within the memory of the Troubles and the physical and policed division of north and south. Translated into the history and the biography of the lived experience the image not only gains another life, it is reframed and relocated in the lives of the co-researchers. In this coupling of image and response, image and text develop conjoined meaning in a culminating move that translates the image into a form of narrative and relocates the image from a regime of representation to its place within the circuit of language. What the opinions and experiences of the co-researchers provide is not simply the nuance and complexity involved when the autobiographic as the local, actual and lived experience is evoked, but also the exclusivist implications that the personal can propose - where the autobiographic assumes the status of non-contestable truth and insight, a having being there supplanting and foreclosing all other modes of comprehension. In this regard the 'event of photography' attempts to do more than simply project a way of seeing images as a kind of scaled up biography and is instead an attempt to express how photographs are caught within conceptual, theoretical, mnemonic and metaphoric use and uses of the visual and the different affective, psychic and political architectures built on ideas of vision, where vision is understood not simply as a synonym for sight, but as a political question of a desired future and cultural (be)longing.

By interposing the co-researchers as a frame of judgement – political, social and aesthetic – the staging of the 'event of photography' is concerned not only with the specificity of sight but also with the public dimension of exchange that discloses the complex nature of interpretation as both cultural transmission and translation. It is a complexity linked to an understanding of the present, where the

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preoccupations of post Agreement and the images' effects shift between a description of historical crisis and a proposition of a radically different future. As both a 'discursive construct' and a 'construction of discourse' the 'event of photography' stages an interrogative approach to images that makes salient questions of place, authorship and subjectivity. But in situating these critical questions in the thick description of the 'event of photography' is also to be alert to how the register of the co-researchers' exchange moves between 'a picture's structure.. its politics, to its agency, its voice, its life', that necessitates an understanding of 'where we are as speakers, as scholars or even observers when we move between these registers' (Elkins, 2011:11). The answer doubtless entails locating the 'event of photography' as the 'now of particular recognisability' replete with references to time, as the quoted exchange from *Place as Archive* demonstrates. Taken together these markers of time effect a sense of urgency, connecting the ordinary and the anecdotal to both the violent past of the Troubles and the uncertain disjuncture of 'post Agreement', both diagnostic and symptomatic of how speech is haunted by loss and the irrevocable and the promised temporal coherence of a future that is yet to come.

Taking into account the curatorial emphasis placed on the dialogical that the 'event of photography' stages I have in the chapters that follow for the most part quoted from the day's event as exchange rather than quote specific sentences attributed to a co-researcher. In this way it is hoped that the reader is better equipped to understand the dynamic that emerged and more able to judge the ways in which the material of the event, the conversation and the photographs, is further interrogated, added to and synthesised. In undertaking this I have followed up references made to other photographs and photographic practices in an attempt to reveal the complex ways that photographs speak to and resonate with images made elsewhere. In doing so, my interest is not in proposing a model of transnational photographic practice but is directed instead to the associative value of photographs in imagining the contemporary.

This thesis in considering images as productive sites of meaning and affect reverses the purely illustrative use of photography on the information booklet, *The Agreement*, distributed to every household in Northern Ireland in advance of the

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May 22nd referendum on the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Its cover image shows a woman, man and two children, a boy and a girl silhouetted against a sunset, overlaid with the text 'This Agreement is about Your Future. Please read it carefully. It's Your Decision'. The photograph '*Family standing on rock on beach at sunset, rear view, silhouette*' (Fig 1.2) taken in Cape Town, South Africa in 1996 by German photographer Roger Ellis appeals to normative ideas of 'family' and 'belonging'. But the use of the image to illustrate the referendum not only supposes that the image's meaning is stable irrespective of the context of publication, exhibition or audience, but also that the landscape of Cape Town can substitute for and be made equivalent to the landscape of Northern Ireland. Moreover this implication that the location could be anywhere, not only dehistoricises the specificity of a beach in Cape Town but leads to the more serious implication of denying the lived conditions and political, social and historical experience of South Africa.<sup>10</sup>

Countering this assumption of generic meaning this thesis re-centres the role that spectators and audiences to photography have, whose role, while no less decisive than curators and commissioners, has been for the most part elided and speechless. In an attempt to rebalance this asymmetry and to counter the assumption of an image's generic and generalisable meaning the 'event of photography' stages the social as an 'ethic of narrative hospitality' (Ricouer, 1996: 7) where the inter-subjective and inter-disciplinary not only tests the value of agonistic deliberation but in doing so indicates how interpretation produces the visible. As such it is a process which seeks to enable a critical recuperation of the indeterminacy of an image's meaning as an opportunity to mediate a different social formation, a counter-memory for the future, through a collective undertaking and a social framework that brings together a group of people who are constituted through the invitation to participate.

While the invitation to participate as co-researchers was carefully arranged and curated to ensure a breadth of disciplinary and community association, the social

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<sup>10</sup> While it could be argued that the use of the image '*Family standing on rock on beach at sunset, rear view, silhouette*' sought to draw connection to the ending of apartheid, the responses of the advertising agency, photographer and photo library in London would not support this – see: Richard West, "*It's your decision? The Good Friday agreement*", Source, Issue 15, Volume 5, Number 1, Summer 1998.

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proposed through the 'event of photography', its contingency, invited the co-researchers to contest the political determinations of community identity. To contest, in other words, the official story of the Troubles, the one encoded and handed down via the Agreement in the reduction and circumscription of 'our continuing and equally legitimate, political aspirations' which undergirds what has become the representational privilege accorded to both nationalism/republicanism and loyalism/unionism. It is also to consider the impact that the Troubles have had on Northern Irish photography, both thematically and formally. From the photographic representations of the Troubles held in the Belfast Exposed archive to the dominant media representations, which present the Troubles as communities living out an existential crisis against the backdrop of British army surveillance and checkpoints.

The following chapters Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning present the three stagings of the 'event of photography' where the work of the six photographers, John Duncan, Kai Olaf Hesse, Mary McIntyre, David Farrell, Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert is mediated by what is looked at, seen, noticed, observed, clarified and justified - an editing process that is produced by the co-researchers, the photographers and the images themselves. In this regard the 'event of photography' attempts to do more than simply ascribe to 'giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony' (Mouffe, 2007:5) by tracing the link between seeing and speaking that not only confirms the visual as a form of vocality, but does so in a way that reveals and registers the complexity of an image's affect and makes that complexity intelligible.

It is a research process which therefore attempts to uncover the relation between image and speech and to make synchronic the complex forms of time and presence of images and post Agreement; where the tension between subject and object of knowledge, fact and fiction, presence and absence, past and future is the substance of the discussions and the analytical space where speech is calculated both in its relation to keeping silent and as an ethical relation of Self and Other. As the circumstance for a localised critique of 'post-Agreement', the social and relational dynamic of staging the 'event of photography' also gives rise to the disruption of

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the categories nationalist and loyalist identity, whereby the politics of identity and difference in all its intricate institutional and affective dimensions is recalibrated to an imagination of what is to be done otherwise. Moreover across the three events different approaches to images are generated by the range of disciplines and critical interests of the co-researchers, whereby what is said is not simply in response to the images but also in response to ‘the proximate sense of an interpreting community’ (Edwards, 2009:44). It is a social and relational dynamic which not only moves between the private and the public dimensions of the ‘act of viewing’ recorded in the shifts in discussion from responses to specific images to responses tangentially connected to specific images, but moves also between moments of agreement and disagreement.

Through tracing the translation of perception to description, seeing to speaking as the sentient effects of photographs, the following chapters consider how the framework of the ‘event of photography’ opens a space for the inter-disciplinary and inter-personal that foregrounds the agonistic without acceding to or being caught within the Agreement’s binary logic that underwrites claims on the future as culturally and historically distinct and determinate. Each of the thematic conjunctions – Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning – is examined through the reflection on photographic practice, philosophical and political discourses, as well as the analysis of what is said by the co-researchers. At key points within the thesis my own curatorial practice is brought into play to counterbalance and hinge these discourses with the situated practice of curated research. In this way a number of voices are combined in the act of thinking through the relationship between the photography and audience, those of art history, art criticism, art theory, political theory, and philosophy and in so doing reveal how images as productive sites of meaning and affect which make apparent ‘thought as felt and feeling as thought’ (Williams, 1977:131). This grounding of interpretation in the experience of looking at images explores the manifold ways that images speak, where what is seen is modulated and mediated by the political, social, cultural and personal histories of the viewer. In locating the images within the lives of the co-researchers the ‘event of photography’ not only generates an inquiry into an images affect and resonance as ‘the now of particular recognisability’, but does so by making apparent how the dynamic of recognition

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and non-recognition is linked to the political organisation of the social life of Northern Ireland that claims identity as historically determinate. It therefore assumes that the methodology of staging the 'event of photography' to investigate the different figurations and strategies of interpretation, also opens an analytical and discursive space to consider post Agreement as a distance from the Troubles and its administrative continuation.

This thesis is an exploration of the 'event of photography' as both a mode of engagement and cultural production, where 'the now of particular recognisability' interrupts and interrogates the complex temporalities and meanings of both photography and post Agreement. This bifurcation of the research project – on photography and post Agreement – is an effort to explore meaning as a contested process, where the dynamics of looking at images brings into view the cultural life of post Agreement and the limitations of the critical discourses and the reductive categories of loyalist and nationalist. In many ways it is a research process which extends the line of argument of the evidential use of photographs that 'can lead you to believe the abstract tale that I've told you has a real, flesh and blood life' (Becker, 2002:11) by analysing the evidence of viewing photographs as a dialogic and agonistic process. As such it sets out a use of photographs as a visual and discursive space and as a channel through which 'collective passions will be given ways to express themselves over issues which, while allowing enough possibility for identification, will not construct the opponent as an enemy but as an adversary' (Mouffe, 2009: 103).

By making images the primary object of investigation and conversation the primary medium of enquiry the 'event of photography' both enables affective meanings to be contested and negotiated and provides an analytical framework for the consideration of the cultural politics of post Agreement. This is not to suggest that at each event all possible viewpoints were spoken but is instead to suggest how the 'event of photography' as a critical research method generates thinking and questioning, negotiation and disagreement whereby the images become the material resource of understanding, identification and disruption. It is a process which therefore seeks to connect affect with meaning-making that intertwines with the social dynamic and immediacy of conversational praxis. In this emphasis

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affective meaning making not only ‘solicits reengagement with the politics of viewing’ (Brown and Phu, 2014:7) but by doing so through the dialogical framework of the ‘event of photography’ reveals how affect is made the subject of persuasion, negotiation and refusal as a complex relation between images and words, seeing and speaking which demonstrates ‘ways of seeing’ as an affective practice that is both open to revision, agreement and objection<sup>11</sup>. It is therefore a methodological approach which undertakes to explore an image’s affective meaning as a combination of ‘feeling photography’ (Brown and Phu, 2014) and ‘thinking photography’ (Burgin, 1982). A combination which seeks to hold in check an overdetermination of thinking or feeling by stressing the relational, dialogical and distributed aspects of meaning making.

The following chapters explore each event singularly in an effort to explore the integrity of the dialogical process as a social dynamic of intersubjective and interdisciplinary exchange and the conceptualisation of each group of co-researchers as a temporary discursive community.

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<sup>11</sup> For an example of the increased attention afforded to affect as a counterpoint to the materialist project of ‘thinking’ photography see: Elspeth H Brown and Thy Phu (eds) *Feeling Photography*, Duke University Press, 2014. For a critical consideration of analyses of affect and emotion in cultural studies, cultural history and social science see: Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Routledge, 2004 and Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012 and for a consideration of contemporary theories of affect see: Melissa Gregg and Gregory J Seigworth (eds) *The Affect Theory Reader*, Duke University Press, 2010 and Patricia Clough and Jean Halley (eds) *The Affective Turn, Theorising the Social*, Duke University Press, 2007.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Spectrality and Urbanism**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The curatorial frame of spectrality and urbanism attempts to consider the manner in which city life and its history transect in the images of John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse. Taking the city of Belfast as the principal object of the images, the theme of spectrality and urbanism sought to explore how the spatial serves as both the horizon of the political imaginary and the stage of political action. In particular the combining of spectrality and urbanism was an endeavour to understand in what ways the projected and situated identity politics of nationalism and loyalism redesign and fragment the geopolitics of the city. As such the curatorial frame of the event sought to explore how spectrality and urbanism might be understood as a constitutive feature of this fragmentation rather than its secondary effect.

Given the numerous forms and iterations through which the spectre and spectrality have been considered within literature and notably invoked by Marx and revised by Derrida<sup>12</sup>, my use of the term spectrality was intended as a way to put pressure on questions of time and presence, in order to unsettle the chronological logic of past, present and future and the antinomy of absence and presence. Nevertheless my curatorial concern was to keep this field of interpretation open, in order to understand what spectres were invoked that spoke to the present as being out of place and time. In part this might be taken as no more than a reflection of the open ended nature of the curated research. But it was also intended as a mechanism to understand how the idea of the spectre, as a trope of haunting is inflected in an

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<sup>12</sup> The use of the 'spectre' by Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* provides the critical source for Derrida's *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (Routledge Classics) 2006, which reconceives the relationship between Marxism and deconstruction. For a comprehensive analysis of the political effect and disputes that have emerged in response see: Michael Sprinker (ed), *Ghostly Demarcations - A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, Verso 1999.



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engagement with the spatialities and temporalities of city life, to prompt a consideration of how John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse's images of city spaces uncovers visual and narrative tropes of spectrality. It is an attempt to understand in what ways the double of spectrality and urbanism when understood as the conditions of the city and as scenarios for looking again at the city, might subvert the symmetry of self/other, inside/outside, us/them in order to think beyond or between the sectarian spatial and temporal logics of Belfast. A subversion that similarly questions an administrative policy that designs and manages the segregation of the urban space to assert the ubiquity of loyalism and nationalism as urban categories of social life.

To this end I chose not to offer any conceptual specification for the terms spectrality and urbanism in order that the co-researchers would speak from their own understandings and approaches relevant to and informed by their critical and disciplinary interests, relation to Belfast and interpretation provoked by photography. In this way the event sought to situate the photographs of John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse within the convergences and intersections of the disciplinary, the political and the social in order to make complex the apprehension of loyalism and nationalism as historically determinate designations.

However this is not to suggest that the curatorial approach of spectrality and urbanism sought to either negate the lived realities of segregation and structural inequality, or to reconfigure the cityspace as a 'homogeneous empty time' (Anderson, 2006:25), instead it attempts to see if the topos of mapping could provide a useful corrective to the modulations and mediations of denied recognition. In other words to consider how urbanism regulates ideas of us and them, private and public, the political and the social and how spectrality usefully articulates the aporetic and the agonistic to put pressure on the supposed historicism of loyalism and nationalism. As such spectrality and urbanism, notwithstanding the ways in which both these terms are laden with their own histories of contested meaning and usage, are intended as a means through which spectrality as the uncanny and the unhomely is central to a consideration of the ways in which the sequestration of the city emerges in narratives of the present.

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In thematically constructing the event under this double heading, the curatorial intention unfolds along two interlinked trajectories: to put pressure on the contemporaneity and synchronicity of sectarianism and urban development and to open a space through which the proximity of us and them, same and other, past and future might be rethought and remapped by the co-researchers. It is therefore an attempt to disrupt the temporal and spatial rhetorics of the city in order to foreground a critical space for the co-researchers to approach the photographs and the city without the guarantee of direction.

Consequently the arguments that follow explore the specific photographic experience of the co-researchers: to consider how the images of John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse operate in the ideological and cultural space of the city. The co-researchers commentary on the photographs is used then to make broader assertions about the complex specifics of the local and the particular that throws light on the dynamics of urban development intended to subsume the histories of violence. In drawing together the work of John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse was equally to consider how tensions between the old and the new, patterns of neglect and redevelopment provide a set of alternate directions and coordinates with which to navigate the city - the hidden spaces of private lives and the neglected histories – that counter the official maps and strategic plans for the city.

As a form of remapping the city whose coordinates are determined by the pragmatics and aggregates of the co-researchers exchange, it is similarly an attempt to productively read cultural uncertainty as an interstitial space ‘where between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:28). In proposing the exchange of the co-researchers as an example of this ‘transversal movement’ between multiple perspectives, the following account and analysis of the event also seeks to explore how the affective meanings of the images set in focus the contingency of the present.

In proposing this remapping of the city as a productive matrix across space and time, that is in part a political task that discloses proximity, and a social task that

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recognises alterity, is also an effort to make apparent the range of differential knowledges of the city, of the lived and the imagined. It is a process that looks to the markers of segregation of Protestant/Loyalist and Catholic/Nationalist as the circumstance of cultural uncertainty rather than cultural definition. While this latter point on first reading may appear to be a pacification of the worst excesses of segregation or a negation of the violent political and social histories of the city, it is intended as a productive negotiation between the strategies of self/other, us/them, inside/outside. As such cultural uncertainty is mobilised as a critical method to unmask the spatial and temporal politics of segregation as the assurance of distance in proximity that the peace line walls make physically legible. In this regard the conjoining of the ideas of the spectre and the urban interlock time and space, as a complex strategy of social and political reference, where the social and the political assume a locational identity within the spatial and temporal politics of the city.

Spectrality and urbanism is therefore both a curatorial framework and an analytical framing of John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse's images, which assumes the necessity of adopting a perspectival stance that involves otherness, distance and proximity and foregrounds the city as a set of spatial and temporal practices. It is a conjunction that encourages an approach to the city in response to photography, that is neither exclusively spectral or exclusively urbanist, but is instead marked by this double of a haunted futurity, as that which is past and not yet arrived. It therefore moves beyond an articulation of the ways in which the cultural and political difference proposed by Protestantism/Loyalism and Catholicism/Nationalism metonymically function in the name of the nation Britain and Ireland to consider the spectre of republicanism as a social and political project of a future yet to come that complicates and interrupts the discourse of nations and similarly interrupts the supposed correspondence between urban development and progress. In so doing it claims an analytical and conceptual need for the space of the city to be unbounded from the sectarian cartography or the administrative fiat of Ciaran Carson's melancholic projection and introspection of 'the city is a map of the city'(Carson, 1989: 69).

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The curatorial intention to see how the co-researchers response to the images might transect and deviate from the tribal cartography of sectarianism and urban redevelopment was also an attempt to understand in what ways the images of John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse hold attention at the critical intersection of sectarianism and urban redevelopment. This dual aspiration places this chapter in a curious critical position, necessitating the space for the divergent opinions of the co-researchers while at the same time focusing those critical energies on the collective object of the study, the photographs of John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse. What arises is the dissolution of the two terms, spectrality and urbanism into one way of seeing; a dialectical synthesis which is significant, insofar as it suggests the attempt to speak of Belfast as an urban space is intimately connected to an attempt to speak of the city's histories and imagined futures. Similarly it was not my interest to create a unitary discourse of the post Agreement moment, nor to suppose that post Agreement presents a moment in the linear construction of the city's histories, that is preceded by the 'Troubles' and 'Agreement'. Instead it was to see how spectrality might be usefully deployed as both an intervention and interruption in the teleological idea of progress that 'post Agreement' proposes and to consider what implications this has for an understanding of the city's urban fabric.

But in pursuing the idea of the spectre and spectrality I am equally cautious of not invoking a 'generalised economy of haunting' (Luckhurst, 2002: 534), that obstructs a more detailed sense and sensitivity toward the particular social, political and cultural conditions of the city and fails 'to risk the violence of reading the ghost, of cracking open its absent presence to answer the demand of its specific symptomatology and its specific locale' (2002:542). It is also to note the overlap between the use of the term spectrality and the spectral qualities of the photograph, which in the disruption of the temporal and spatial logics of chronology, and the simultaneity of critical distance and proximate scrutiny, absence and presence similarly describes the lived experience of residential segregation in the city. As such the use of the term spectrality is proposed as a mechanism through which to investigate how the cityspace is cognitively mapped,

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equally wary of over-determining symptomatology or location in a repeat of the Manichean division of Protestant/Loyalist and Catholic/Nationalist as origin and explanation. In the narrowest subdisciplinary and broadest transdisciplinary sense, then, the curatorial and analytic framework of spectrality and urbanism pursues via the work of John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse an urban geography of the spectral to challenge the established binaries of us and them, self and other, while maintaining the primary principle of ethical responsibility to the other, as other than self.

In an effort to attend to the rhythm of the event the following account and analysis corresponds to the flow of the day, commencing with a discussion generated by John Duncan's photographs and concluding with Kai Olaf Hesse. An alternative structuring of this chapter could have followed the model of Derrida's *Glas* (1974), and kept the events of discussion separate. In selecting an essay form, constructed at the intersection of the event and my analysis, the hope is that the reader is better equipped to critically judge my responses intended as an extended consideration of some of the issues that arise.

The event was hosted at Belfast Exposed, a city centre photography gallery located in the Cathedral Quarter, on Friday February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The co-researchers invited to respond were: Declan Long, visual arts lecturer, National College of Art and Design, Dublin; Ruairi O' Cuiv, public art manager for Dublin City Council; Siún Hanrahan, visual arts researcher, Belfast; Trish Lambe, curator, Gallery of Photography, Dublin; Gerry Tubritt, community development worker, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, Belfast; Fergus Jordan, photographer, Belfast; Daniel Jewesbury, visual arts lecturer, University of Ulster, Belfast; Christa Maria Lerm Hayes, visual arts lecturer, University of Ulster, Belfast; Andrew Finlay, sociology lecturer, Trinity College Dublin and; Dessie Donnelly, Director, PPR - Participation and Practice of Rights, Belfast.

In assembling the co-researchers I sought to put together a group that could enable discussion across several points of interest – the perspective of community development workers, art historians, photography and public art practitioners,

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curation, sociology and critical theory. In putting together this group I also chose co-researchers from the North and South – both Northern Irish who now live and work in the South (Declan Long and Andrew Finlay) and co-researchers who are from the South (Ruairi O’Cuiv and Trish Lambe) - in order that the urban development of Belfast might be understood from the perspectives of distance and proximity, both physical and psychological, and the perspectives of lived and reported experience. This curatorial action was intended as a response to the photographic perspectives of John Duncan a Belfast based photographer and Kai Olaf Hesse a German photographer, as the local and the international, in order to bring into play the temporal and cultural dimension of how knowledge is produced, represented, translated and contested.

### **2.2 Spectrality and Urbanism**

John Duncan’s introduction to his photographs of Belfast recounted a personal relationship to the city, while acknowledging that the proposed theme of the discussion has implications that go beyond the autobiographical, as the following response to the curatorial brief demonstrates:

To consider my practice in terms of spectrality and urbanism, to think about Belfast’s industrial history and the spectre of civil strife that continues to contour and shape the cityscape and its future is a slightly unusual or a different starting point for me to talk about my work. The talks that I’ve done up until now usually consist of this is how I got started, these are the people who influenced me, this is the first project and on to more recent work. (Duncan)<sup>13</sup>

What is immediately striking about Duncan’s response is how the framing of the event disrupts what he defines as his more chronological approach to talking about

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<sup>13</sup> All quotes from the photographers and co-researchers are taken from the recorded transcripts of the event and are attributed with the name of the speaker throughout the chapter.

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his work. In setting aside 'how I got started, these are the people who influenced me' as the primary descriptors and a more or less impeded autobiography, Duncan attempts to place his photographs on a more nuanced and substantial footing than the familiar tradition of biographical detail permits. This is of course not to suggest that the biographical detail is not as significant a fact as any other but rather to consider how the 'slightly unusual or different starting point' accentuates the way in which the city incorporates personal memories and symbolic landscapes.

In the series from 1995, *Fast Friend Les Dawson* Duncan maps the city through marginalia, the neglected and abandoned items left on the streets or the numerous red paint marks of a child's hand that remain on a wall (Fig 2.1). The title photograph of the series (Fig 2.2) shows a map drawn in biro on a piece of discarded cardboard which once boxed Stormcote masonry paint. The map offers some clues to place; it names King Street, proposes a location of a Church and a Fire, and proposes a rendezvous site at a junction to the north of King Street. This site marked with a hastily drawn cross suggests that either this is where Fast Friend Les Dawson can be found or that these directions are drawn for his/her attention. The ambiguity of the map suggests a range of possible meanings and interpretations; that Les Dawson is a misspelling and that it should read Les Dawson, the name of the British comedian who hosted the television game show *Fast Friends* that aired for one series on BBC One in 1991, or that the word Fire refers to the site of the premature detonation of a car bomb on December 1, 1975 that killed IRA members Paul Fox and Laura Crawford, or the site of two car bombs on King Street on Wednesday 9th December 1992 and Fast Friend Les Dawson is the innocuous sounding codename for the operation, or a mocking reference to the gameshow's repeated question Who have you elected as your team leader? Each possible meaning that the photograph produces opens an entirely different urban scenario, from the innocent and playful to the threat and execution of violence, relocating the map at the fractious juncture between two social realities of the city: the benevolent and the malign. It is a range of explanations and readings of the discarded map that are informed not simply by

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the content of the photograph but by the histories of Belfast, that charges the ephemeral with symbolic meaning.

From mapping the city through the ephemeral, Duncan's *Trees From Germany* (2003) commissioned by Belfast Exposed utilises the official maps, the Metropolitan Area Plan and the Belfast City Centre Public Realm Strategy as walking guides. It is a critical response to the city-as-image proposed by the official planning and redesigns for the city which presents a 'different mindset to my previous picture making strategies which were more intuitive and more engaged with the periphery of the city, for example in the series *Fast Friend Les Dawson*' (Duncan). This alternate mapping of the city's centre, nevertheless focusses on the marginalia of reconstruction, including the eponymous *Trees from Germany*, imported and planted as part of the city's reconstruction as a landscaped urban centre which both indicate and signal an accelerated and hyper real urban development, where the importation of instant landscaping makes complex and more ambivalent the city as a production of time and space and the realisation of city as form.

One photograph from this series shows the interior courtyard of a new development complex of private housing, the South Studios on the Tates Avenue in Belfast (Fig 2.3). Duncan describes his interest in accessing the interior as a perspective on the city 'I began to think more about the interior private space...as a kind of new city space and gated community' (Duncan). The photograph looks out from a recessed elevated courtyard toward the mountains. In the left hand corner of the photograph can be glimpsed the top of a bonfire, built and burnt annually by the Loyalist community on the evening of July 11<sup>th</sup> to commemorate and celebrate the Battle of Boyne victory in 1690 that secured the continuation of Protestant and English rule in Ireland. Duncan explains 'initially with this photograph I was uncertain if the top of the bonfire would be visible from inside the apartments, but once inside I knew it was what I wanted to focus on' (Duncan). This focus interrupts the view of the mountains and similarly intrudes on the enclosed private landscaped courtyard, repurposing an understanding of the enclave architecture as a desire and design for security and a restriction on



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physical neighbourliness. Within the photograph the spatial logic of both the July 11th bonfire and the apartment block overlap in shaping the geopolitics of the city as a continued contestation over frontiers. The compositional arrangement of the photograph not only attests to the ability of an image to offer a vista over the city unbounded by the territorial logics of occupation, but in doing so resets the courtyard as a hidden scopic space of surveillance and shelter that alludes to the problematic of seeing/being seen. It is a resemblance that shapes Duncan's response to the city indicating how conflict is about destruction as well as construction, as these new builds of seclusion and introversion take on a life within new cartographies of conflict. Interestingly in the conversation generated by this photograph the name of the apartment complex, South Studios, was mistaken for South Facing Studios, suggesting a turning away from looking at the North.

Gerry Tubritt: Some of your photographs around bonfires kind of struck a chord with me because a lot of the work that I do is about friction within communities. One of the new frictions in the last 15 years has been about economics and not about sectarianism as developers build these private developments on interfaces or in single identity communities, like the South Facing Studios. Real tensions are being created in these areas, with some of the people who have moved into those communities objecting to the flags and the bonfires where there were never any objections before. I think the photographs show these tensions, it's certainly what I see in them.

John Duncan: Well I think the South Facing Studios is a definite example of that. It would have been a very traditional loyalist area. In the catalogue essay for the project David Brett describes

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it as a kind of a cruise liner having been floated in, as an almost alien thing.<sup>14</sup>

Gerry Tubritt: And I think that the sense of alienation of the Protestant community in Belfast, which we can see in the flags protest at the moment, was exacerbated by the fact that these massive developments were turning up in what they saw as their territory and yet they could never have them, they could never live in them because they couldn't afford them. This has exacerbated the sense of alienation for loyalists within this city. It's one of the real effects of recent development

Dessie Donnelly: I think what stands out for me is the response to this very normalised process of capital development and gentrification that is happening in working class communities around the city centre and how this response here in the discussion with the different communities to that development, which also comes out visually with the images, is this sense of loyalist working class alienation and loyalists not knowing how to respond to the change.

You'll find in republican communities that the change is more embraced and this has to do more with the dynamics of leadership within the contrasting communities than actual benefits. It is to be embraced in the republican communities because it's understood as progress for us, despite the fact that this process of gentrification is actually not benefitting either working class community. If you look at statistics on unemployment and suicide in republican areas, they're just as high if not higher than loyalist areas, but you don't have the same reaction to development.

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<sup>14</sup> See David Brett 'The Spaces in Between' in John Duncan, *Trees From Germany*, Belfast Exposed Photography, 2003.

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This exchange which stresses uneven development and uneven response to development also suggests the ways in which economic inequality is mediated in the cultural politics of the city; split between a loyalist and a nationalist response. This mediation of change, while understood as overwriting the histories of sectarianism, nevertheless retains the division of Protestant/Loyalist and Catholic/Nationalist.

What is notable in this exchange between the community development workers Gerry Tubritt and Dessie Donnelly is the way in which the histories of loyalism and nationalism fractures a working class response to the urban development, proposed as a consequence of differing dynamics of leadership and explained by the impact of the sense of alienation. It is an argument which not only reveals the splits and division within the city's working class but does so by ascribing and locating this division within the political claims of nationalism and loyalism. What is striking is that while the argument presents the friction of the last 15 years as economic, it does so through a repetition of the differentiation of nationalism and loyalism. The potentially subversive question of the 'working class' remains unrealised 'despite the fact that this process of gentrification is actually not benefitting either working class community' (Donnelly). While the affective consequence for both communities is experienced as unemployment and suicide, the social and political histories of sectarianism are mediated to block any emergent cultural identification of the 'working class' as a discursive and political strategy. As such it describes how the potential for contiguous meaning is resignified as distinct experiences for loyalists and nationalists in part by the 'dynamics of leadership in the contrasting communities' (Donnelly).

This proximity recalculated as distance replicates the displacement of identification in the photograph of the South Studios apartments. The planned landscape of the courtyard with its heterotopic promise of enclave living and uninterrupted views of the mountain is fractured by the bonfire as a reminder of the streets below as 'their territory' (Tubritt). The intrusion of the top of the bonfire pyre, with a UVF flag in the left hand frame of the photograph disrupts the revised image of the city, producing a composite image of the cityscape that is

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equally about development and consumerism as it is segregation and sectarianism. In this close reading between context and what is within the frame, Tubritt and Donnelly's exchange points to how response to urban development is constructed to reinforce the singularities of 'class', 'religion' and 'nation' as primary conceptual, territorial and organisational categories, whereby identity as difference is mediated by an urban development that draws on both the real and the imaginary city. But this exchange also points to the difficulties of 'speaking on behalf of' as it mandates a dialogical positioning that is predicated on the two community model. In doing so the exchange turns toward explanation which given the lived experience of segregation commences with a positioning of us/them as Protestant/Catholic and loyalist/nationalist. The contestation over urban space reformed in the language of social, economic and temporal estrangement resonates in the description of loyalist working class alienation that focuses attention on competing claims for resources and recognition.

However in the exchange there is a range of analyses proposed by the term 'alienation': Duncan repeats David Brett's description of South Studios 'as an almost alien thing' which suggests the de-territorialisation provoked by the apartment complex effects a becoming-other upon the loyalist community; Tubritt describes it as a combined social, cultural and political estrangement and Donnelly registers it as an effect of 'the dynamics of leadership'. What this range of descriptions share is an account of the loyalist response to urban development as giving way to a becoming alien. However, the social and political potentiality of 'becoming minoritarian' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004:118) as a site of radicalism which could seed a different set of political identification within the city, conversely threatens to restate the spatial politics of working class loyalism as a territorial claim 'which we can see in the flags protest at the moment' (Tubritt). It is perhaps this risk of being premised on an essentialism that shifts attention from 'becoming minoritarian' to the predicament of minoritarian belonging that is the cause of the dispute in the following discussion about the Protestant working class:

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Andrew Finlay: I teach sociology, I'm a kind of an anthropologist and when I was watching the images, I wasn't getting a big sociological hit, though I can see a certain reading of the Protestant community through these images. But the way I was responding was very much more personal, memories that some of the images recalled, recognition of places, recognition of events and demonstrations and some of that is really quite strong, some things more strong than others

Siún Hanrahan: Can I come back to Andrew's earlier comment because in some senses your comment was intriguing. It was that you didn't see in the images the sociological, and that your response was very much at personal level. Whereas from the perspective of a lot of people round the table, the sense of the work opening onto questions around society, social relations and onto the sense of the person and their experience of that space is where a lot of us would start making sense of the images. So I think it's really interesting in the context of this discussion to hear that not being there for you and why it's not there

Andrew Finlay: I can see it but it's not how I responded. I can see it when it's pointed out to me and it makes sense to me because I'm familiar with the sociological kind of stuff. So it does make sense to me when it's pointed out to me, so there's that. I guess there's some part of me which is a bit resistant because then I want to go into an argumentative mode in the sense of it not being good sociology, with the use of terms like alienation and so on and that's the bit that I would kind of want to pull back from

Kai Olaf Hesse: I think that what it comes down to is that you're just not used to that kind of language

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Andrew Finlay:        Except I'm not hearing photographic language, there was art practice language which I kind of enjoy as a spectator and appreciate but the sociological language I'm very familiar with and recoil from.

This recoil from the use of sociological language points to a mistrust in turning to photographs as a reference for the complex social relations of the city. Finlay's critique of this mode of sociological explanation and interpretation as an assumed language that usefully describes an image's meaning, contrasts with the value he affirms in the personal resonance, the 'recognition of places, recognition of events'.

While Hanrahan identifies how the photographs open a space for the subjective contemplation of the histories of the city that directly engages with questions of social relations, Finlay's challenge is that the replication of a sociological language is a weakened form of sociology. It is a challenge to the conceptual terms used, which counters Hanrahan's response to the images 'as specialised generalisations, which invite us to generalise' (Becker, 2011:11). As such it separates the discursive terrains of art practice and the sociological, whereby the use of sociological language is understood as an appropriated form of photography criticism. On the one hand this could be read as a technical objection to an imprecise use of sociological interpretation, but Finlay's objection to the 'use of terms like alienation' points to a more specific set of concerns that this mode of reading produces. An objection, which in part is responsive to this sense of weakened sociology, but equally can be understood as a political objection to alienation proposed as 'becoming minoritarian' which runs the risk of privileging particular identities or groups. It therefore suggests that the cultural politics of alienation, when conceived as marginality and as the sign of disadvantage and the symptom of social vilification replays the deterministic polarisation of the city as competing identity claims. This awareness signals back to the co-researchers presence as spectators and their active role in 'making sense of the images' (Hanrahan) indicating that the dispute over the use of 'sociological language' is both an argument about translation, authority and legitimacy and the ways in

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which the loyalist working class are imaged and imagined. Despite the qualifying connection 'from the perspectives of a lot of people around the table' (Hanrahan) the images expose the link between perspective, situated place and the subject and subjectivities of the city:

Fergus Jordan:           Where I live in the Lower Ravenhill in East Belfast there's a social housing development .You see the intentional intimidation through erecting flags right at the edge of a site where apartment blocks are going up. But these 60 dwellings, these houses are social housing, yet the same type of threat is there as if some unknown entity is going to move into the community. You can see the same thing that you see in John's photographs, even before the apartment block is built, this declaration that this is a loyalist area and this fear of people moving into the area and buying up the community.

John Duncan:           In the Lower Shankill that sense of objection was quite active. Down the side of one of the developer's signboards it was written we don't want your yuppie apartments

Gerry Tubritt:           I think there's a great deal of resentment about these developments, including the new social housing developments and the fact that the community has no control over who goes into it.

Fergus Jordan:           Yeah, because it's about equality.

Gerry Tubritt:           Yes, it's about equality, there's a statutory requirement about housing need, so they can't dictate who lives in those communities.

What is clear in this exchange is how the political claims of loyalism work across the city space as territorial and territorialising inscriptions. The specificity of the identity categories Protestant and Loyalist stand in reproach to the collective

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identification of working class ‘they can’t dictate who lives in those communities’ and similarly stand in as an identifier of working class resistance to gentrification, ‘we don’t want your yuppie apartments’. It points to how in ‘making sense of the images’ in the language of cultural description, there is a tension between justification - ‘the community has no control’ - and explanation - ‘they can’t dictate who lives in those communities’. But this double movement of justification and explanation, knowledge ‘that’ and knowledge ‘of’, as an attempt to produce coherency has the potential to elide the contradictory and the ambivalent and risks producing ethnocentricity as its narrative. Indeed it points to the challenge of the discussion where the city as the subject and sectarianism as the object resurface in different forms: as historical explanation, sociological consequence and psychological apprehension. This is not to suggest that Tubritt’s description is intent on reproducing this logic, but instead to point to how the framing of speaking ‘on behalf of’ constructs perspective as an epistemological base to speak ‘for’.

This intersection of justification and explanation as a form of identity and expectation is explored with Duncan’s topographical survey of over 100 photographs of developers’ signboards, which he began in 1999. In this series of photographs the contestation over land as territory and urban development as progress is made explicit, where the use of flags as ‘intentional intimidation’ (Jordan), combines with the developers signboards of a future yet to be built (Fig 2.4). The union flag and red hand of ulster flag that frames the developers’ board visually and spatially asserts who the future inhabitants can be, presenting a future not yet lived in, but one that is tensed to the history of city. This sense of claustrophobia and entrapment that the flags assert is further accentuated by the layering of photography, as the photograph is itself a photograph of the design of the future on the developer’s board. This tension between the developer’s signboard that projects a future that displaces the past, and the flags which displace the developer’s future, reveal a contestation and uncertainty about the present. What is obscured by this fictional future and the symbolic geography of unionism/loyalism is a view of the cityscape, suggesting that the city is already



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doubly mapped both by the coordinates of sectarianism and the fantasia of development. In addition to this assertion of a political and spatial rhetoric of continuity (the flags) and discontinuity (the new build) there is also the ghostly effect of an incomplete construction which could be mistaken for the ruins of a bombed out home. It is a foreboding photograph that dramatises the tensions of the present, with the repeated presence of a photograph in a photograph laying bare the representations of the city and the political, economic and spatial claims to cultural priority. This repeated presence moves discussion beyond the cultural description of identity as expectation and explanation, to a question of the city-as-image. It is a question that brings into play the double of spectrality and urbanism as a movement between cultural memory and desire, ambivalence and contradiction, the real and the fictive.

Fergus Jordan: For me there are two levels of reading, there's the localised knowledge dealing more in relation to conflict and post conflict but there's also the broader dialogue. For me, your work reflects ideas about American photography, kind of 20th century Stephen Shore<sup>15</sup> type work and those types of comparisons..... in your work there's this kind of clinical quality colliding with a very serious social topic.

Declan Long: But isn't that precisely the issue, that there isn't really a contrast in the work between a kind of slick manufactured place and a more authentic landscape beyond where the real problems are. For me part of the essential problematic of this work is how we construct an image of a locality or a landscape from any of these positions, or any of these perspectives. Although of course there is a position from which you photograph, the internal view of the new development out onto the tip of the bonfire is a framing

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<sup>15</sup> Stephen Shore is an American photographer who combines the use of large-format colour photography and a topographical approach to the contemporary US landscape. For online portfolio see: <http://stephenshore.net/index.php>

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context for the photographer to see something. In a really important way a lot of your work seems self-referential, it can't stop asking how this place could be photographed.

The sign board project is particularly good in that regard because in the Tate's Avenue photograph, right in the middle of that picture where there should be a view out to the authentic landscape, there's a picture of a vision of the landscape but it's still in a photograph. It's a photograph of a design that's on a photograph, on a panel, much as your own image is on a panel. Neither is more real than the other and in each of the other images there seems to be some way in which by setting out distance and horizon and so on there's a very careful sense of this as landscape and as photography, while there's also a kind of troubling of what photography would be. It's always haunted by other images from Belfast, haunted by images from America and there's always a kind of haunting of what this image could be, by all the other images it could be.

Jordan and Long in shifting the focus away from cultural description open a conceptual space from which to consider not only the surface meaning of a photograph, but also the submerged histories of photography, which makes complex perspective and visibility. These submerged histories not only revise the sense of context by placing the photograph at the intersections and interstices of other images, it locates the photograph in this disjunct moment as a 'kind of troubling of what photography would be' (Long), which complicates the idea of a photograph as an '*experience* of the past' (Edwards, 2001:125) through a restless apprehension and haunting of 'what this image could be'. In Long's account not only does the photograph of the developer's signboard (Fig 2.4) provide a visual comprehension of the city through which Belfast's sectarian geography is rearranged, revealing discontinuities and continuities of distance and proximity, it does so through a double address to landscape and photography. It is this double

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address which denies the contrast between recent development and a supposedly more authentic landscape, which problematises and questions perspective as identification. It is a critical reflexivity, the 'troubling of what photography would be', which similarly troubles any discursive strategy of 'making sense of'.

In probing this experience of 'making sense' in the complex figures of doubling - presence and absence, real and fictive, difference and identity, horizon and distance Long both troubles the city-as-image and the present as either a break or bonding with the past. Likewise the haunting by other images of Belfast, of America and by 'what this image could be' not only complicates interpretation as 'making sense of' by revealing the conceptual and temporal indeterminacy of a photograph, it similarly re-presents Belfast as a process of multiple perspectives. It is a haunting which differs from the comparative model suggested by the topographical approach of a '20<sup>th</sup> century Stephen Shore type of work', since haunting contests the construction of 'an image of a locality or a landscape from any of these positions, or any of these perspectives' (Long).

Nevertheless it is notable that this turn toward a discussion of photographs as a conceptual and disputed space arises in response to Duncan's photographic series of work, the archive of over 100 developer's signboards. Part archive and part survey, the series foregrounds a topographical interest that articulates, across the repetition of the signboards, the construction of city-as-image. The signboards generalised through this repetition assume an equivalence of meaning as markers of a city under construction. In this they share a similarity to Duncan's *Bonfires* (2008), a photographic series that documents the construction of bonfires around the city in July. With both series the photographs are taken before the main event, the completed development and the torching of the bonfire on the evening of July 11<sup>th</sup>.

In reversing the trajectory of David Company's 'aftermath' image (2003), the images detail the construction of the bonfires as markers of place as territory which 'press against the very limits of the limited thinking about "community" which rippled out from the politics of the peace process ..but has no sense of what

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a community really should be – except it should not be what we see flying from the top of the Springmartin bonfire’ (Graham, 2008:5). In the photograph of the Springmartin bonfire (Fig 2.5) the large concrete clearance of the bonfire site is shaded a deeper grey in the middle square, either from the worn colouration of previous bonfire burnings or as a designed plot for the construction. The effect of this concrete square as urban defensible space is amplified by the construction of the bonfire in its centre, the stepladder resting against the side, implying the manual labour involved, where construction, ideological and physical, are combined. The swastika flag that is flying from the top of the Springmartin bonfire both challenges the periodization post Agreement as a process of making sense and amplifies an urgency to re-engage with the specificity of territorial claims, as context and history within the city:

John Duncan: In one of the other images that I included in the bonfires project there is a swastika being flown at the top of the bonfire. Combat 18<sup>16</sup> had been quite active in that area. I think it's a very confusing picture unless it's quite well contextualised. When the image is shown outside of Northern Ireland, people were saying they're going to be burning the Swastika and then you explain it to them. With some of these images it's actually quite difficult to navigate the way meaning is attached. It's something that is hard to control

Daniel Jewesbury: There are two things that come to my mind. I've looked at images that are being made in the Republic of Ireland in the last few years in relation to people who have started photographing ghost estates and so on and you can see a real presence of a kind of northern approach to

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<sup>16</sup> Combat 18 is a neo-Nazi organisation. In South Belfast in 2009 they were responsible for attacks on the Romanian community. 110 Romanians under armed police guard had to be relocated to a secret location in Belfast for their protection. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jun/21/race-northern-ireland-romanian-gypsies> (accessed Jan 2015)

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photographing urban space, the kind of approach that is there in John's photographs. You see this turning up in photography in the South now and there's a kind of translation of that sense of threat or failure or desolation or menace of some kind into another context and I think it's very interesting because it's exactly what you were saying about something being transformed from a sectarian conflict into an economic conflict. It's really interesting just to see how the images that are coming from here form a kind of mental notebook for photographers working in the South and how these reappear then in a different context.

But also then it makes me wonder about photographing the swastika which depends on a certain degree of contextualisation. Do you think the same is true of a lot of your images that they depend on a certain kind of knowledge?

John Duncan:

I think that the Bonfires project is interesting in this aspect. It's the one piece of work that I've made that's been published as a book, as opposed to a kind of exhibition catalogue so it's travelled further than anything else that I've done and I think that, yes here we tend to think of bonfires very much in terms of our own situation but of course these kind of large fires are built everywhere. So in some ways something so specific to Belfast actually does travel out in a way that I hadn't quite predicted. I was contacted recently via email from somebody from Israel who had been doing a series of photographs of bonfires there, he was very distraught because he had just come across my project and was going, well that completely wrecks his project - but it's not like we have particular ownership of them though we think we do.

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In touching on considerations of translation that bring into focus the ways in which the meaning of a photograph is produced through a series of actions, from publication to exhibition, the exchange demonstrates the ‘difficulty to navigate the way meaning is attached’ (Duncan). While the swastika flag requires contextualisation, the relation between place and interpretation do not easily follow on from one another since the meaning of a photograph is caught in conflicting interests and identifications – political, ethical, cultural and aesthetic. In the course of the discursive event the impossibility to think of explanation and interpretation as vested in the authority of the image is underscored by the ways in which judgement and identification shape response to the photographs. It is also challenged by the potential of images to serve as forms of connection, where a photographic approach in addition to a photograph’s content or affect resonates beyond the immediate context of the local. It is a point which Jewesbury explores in the translation of a ‘Northern approach to photographing urban space’ to the South in response to ghost estates, the austere material symbol of the collapse of the Celtic Tiger<sup>17</sup> in the Republic of Ireland. For Jewesbury this translation functions as a form of tacit knowledge which cuts across the need for contextual knowledge, since as Jewesbury indicates through his citation of threat, failure, desolation and menace this has less to do with the content of images and more to do with presentiment. Understood as a translation of a way of seeing the South through a Northern photographic approach to urban space, the post-Crash landscape of the South and the post-Agreement landscape of the North become visually linked in a way that corresponds to the claim of ‘something being transformed from a sectarian conflict into an economic conflict’ (Jewesbury). While for Duncan the resonance of the images is predicated on the content since ‘large fires are built everywhere’ and are therefore not ‘something so specific to Belfast’ and ‘travel out in a way that I hadn't quite predicted’ (Duncan). This split emphasis on what is seen and how it is framed, elides how framing effectively produces the content of the image as a perspective of a photographic approach.

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Celtic Tiger’ was the term used to describe the economic growth of the Republic of Ireland between 1995 and 2000. With the loss of fiscal sovereignty subsequent to the crash of 2008, Celtic Tiger is now associated with the causation of economic collapse. For a comprehensive analysis see: Eamon Maher and Eugene O'Brien (eds) *From Prosperity to Austerity: A Socio-cultural Critique of the Celtic Tiger and its Aftermath*, Manchester University Press, 2014.

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It is a point demonstrated by Duncan's *Bonfires* (2008) which takes as its subject what is in the edge of the photographic frame of the photograph of the South Studios apartment complex (Fig 2.3) presented here not as an interruption of the sightline, but asserted as integral to the life of the city. The repetition across the series, where each bonfire contains its own narrative of projection and introjection, displacement and over-determination, aggression and defence, denies a singular description, and instead makes apparent the political and psychic question of boundary and territory. The details of architectural design: tyres, wooden pallettes, proximity to homes and roads, vertical height, circumference of the base and the range of flags from the paramilitary flags of the UDA and the UVF, to the Irish Tricolour, the Polish flag, the Palestinian flag, the Israeli flag and the swastika are secondary to the principal effect to regulate spaces within the city, assigned loyalist through the construction of bonfires. As such the bonfires act as a presence of epistemic, ethnocentric, loyalist intelligibility, which cohere in an address of recognition and visibility. There occurs, then across the series the assertion of loyalist identity as a production of urban space, enacted in the bonfires as rhetorical constructions of a 'national' past. However there is also a tension between the pedagogical and performative function of the bonfires since this address to loyalism, as both knowledge and symbolism, presents loyalism as a foundational historical presence and loyalists as a people constructed by the contestation over the territory and borders of Northern Ireland. The repetition of this claim creates a visual and narrative chain overlaid with a diverse and fragmentary set of mediations, which in turn inflect the way each photograph is perceived and experienced. In the photograph of two bonfires (Fig 2.6) the repurposed bonfire plots of raised communal garden spaces with brick built borders, creates a carefully framed correspondence between the lines, horizontal and vertical, and the materiality of the red brick, the soil, and the wooden towers. This repetition within the photograph and across the series plots the political claim to cultural priority across the city, presenting bonfires as both sites of social antagonism and as potent forms of identification and displacement. It corroborates Jewesbury's suggestion that the organising principle of the photographs of the bonfires is constituted in the transmission of threat, failure, desolation and menace. Understood as totemic cultural effects of sectarianism, the subjects of

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threat, failure, desolation and menace are incorporated into the analytic construction of each photograph, where the depth of field repeatedly asserts the bonfire as part of the urban fabric and landscape of Belfast. But this aspect of repetition as ‘a form of cataloguing’ moves beyond an identification of the pedagogical and performative nature of the bonfires, toward a description of architectural form which relocates and translates the meaning of Bonfires into the discourse of conceptual photography as the following exchange indicates:

Declan Long: Does your work incline more towards conceptual photography in terms of an investigation into what photography is and what it does in relation to setting rather than the suggestion on reporting on a particular place might indicate. One of the points of comparison for the bonfires might be the Becher's Water Towers<sup>18</sup>, for instance, as a sort of cataloguing of a particular kind of architectural form. But as a need to report or a need to make visible something from society, that conceptual inclination resonates with the kind of more grounded political urgencies.

John Duncan: I think I'm much more towards the reportage side of things. I'm aware of the debates and critical thinking about photography but I think I was probably quite at pains in the edit not to make the Bonfires too regimented and the overall edit is quite deliberately away from the Becher's Water Towers ....

Declan Long: But what I can't help seeing is that there is something which suggests that. The rhythm changes, you're closer, you're further away, the sky is changing colour. It's not quite as systematic as Becher's Water Towers but it seems like there's an awareness of that kind of world of photography while also a need to record, a need to be present and there seems to be a push and pull between these themes.

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<sup>18</sup> Hilla and Bernd Becher's 224 photographs of water towers taken over a period of 25 years: Bernd and Hilla Becher, *Water Towers*, MIT Press, 1988



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Daniel Jewesbury: But I think that is our awareness of the tension in photography, you know that when you take a photograph of something that is that shape, inevitably what you're taking on is how do I make this either look like or not look like a photograph by the Becher's.

The basis for the comparison between Duncan's Bonfires with Becher's Water Towers lies in the iterative interrogation of architectural form. While the historical specificities of Becher's Water Towers and Duncan's Bonfires are distinct, this focus on architectural form makes visible the resonance between the images. However this is not to suppose that Long and Jewesbury's aim is a recuperative interpretation which obscures sectarianism, but is instead a focus on the materiality of the bonfires which provides a way of looking again at their actual construction.

To the extent that the symbolic function of the bonfires, as noted previously, is to annually authorise, discipline and control the sectarian logic of division and dis-identity, their purpose is pragmatic. But this pragmatic purpose doubly inscribed as the threat of violence and the fear of political violation is both stable and unstable in its meaning construction. Across the repetition of images of bonfires, meaning is mediated by political organisation 'there is a swastika being flown at the top of the bonfire. Combat 18 had been quite active in that area. I think it's a very confusing picture unless it's quite well contextualised' (Duncan). The combining of 'grounded political urgencies' and 'a conceptual inclination' (Long), articulates the tensions, the 'push and pull' between form and content, which also plays out in the drama of identity that the bonfires symbolise and stage, where image and identification are intimately linked:

Declan Long: I think the question of how the image of a location is achieved and the thought process that goes into it is significant with regard to how images of that place might circulate more broadly and how there might be contested images of the place. The example that you were bringing up earlier Daniel about photographers in the South, it might well be because place, locality, landscape, private and

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public property and how we represent these things are now more notably contested.

Siún Hanrahan: I would say that now there's more explicit attempts to articulate social consequences, and the consequences of these moments for the landscape and for the lived experience of people. The visual tropes of these social consequences present a resistance to the developer-type images, to the romantic landscape, to all of the things that sell as opposed to how it actually is for people with rats running up and down the road because the place hasn't been finished off and there's antisocial behaviour in the couple of empty houses down the road, you know, the lived experience.

John Duncan: But I think for a lot of photographers based in Belfast there has always been an acute awareness of how this city is represented. It's something that is always in the background. What I've picked up most with the flag protests is that there's an obsession about the image of Belfast again, it's like if you could protest and do that somewhere and nobody heard about it that would be absolutely fine but it's damaging the image of Belfast. That's said repeatedly.

Declan Long: And this need really does relate to how we make, circulate and frame an image of Belfast.

Duncan's emphasis on the 'acute awareness' among photographers about how the city has been represented, points to the ways in which Belfast is implicated in the contestation over identity and representation. In the merger of Belfast the city and Belfast as the subject of photography, historical specificity is claimed by a form of realist representation that would detail the social and lived experience of place. It is a claim which is invested with a strategic and political subversion of the image of the future constructed by developers' designs, where photography is understood

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as a form that links the knowable and the visible and makes manifest the lived experience of place. But despite this assessment, the question, 'how this city is represented' remains 'always in the background' (Duncan). This intimation that the question forms the city's political unconscious, also implies that it guides structures of political thought, opening and foreclosing critical debate. For Duncan 'the image of Belfast' has a rhetorical use value, which assumes a passive and unitary point of view on 'how this city is represented', a use value demonstrated by the response to the ongoing loyalist flags protest that dispute the decision by Belfast City Council in 2012 to restrict the flying of the Union flag at Belfast City Hall to 18 days a year<sup>19</sup>: 'What I've picked up most with the flag protests is that there's an obsession about the image of Belfast again, it's like if you could protest and do that somewhere and nobody heard about it that would be absolutely fine but it's damaging the image of Belfast' (Duncan). Conceived as a threat to the image of Belfast, the response to the 'flags protest' substitutes critical and political analysis for the image of the city as the object of analysis. It points to the ways in which image assumes a narrative function of post Agreement, as image is conflated with the brand and reputation of the city, 'it's damaging the image of Belfast' (Duncan). The 'image of Belfast' presumed to be damaged by the flags protest is predicated on the identity of the city as post Agreement, as the site of difference to and disavowal of the past of the 'Troubles' that gives force to the political argument to produce and make visible the changed circumstance of Northern Ireland. It is an aspect made legible in the counter-demonstration to the flags protest, where the staff of retail businesses, bars and restaurants wore t-shirts that read 'Backin Belfast', in a campaign financed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and Belfast City Council. As such the 'obsession about the image of Belfast' (Duncan), speaks directly to the complex of social and psychic realities and disjunctures of post Agreement played out in the discourse of power and presence, branding and reputation. Abbreviated to this key point of signification and dispute 'the image of Belfast' stands in for these continued tensions laden with the visibility and recognition of historical necessity.

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<sup>19</sup> On 3 December 2012, Belfast City Council voted to limit the days that the Union Flag flies from Belfast City Hall in line with British government guidelines regarding government buildings. In response there were street protests led by loyalists and clashes with the PSNI. In January 2013 there was significant unrest at the interface of nationalist Short Strand and loyalist East Belfast, during which the PSNI used plastic bullets and water cannon on the loyalist protesters.

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Moreover, in so far as the 'image of Belfast' forms the city's preoccupation, its 'acute awareness' and 'obsession', it is in principle indifferent to and hence cuts across art/non art distinctions. It is an abbreviation that turns from the vicissitudes of interpretation to the strategy of address: 'how we make, circulate and frame an image of Belfast' (Long) which works across time and place, as discipline and dissemination.

In this intercut of time and place, historical record and cultural and political memory, images as 'visual incisions' (Edwards, 2006:3) not only reveal how place is materially produced but also multiply signified. It is an aspect that is made apparent in the Duncan's image *Closing the Ring* (Fig 2.7) of a reconstructed 1991 Belfast street from the film of the same name directed by Richard Attenborough. The photograph shows a wall and a tower, both fortified. In the road there are concrete barriers to further protect the wall, a CCTV camera extends from the tower and the corrugated fencing above the concrete walls is topped by barbed wire. Its main purpose of preventing access and securing what is behind the wall is obvious, though what lies behind the perimeter is unclear. The photograph, when approached with 'an acute awareness of how the city is represented' (Duncan) emphasises the circulation of images as theoretically complex and politically contested. To illustrate this I have chosen to present at length the flow of argument that the image generated:

Daniel Jewsebury: The *Closing the Ring* image is incredibly rich and complex and in many ways quite unreadable. There are so many levels of reading and projection involved in the image

Trish Lambe: When you exhibit your work the audience are often very perplexed. It's a difficult task to mediate your work because you'd never want to over explain it. In many ways your work is deliberately difficult, intriguing or ambivalent.

But for me this is what draws me in and that is what we've found when we've shown your work in the Gallery of Photography in Dublin. You find yourself in the picture

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having to really think what is going on here and it's disconcerting so you have to spend time with them.

Declan Long: There is something about your whole body of work, about your relationship to the city, your walks in the city, your being at home in this place and being not at home while at home, all that stuff. In terms of that tension between thinking about photography and what photography can do, and how to some extent its reporting on place, this is all thrown into crisis with the picture of the film set because here's the world, here is an image of what we might imagine something that has been and yet it's an image of an invention of that. It's a cinematic restaging of something, so the idea of this as a report of some kind only takes us into a question of how we construct a historical record. It takes us towards the kind of contestation of memory.

And this is not to make a correspondence between Northern Ireland and the Holocaust, but it does remind me of Omer Fast's research on the aftermath of Spielberg's Schindler's List where he goes to the reconstructed Auschwitz which was made for Schindler's List. In Omer Fast's film<sup>20</sup> you have this mix of footage of Auschwitz and footage of the reconstructed Auschwitz and there's people talking about their memories of place and so on and the two things get conflated and confused.

Daniel Jewesbury: It is also connected to the kind of question that we forget to ask most of the time, even when we think we're really clever and know exactly what questions to ask, which is does it matter if it's real, if it's true. Does it matter whether it's been made by a film crew?

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<sup>20</sup> Omer Fast's Spielberg's List (2003) is about the social and political impact of Steven Spielberg's film Schindler's List (1993). By showing the testimonies of the extras of Spielberg's film, Fast subverts the logic of witness testimony by conflating the fictive and the real.

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Kai Olaf Hesse: I think in general photography is still trapped into that notion of what we see is real

Andrew Finlay: But why would it matter whether it's real or not.

Mia Lerm Hayes: It does matter if it's a simulation or a fabrication. It's critical...

Siún Hanrahan: So perhaps it's more a question of how we might make it matter

John Duncan: Certainly as a photographer you carry fictional representations around with you. I think if I would contextualise this in my practice more the title of the picture would reveal that it's from the film set *Closing the Ring* and I would be trying to place it within the city when I was walking around North Belfast that week and that this was 10 minutes from the Girdwood Barracks, it would be to make the film set real.

If, as Long suggests, the reconstruction of a 1991 Belfast street morphs back into a form of 'documentary photograph' that 'throws into crisis' photography as reporting on place, it does so by questioning the equivocation of recognition and remembrance, memory and the lived. In interposing the place and time of an imagined and a remembered Belfast, the photograph involves a double stance toward contemporaneity – between the recognition of the past and its transmission and translation. The reconstruction of a street from the Troubles draws attention to how a historical record of what took place is constructed. Long, in proposing a similarity to the conjunctural history of Omer Fast's *Spielberg's List* (2003), where the remembrance of working on the film *Schindler's List* as an extra is represented as testimony of the Shoah, highlights the complex ways that remembrance exceeds the time and place of the lived experience of trauma. Although this may be a stark presentation of Omer Fast's *Spielberg's List*, it nevertheless demonstrates the problem of what an image refers to, since memory, recollection, remembrance, testimony and witness are blurred in the films edit

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between the footage of Auschwitz and the footage of the reconstructed Auschwitz. As such *Spielberg's List* displaces the problem of truth or meaning from the disciplinary confines of realism, to an interrogation of how the knowledge of the Shoah is formed, how it circulates and how it is appropriated.

It is a form of critical displacement which opens a re-examination of the privileging, conceptually and discursively, of photography's assumed relation to the real - 'does it matter if it's real, if it's true?' Jewesbury's provocation in an echo of Beckett's 'what does it matter who is speaking?', that forms the basis for Foucault's enquiry 'What is an Author?' (1977) questions why realism is affirmed and privileged as the truth of a photograph and the determining experience for a viewer. As such, 'does it matter?' forces attention to the ways in which the discourse of realism forces a photograph to be situated between the two poles of description and designation, as truth and witness. Lerm Hayes critical injunction to distinguish between the real and the fictive proposes that a photograph has a documentary role and classificatory function that can be discharged as the ethics of memory and testimony in response to the lived experience of trauma. But this return to truth and realism which assumes a photograph is present centred at the time of its production, while prescient to an ethical consideration of testimony and witness sets aside the complex and variable functions of photography as a dissemblance of the documentary form. It is this ambivalent relation to the real where 'You find yourself in the picture having to really think what is going on here' (Lambe) that opens the space and function of the photograph to revision and adaptation.

It is notable that Duncan shows the image *Closing the Ring* alongside the images of the twenty-seven acre site of the Girdwood Barracks, as a way of contextualising the fictional representations of the city. In the series of the former barracks *We Were Here* (2006), Duncan photographs the deliberate whitewashing of British Army insignia on the barrack walls (Fig 2.8). Beyond the simplistic intention of concealing and protecting the regiments' insignia, the whitewashing also conceals the presence of the British Army as a point of reference within the Troubles. Moreover the use of white paint on the barrack walls recalls how 'some walls in the city' were 'whitewashed to the level of a man's head so that patrolling

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soldiers at night are silhouetted clearly for snipers' (Carson, 1989:78). In this repetition and recollection of the whitewashing of the Troubles, the photographs take on a double presence and meaning of soldiers and snipers, of concealment and exoneration that dramatises the contested histories of the Troubles. The series title, the graffiti tag *We Were Here*, retrieves the fundamental thought of post Agreement as the aftermath of the Troubles, but this temporal logic of past/present, pre and post leaves profoundly unresolved the pronominal 'we' of the title.

Duncan's assertion of the interconnectedness and physical proximity of *We Were Here* and *Closing the Ring*, suggests an overlap in the efforts and attention to the construction of the past as a working concept. In locating *Closing the Ring* within the city space to claim its realism, 'to make the film set real', Duncan reverses the documentary logic of realism over fiction, instead presenting them as intimately linked as recognition and remembrance, presence and absence that usefully calls into question the very grounds of critique and keeps open the flux and complexity of photography as a social practice. It is a process which similarly puts pressure on the descriptive language of the 'self-referential' image that 'can't stop asking how this place could be photographed' (Long). Through invoking the spaces through which notions of belonging sit incommensurably with demands of development, Duncan's images consider what it means to live in cities that bear the imprint of violent conflict 'constituted by communities that are the products of different histories and histories of differences' (Keith, 2005: 550). It is a questioning which is borne out in the co-researchers response through which the incommensurability of Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and loyalist become visible not as questions of representation but as a questioning of the regimes of thought that the representation of difference depend on. It is a questioning which similarly explores the city located between sites that display the most intense forms of intolerance and sites which present a break with the past, as a spatial regulation of the city that affirms the doxa of the two communities model and the market logics of development. It is a spatial regulation of the city where both 'communities' and developers are engaged in an effort to make place descriptively legible, in ways that engender a narrative proposition of the past and imagined future.



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It is this descriptive narrative that Kai Olaf Hesse explores in *Topography of the Titanic* (2003) which like Duncan's *Closing the Ring*, provocatively questions the relation of the past to the imagined as a process in which the past is reconstructed and fictionalised.

Kai Olaf Hesse: In 2002 I was invited to Belfast with an exhibition and I was in Belfast for 2 or 3 days. On the last day I had half a day to spend with my wife and we stumbled across a small cardboard sign reading 'Titanic Harbour Cruises' and I was like wait a minute, Titanic was built here! And we took the tour with the boat, along the dock and the pump house and that was basically all I saw. On my way home on the plane I was thinking 'there's no way that they built that ship there', because in any other town in the world you wouldn't have stepped out of the plane without seeing signs to the museum, to the square. And that absence, this was obviously before the Titanic Quarter was developed, basically drove the idea to photograph a piece on the Titanic [...] It was obvious to me that for the developers this was just an empty piece of land and they could sort of imprint this Titanic brand on top of it in terms of selling it but they were not serious about what was there. They were just happy to have this brand and that was an asset to them but they were not really interested in the history, it was very obvious they were not interested in the buildings.

John Duncan: You know, it's definitely talked about how the drawing office...the actual thing that has a real historical connection has been neglected and what's been given priority has been the shiny new bling piece of architecture. It's like what you were saying about what you thought getting off the plane 10 years ago that there would have been lots and lots of stuff, I suppose now there is.

Kai Olaf Hesse: But what there is debases the history, the memory.

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Hesse's surprise in 2002 that Belfast did not clearly signpost or celebrate the city as the construction site for the building of the Titanic, reframes this absence in the language of branding 'in any other town in the world you wouldn't have stepped out of the plane without seeing signs to the museum, to the square' (Hesse). Photographed before the reclamation and rebranding of the former shipyards to the east of the city as the Titanic Quarter and the opening of the Titanic Centre in 2011, *Topography of the Titanic* presents a form of commemoration that stands at the intersection between remembrance, formalised as urban development and the histories of the Titanic. In mapping the site of the shipyards as a space of absence and neglect, *Topography of the Titanic* prefigures the development of the site and stands in contrast to what has been developed. Hesse's criticism of the brand Titanic Quarter contrasts to his interest in the treatment of history. But given that the Titanic disaster is an enduring literary and filmic subject, this disputation about history is itself caught up in the numerous narratives and meanings of the Titanic, transnational and local, as labour, as ship and tragedy.

Hesse's focus on the materiality of the shipyard in *Topography of the Titanic* as an endeavour to retrieve a history of the ship and its connection to the city arguably participates in and taps into the Titanic brand that emerged with the release of Cameron's film *Titanic* in 1997. However *Topography of the Titanic* in charting the ship's recovery of meaning to the city does so by providing a comparative reference to the Titanic branding of the city. In mapping the materiality of the site, the drawing office, the slipways, the motorway underpass, *Topography of the Titanic* addresses the story of the Titanic as a history that is happening, as each photograph is constructed from the perspective of the ship's connection to the city, charged with the spectral trace of the history of the Titanic. As such the publication *Topography of the Titanic* is both retrospectively and prospectively constructed: retrospective in its use of images from the Ulster Museum archive, and prospective in the sense that it opens a view to how the site could be developed.

Kai Olaf Hesse:            Looking at the Titanic site always transmitted this sense of positive potential, not that I was the person who had any idea what to do with the site in terms of one should do this

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or build that, but more that these unoccupied sites have been opened up for the imagination. Although of course that possibility and potential for the people to imagine what could be done didn't happen.....

Gerry Tubritt: For me looking at all the images of the Titanic the potential that you're representing is within the official neglect and abandonment of the spaces. They had had some utility in the past and that is gone. A lot of this potential for the future is the fact that officially it's now useless, so somebody else can now take it and grow something

This opening of the site to the potential for imagining the future is neither an uncontested process nor a definitive one, critically or politically. In providing a counter image to the Titanic Quarter development, it leads to a consideration on the demise of the shipyards, the emergence of the Titanic as part of the city's symbolic and cultural heritage and the discursive transfiguration from the Troubles to post Agreement Belfast. But as the photograph of the drawing office exposes (Fig 2.9), the development of the Titanic Quarter has acceded to the logic of branding, separated from the 'actual thing that has a real historical connection' (Duncan). The displacement of the drawing office and its contiguity to the Titanic, makes its presence culturally and politically authoritative as comment and critique on the urban development of brand Titanic. In marking the separation between Titanic the ship and Titanic the brand, *Topography of the Titanic* maps this faded presence of the shipyards against the immediate visibility of the branding of urban space. Viewed as interrogations in the interstices between the ship and the brand, *Topography of the Titanic* re-values the presence of the ship by resisting it as a signifier of regeneration, a resistance which is sharpened by the use of archive photographs that makes visible the abandonment of the ship's presence in the city. In particular the photograph of the drawing office as the ruin of its archive image, traces this displacement of history for symbol. But it is a displacement that is impeded by the history of the Troubles as the following exchange demonstrates:

John Duncan: We touched earlier on the kind of brand awareness of Belfast and the kind of new image that is being built around

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the city and I started to think about your pictures as the foundations for this new myth that a certain set of people in the city want. And it's the difficulty of how this Titanic image does not sit over the top of The Troubles image.

Andrew Finlay: It's also that the Titanic is the high point of a certain kind of modernist hubris about progress and technology that is punctured. It's just such a flawed image in that sense, yet there's this endeavour to make it work for regeneration. But also the history of the shipyard in Belfast is problematic. In the period after the Titanic sank in 1912, the shipyard workforce was huge, and around 1918 there was serious industrial unrest with a mass strike for a 44 hour working week. The workforce had been quite mixed during the war but after the industrial action, in a strategy of divide and rule there were mass expulsions of Catholic workers literally driven into the docks and not just Catholic workers but Protestant socialist, militant trade unionists were also expelled and never got their jobs back. I don't know, the figures vary, 8,000 to 12,000 workers expelled, never got their jobs back, and subsequently the shipyard became a byword for a certain kind of politics.

Kai Olaf Hesse: We're dealing with two sets of histories here or at least two. If you talk about the branding of a city or of a quarter this issue is not about the history of the ship, it's not about the history of the yard it's about the movie and they're trying to get a chunk of the movie to use it as a brand otherwise they would care about the dock, they would care about the pump house, they would care about the drawing office. And then there's the history of the workforce, of the people of Belfast and nobody cares about them...there's not one voice speaking for the history of the workforce in Belfast or the people's history of Belfast, there's always at least two sides.

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Andrew Finlay: It seems to me this is part of a process of history being rewritten. There was an organised labour movement here and it was defeated. Part of its defeat was what happened in 1920, that's part of the history and the shipyard is a part of that and the expulsions of those people from the shipyard is a significant moment in the defeat of a labour movement.

In this exchange the Titanic turns from being a symbol of 'a certain kind of modernist hubris about progress and technology' into becoming the symptom of the ethnography of the 'two sides'. For Finlay this shift in perspective emerges from 'a process of history being rewritten' marked in the repetition that 'there's always two sides'. It is an objection which while not explicitly connected to the images of *Topography of the Titanic*, indicates how what is seen is discursively constructed and contextualised. A construction which for Finlay in denying moments of political association and their historical defeat, not only installs sectarianism as the dominant narrative but makes narratively marginal what is nevertheless theoretically and politically central since the history of the labour movement 'required the constitution of new subjectivities' (Hall, 1987:45).

It is an exchange which demonstrates the instability of the Titanic in terms of cultural and political signification which speaks to the crises and contingencies of the city's history. It reveals a complexity of reference and representation, caught between the filmic, 'they're trying to get a chunk of the movie to use it as a brand' (Hesse) and the social imaginary of the workforce and the people of the city. But if a part of this dilemma of what the Titanic stands for is split between the transnational and the local, 'how this Titanic image does not sit over the top of The Troubles image' (Duncan), it is also split between the urban development narrative of post Agreement and the fragmented history of the shipyards as a 'byword for a certain kind of politics' (Finlay).

The Titanic as a nexus of competing claims becomes the decentred 'subject' of *Topography of the Titanic* figured in the in-between frames of the labour movement, modernist hubris, urban development, sectarianism, post Agreement and post industrialisation. This is made visibly apparent in the use of archive images, where the historical presence of the Titanic is supplanted by the absent

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and neglected spaces of the city. In registering the cultural and social difference in the meaning of the shipyards across time, *Topography of the Titanic* presents how this meaning is effaced and obscured by the transliteration from ship to brand.

Within this archival structure, two figurations of the Titanic co-exist and cohere in the emphasis on a documentary approach. As an exploration of the *Topography of the Titanic*, which as the title suggests supposes a precise and detailed description, this archival structure dissolves the distinctions between past and present, so that the question of the future is 'opened up for the imagination' (Hesse). However proposing the Titanic as a visual and narrative pretext for the emergence of a different way of imagining the city and of a future that has yet to be begun, also runs the risk of simply setting up new symbols of city identity that generate new forms of 'identity politics' in the splitting of inside/outside, self/other, us/them. It is a risk acknowledged by Daniel Jewesbury and Declan Long:

Declan Long:            There's something about the photograph with the flyovers which struck me as having a hint of JG Ballard about it, you know, of a particular vision of the future which is extreme and kind of inhuman or post human. These big brutal motorways which sever cities but as a place have this kind of thrilling sexually charged mechanisation. There's an associated vision of the future around those big flyovers which maybe point to a more extreme way of talking or thinking about these topics and questions of regeneration and community. I wonder is there room in any of this for things with such a hard edge which point to discourses outside of the kind of liberal negotiation of the more or less exactly what we have but different versions of it, you know, some other more extreme image. In some way to find in the past a vision of the future which would be an alternative future reality to the one we have..

Daniel Jewesbury:    When the Laganside development wound up they put up these perspex hoardings with bold colourful graphics and it had this slogan 'Our Legacy, Your Future' and I thought

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there's such a sense of threat in that slogan, it's not even veiled. I wrote about the photograph of the motorway extension in a book *Where Are The People?* which is not unlike what you've said about the door with this unlucky number 13 painted on the stanchion and the words 'What was here before? Who was here before?'. But really it's not just about a home that's gone or a home that's been cleared away, it's actually an image of us all being locked out of this future. And this goes back again to ideas of the future and the past, we can say at some point people lived here and that was good but where's the future, where's the future that we can comprehend in the same useful simple way.

The photograph beneath the motorway flyover (Fig 2.10) focuses on the liminal space left over by the motorway construction. Photographed in daylight the central support tower is painted with a door, the number 13, a window and the words 'what was here before?, who was here before?'. The words suggest a process of return or revisiting home, but in the elusive and overlooked space beneath the flyover, what Marc Augé calls in the book of the same title, 'non-places' (2009), the questions of who and what mark the space through the temporal lens of time passed.

The detection of a 'hint of J G Ballard' with 'its associated vision of the future around those big flyovers', directs attention to the horror/fascination dynamic inherent in spectacular consumption, pointing to how the narrative of the past might be reordered. This suggestion of a different form of annotation to past events in order to 'find in the past a vision of the future', puts forward the concomitant processes of revisioning, rewriting and rereading the past to engender 'an alternative future reality to the one we have' (Long). As outlined by Long this revisionist process disrupts the politics of representation envisaged in 'the kind of liberal negotiation of the more or less exactly what we have but different versions of it'. But this emphasis on opening the past to simultaneously augment and reconfigure a future contrasts with the double question of who and what in the

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photograph – where people and place are both background details and fictionalised facts and events of the past interred in the space beneath the motorway. As an address the locus of the questioning is simple and yet the questions, ‘what was here before?, who was here before?’, open a complex network of contestations and uncertainties about the city’s histories. This past conjured by the graffiti that addresses itself to what is invisible does so by assigning an unknown and unclaimed history to the place. The repetition ‘here before’ reforms the questions as rhetorical devices, as commentaries on recurrence and complicities of present and past.

For Jewesbury this feedback loop of ‘here before’ suggests a city not only haunted by the past but by lost futures. Jewesbury’s reading of the photograph as a visual analogue of the threat contained in the developer’s slogan 'Our Legacy, Your Future', presents the photograph as a desolate elegy of a wounded city whose future is in lock down – ‘it’s actually an image of us all being locked out of this future’ (Jewesbury). But in this future that fails to materialise and remains spectral, the graffitied doorway also suggests a kind of portal to a time and place now gone and to a future that has yet to happen. It is this doubling of the spectre, as past and future, where ‘one can never distinguish between the future-to-come [à-venir] and the coming-back of a specter’ (Derrida, 1994:38), which suggests the present as a translation and transmission from the past to the future and from the future to the past.

The drawing of a home, complete with curtains in the window and a door with a letterbox presents a version of homeliness etched on the flyover stanchion which contrasts with the emotional austerity of the space. Cast aside to provide for the motorway, it presents a space of stasis beneath the perpetual movement of the motorway traffic above. Jewesbury’s contention that it is an ‘image of us all being locked out of this future’ suggests the anachronism and inertia of the ‘home’ depicted in the graffiti beneath the motorway presents the internment of the future. For Jewesbury the bleakness of this reading of a city and people being held back by a future not yet imagined finds its place of urban description in recent development:



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Daniel Jewesbury: Mike Smith, the managing director of the Titanic Quarter was saying at one point how lots of people knock the Titanic Quarter but people knocked The Odyssey and The Waterfront<sup>21</sup> when they were being built and Belfast is now unimaginable without them

Declan Long: But that kind of gets to the heart of it doesn't it, to what extent the city is imaginable and to what extent photography has any role in imagining the city's past or projections of the future. This idea that something is unimaginable is what Mark Fisher writes about in *Capitalist Realism*, whereas to see those cracks or glitches ..is to get a sense of that spectral dimension that doesn't allow the thing to remain fully present.

Daniel Jewesbury: That's interesting and its similar to how in the 6 months before we had this whole onslaught of marketing to do with 2012 Our Time, Our Place before the whole 2012 thing really got underway, when we just had the campaign, you started to get an idea that the advertising had a disciplining voice to it. It spoke in one way to people outside, like hey, come here, we're really great. And it spoke in another way to all the people who live here like let's be nice while other people are here, let's all behave, nobody let the side down, let's all behave and be good.

The confabulation of the city by the recent builds of The Odyssey, The Waterfront and the Titanic Quarter assumes that this urban development affects a shift from the Troubles to post Agreement. This revisionist impulse to overwrite the histories of the Troubles is reiterated in terms of a temporal and spatial difference - 'Belfast

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<sup>21</sup> The Odyssey, which consists of the Odyssey Pavilion and Odyssey Arena, is a sports and entertainment centre situated in Titanic Quarter, which opened in 2001. The Waterfront is a conference, arts and entertainment centre that opened in 1997. The Titanic Quarter is owned by Titanic Investments, a Jersey-registered firm controlled by Donegal developer Pat Doherty and billionaire financier Dermot Desmond.

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is now unimaginable without them' (Jewesbury). The irresolution of the Troubles here transfigured into making the past unimaginable, attempts to produce the present as a signifying time for the inscription post Agreement, articulated in the 2012 marketing campaign *Our Time, Our Place*. It is a disavowal of a past cityscape rendered unimaginable that functions as a kind of anti-memory and an adjudicative procedure, 'you started to get an idea that the advertising had a disciplining voice to it' (Jewesbury). As such the campaign's announcement of a continuous present *Our Time, Our Place* is doubled voiced – 'It spoke in one way to people outside, like hey, come here, we're really great. And it spoke in another way to all the people who live here like let's be nice while other people are here, let's all behave' (Jewesbury); a splitting of the address tourists/residents, inside/outside which tracks the city's cultural and social antagonisms, subverting the political claim of *Our Time, Our Place*, while exposing its political rationale to cover over anomalies and contradictions. This pervasive presentness where narrative, intelligibility and imagination are enfeebled replays Jameson's diagnosis of the postmodern condition, as the failure of the future (Jameson, 1991). For Long, however, it gives rise to a critical questioning about the role of photography in 'imagining the city's past or projections of the future' and to the ways in which a photograph might provide a hauntological trigger, opening up possibilities for other 'times' of cultural meaning, retroactive and prefigurative, and other narratives, phantasmic and metaphorical. In this turn to the 'spectral dimension that doesn't allow the thing to remain fully present', Long locates the critical energy of the spectre in its resistance to and disturbance of the present which like Fisher's glitches disrupt the 'inability to make new memories' (Fisher, 2009:60), opening up time and space for the contingent, the liminal and the indeterminate articulation of 'social' experience.

But if like the repeated refrain, here before, in the motorway underpass, the spectre tracks displacements, it also evokes history as a present past of transmission and cultural negotiation. Long's presentation of the spectre is therefore not simply a poetic description for the subversion and interruption of a pervasive presentness but is an analytical concept, which acknowledges the inherent transience of the

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contemporary, the 'here before' of time and place. However, this function of the spectre that disrupts the present also reopens contestation over the meaning of the past and the future which, while providing for the possibility of subversion, is therefore equally precarious since it leaves unanswered which spectre is called upon and to what end - an apprehension made more acute in the contested histories of the city and the pervasive binary of loyalism and nationalism of the Agreement.

It is this doubling and interlocking correspondence between who and what which disrupts the anterograde amnesia of the Titanic as brand to overcome the Troubles, forcing into view not only how the city is imagined but also the absences, the 'here before' that is neglected in the reconstruction of the city's history of shipbuilding. It similarly disrupts the question how the city is represented, where Belfast as the image of the city turns retroactively into a form of understanding the past. Beneath the framing ontological question posed by Daniel Jewesbury 'does it matter if it's real, if it's true' lies the apprehension of time as the simultaneity of the past and the future which like nostalgia, longs to return home in the future.

The Titanic Quarter, and more obviously the Titanic Centre architecturally designed to resemble an iceberg present a mode of restorative nostalgia, 'reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialise time' (Boym, 2001:15)<sup>22</sup>. The nostalgia for the Titanic returns as the loss of history, 'Belfast is now unimaginable without them' (Jewesbury) and similarly 'debases the history, the memory' (Hesse). This return of the Titanic narrative, as the narrative to end all narratives, metaphorically signalled in the sinking of 'a certain kind of modernist hubris about progress and technology' (Finlay) is therefore intimately linked to the endeavour to install post Agreement as the prevailing logic and description of the present. As the redesign and branding of the site of the former shipyards declares itself in the name Titanic Quarter as an effort to 'conquer and spatialise time', the cultural resonance of this endeavour nevertheless reveals the city's urban contradictions precisely by

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<sup>22</sup> See Svetlana Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, Basic Books, 2001. Boym provides a typology of nostalgia: the restorative which stresses *nóstos* (home) and the reflective which stresses *álgos*, (longing). In this chapter I am drawing on Boym's description of restorative nostalgia as the unrealised dreams of the past presented as the future, which conflates the real and the imagined.

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exposing the areas of the city which defy the prevailing logic that Belfast is unimaginable without them.

John Duncan: But it's ironic that cultural symbols which are so contentious in one area of civic life are on the other hand being seen as a kind of great saviour for the city centre.

Christa Lerm-Hayes: Yes what is culture to be today if it is, as we are also led to believe, to be the new theatre of war.

Declan Long: It maybe remains an open question about the role of culture at this moment and the potential of photography to picture the city in arguably this post political moment in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement. Supposedly we can now be free from antiquated attachments and be free to shop as much as we like and shop our way to freedom. But this kind of new way of describing ourselves or talking about ourselves or even if ourselves exist as a possibility, what language can that be done in, what space does that conversation take place in. In this moment since 1998 when new forms of government are taking place and new cultural projects are being supported is there another mapping of Northern Ireland that can be done that is not purely the consumer identity or the sectarian mappings that we might be more used to and where does that negotiation take place, does it take place with picturing or conversations like this.

Duncan's note of the irony that attends to the use of contentious 'cultural symbols' as a 'great saviour for the city centre' points to the anomalies produced through the installation of this restorative nostalgia as a new groundwork to declare an absolute break with the Troubles. These anomalies which obligate in advance the need to talk about the cultural phenomena of contentious symbols in the civic life of the city, opens the question about 'the role of culture at this moment' (Long). Lerm-Hayes in conceiving culture as the 'new theatre of war' hints at the

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relocation of culture as cause and effect of conflict. This reformulation of culture as the displacement of the political, which could be mistaken for an anti-political alibi for conflict, instead suggests how this displacement actively generates culture as causality and explanation. It is a displacement that is echoed in Long's description of the present of post Agreement as a post political moment. However if this displacement of the political governs a distinct reconstruction of the cultural, in part as a substitution and replacement for the political, it does so essentially as a symbolic act, in the construction of city as image and brand.

In conclusion Long's questioning of how the future is to be reimagined and how the negotiation of this reimagining might take place - 'with picturing or with conversations like this' - is underscored by the question 'if ourselves exist as a possibility'. It is a question that is produced by the division of the city, where the cultural symbols of conflict gain and lose meaning and effect in the movement from the city centre to the margins and from the margins to the city centre whereby the appearance of a post political moment is stripped away to show the ominous survival of the threat of violence. It returns therefore to Duncan's photographs of the neglected and the discarded spaces of the city where psychological states of fear and threat are crystallised into elements of architectural design depicted in Duncan's city of *Bonfires, Trees from Germany* and *We Were Here*. The relentless shifts between occlusion and exposure, the remembered and the actual across the images suggest how the city, in however diminished form, holds some auratic quality of the past. It is a tracing of the past as connection and disconnection that is also at work in Hesse's *Topography of the Titanic* in the disparity between the archive images and Hesse's images that disjoins the Titanic Quarter's relation to history. In this way the dilemma of how the city is represented is inscribed in the photographs and thereby acknowledged, rather than repressed or resolved. It is a feature which shapes the conversation, in the constant shifting of priority status given to thoughts and concerns, in a movement that pre-empts a definitive interpretation of the photographs and the city. It is an interruption of definition which also circulates as a response to the city context, as a sense of expectation and a temporality of waiting, which like the

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whitewashed walls of Girdwood Barracks in *We Were Here* is a space which is waiting to be inscribed, not once but repeatedly, as the blank space in which a future state can be imagined and constituted. A future which as Long suggests requires 'another mapping of Northern Ireland' as a crucial test of imagination that does not repeat 'the sectarian mappings that we might be more used to' (Long), but detects the possibility of change in 'the city is a map of the city' (Carson, 1989:69) rather than the threat of stasis and entropy.

The response to the images through accounts of the everyday lived experience of the city and its histories, not only presents how the city's contradictory cartographies are contingent, but in doing so exposes the political and practical contradictions out of which they are constituted. It is a process which makes apparent the dialectical synthesis of the spatial and the political, where the spatial metaphors of position and location underpin the identity politics of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist that defines the relationship of the spectral to the urban in the cartography of the city. It is an aspect which is also emphasised in the co-researchers' exchange, where location is introduced as insight and knowledge: 'Where I live in the Lower Ravenhill in East Belfast there's a social housing development' (Jordan).

But it is also important to note how Long's provocation of a 'post-political moment' reconfigures post Agreement as both a pragmatic adjustment and resignation, where to 'be free from antiquated attachments' is vulnerable to capitalist recuperation to 'be free to shop as much as we like and shop our way to freedom' (Long). In this construction of a synchronicity of the 'post political' and post Agreement the lack of a new model of affirmative politics capable of negotiating the either/or logic of 'the purely consumer identity or the sectarian mappings' marks post Agreement as a critical juncture. However if 'crisis does not simply expose spectral abstraction, but redoubles it' (Noys, 2010:12) then arguably the periodisation of time announced by post Agreement is itself a spectral abstraction, of an agreement on the future that is deferred and is neither agreed upon nor decided.

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Unlike the spectral dimension implied in a Baudrillardian simulacra (1994), what is at stake is declared in the negative critical power of the Agreement's 'our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations', where agreement is redoubled in the reification of sectarianism. The disjunctive unity of post Agreement, visible in Duncan's photograph of the enclosed courtyard of South Studios apartments with the intrusion of the top of bonfire, presents a complex conjunction of times social, political, economic and cultural, which like the repeated refrain and spectral vigilance of 'here before' in Hesse's image of the motorway underpass, keeps watch on a future that is yet to be negotiated.

Duncan and Hesse's images of Belfast in examining the indeterminacy of post Agreement as historical demand and future expectation, open a space for critical questioning on what future is imagined and envisaged. It is a critical questioning which disrupts the implied threat of the urban development slogan Our Legacy, Your Future whereby the pronominal adjectives 'our' and 'your' claim definition of the past and the future. It is this hegemony of promise as demand that is critiqued by Duncan and Hesse's photographs of the city, where both the market logics of development and the two communities doxa are engaged in the sequestration of place and time. As such the images draw attention to what could have been as a projected past and equally put pressure on the question of what is to come. As visual accounts of the everyday framed in the political narratives of development and segregation, the images make visible the spatial and temporal contradictions of the cityspace as a visual cartography of the competing claims of a future political imaginary.

Likewise the real and imagined urbanisms of Duncan and Hesse's images disclose the ways in which the temporal and spatial logics of development and segregation both attempt to lay claim to the past and future. In making visible the contradictions and similitude of these claims the images open a critical space for the exploration of the cultural politics of post Agreement, where post Agreement is foregrounded as an interstitial space between the past and the future and between disavowal and continuity. It this critical space mediated by the images that the co-researchers speak to across the disciplinary interface of community

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development, critical theory, art history and cultural studies. It is an exploration which is charged with the 'acute awareness of how this city is represented' (Duncan) as both the subject of the city and the object of debate.

The co-researchers' exchange in examining the multiple configurations of the city - as image, brand, post Agreement and lived experience - indicate not only how the meaning of the images is refracted through the specificity of the time and place of looking at the images, but also how images in framing a perspective on the city put into circulation questions on how the city is represented. Questions which turn to the cultural, temporal and spatial politics of the cityspace, where the city's multiple conjunctions of time and place present competing historical demands as visions of the future. It is a process through which spectrality or Fisher's glitches of memory disorder become central to a consideration of the ways in which the spatial sequestration of the city emerge as narratives of post Agreement. Both Duncan and Hesse in drawing on the paradoxical pairing of the real and the imaginary exemplify how the spatial and temporal logic of the two communities model and urban development 'obscure the full historical and social complexity of Belfast' (Allen and Kelly, 2003:17). It is an obscuring of the past legible in the private Titanic Quarter development where the physical and intellectual traces of the histories of shipbuilding, its architecture and labour movement are overwritten with the Titanic as brand. It is legible in the graffitied wall who was here before and what was here before and the unlucky number 13 of the motorway underpass and it is legible in the interrupted sightline of the bonfire tower from the enclosed residential courtyard and the whitewashed walls of the former British Army barracks.

The co-researchers' exchange in reinstating the historical and social complexity of the city through the agonistic readings of Duncan and Hesse's images, uncover how the constructions of the city as image, brand and lived experience shape the geography of the city's imagination. It is a geography which identifies how development and sectarianism operate as two distinct regimes of representation of the city's past and imagined future. Neither reconciled nor dialectically synthesized the geography of development and sectarianism present competing



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claims to the past and the future that sit agonistically within the frame of the cityspace. It is a process through which the double of the continuity of political difference and disavowal of the Troubles generates visual and narrative tropes of the spatial, but it is also a process which unmasks the societal fissures along economic and class lines.

What is notable in Tubritt and Jewesbury's argument of the transformation from sectarian to economic conflict is how a sense of urbanism is a constitutive feature of its mediation, where the spatial is the primary mechanism through which this transformation is recorded rather than a secondary effect of it. It is this sense of urbanism which traces out the political project of urban development and residential segregation onto the cityspace, where the Titanic Quarter and the loyalist annual bonfires construct an imagined future as geography of place.

The co-researchers in addressing these contradictions turn attention to how these spatial figurations of the city are simultaneously real and imaginary, both metaphoric and metonymic appropriations of the city. In highlighting how the Titanic image and the Troubles image are left unreconciled, the co-researchers uncover the shared logic of representation to mark cultural and spatial difference. But within this shared purpose of cultural and spatial representation lies a differentiated reading of post Agreement, on the one hand as the continuity of historical demand as future expectation and on the other as its inverse, the post political. In both configurations the politics of place and the place of politics are linked, insofar as post Agreement as the politics of place accommodates continuity and the post political, and the place of politics as its spatialisation make claims on the city as a political and spatial praxis. Competing claims that not only underscore the political mapping of the past and the future but also the meaning of post Agreement as a theorisation of a political chronology of time and place.

The issue of the Titanic image and the Troubles image as irreconcilable is tested by the co-researchers, revealing the ways in which they are in part constitutive of one another as a claim to place and how they are symbolically and literally put in place. It is an exchange which also indicates how the vocabularies and slogans of

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urban development – ‘Our Legacy, Your Future’, ‘Our Time, Our Place’ – repeats the spatial and temporal vocabulary of sectarianism– ‘our day will come’<sup>23</sup> (IRA) - invoking the lived experience of the two communities and past violence.

It is this reading of the metonymic and metaphoric which opens an analytical space for a consideration of the symbolic and the literal, the lived and the imagined that is directly engaged with and connected to the question of how the city is represented. Moreover in the shifts between the metonymic and metaphoric and the symbolic and the literal, the co-researchers provide a genealogy and cartography of the present of post Agreement, mediated by the images of Duncan and Hesse. It is a cartography that foregrounds the anomalies and contradictions of post Agreement in the simultaneity of urban development and sectarianism as a spatial praxis and a genealogy that traces the shift ‘from a struggle over the relations of representation to a politics of representation itself’ (Hall, 1988:27). This acute awareness of how the city is represented not only opens up the more complex debates about how a new political imaginary of the city might be developed that resists the cultural and economic framing of insider and outsider but critically investigates ‘community’ as an analytical term rather than a rhetorical device for naturalising division.

As a dialogical process which unpacks how the place of politics is an invocation of spatiality and how what is seen and not seen in images locates perspective constructed either as acts of identification or non-recognition, it draws attention to the ways in which the city space is both produced in the image of capital and in the vocabularies of community. These differential typologies of the city that both seek to describe the past and future expectation, point to the ways in which the singular geography of the city is displaced by the competing constructions – social, economic and temporal – through which the city’s past is re-described and its future imagined. It is a process which both acknowledges the city as a representational space and as an act of representation, where the dynamic of urban development and continued segregation are interconnected as endeavours simultaneously real, symbolic and imagined to ‘conquer and spatialise time’. In

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<sup>23</sup> ‘our day will come’ is a translation of the Irish ‘tíocfaidh ár lá’

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this appeal to the spatial both in the vocabularies of ‘community’ and the ‘market’, the cityspace becomes more than an outcome of social relations, but an active and constitutive component in how the city functions as a contested space of politics and identity, longing and belonging, intimacy and estrangement that shapes questions of location and future direction.

Moreover in putting pressure on the present/absent dichotomy, the images of Duncan and Hesse challenge a linear notion of time, rooted in a progressivist sense of political and social change, where the demands made by the spectres from the past punctures the rhetoric of newness, putting into view the graffiti tag ‘here before’ beneath the motorway or the top of the bonfire that encroaches on the sightline from the private enclosed upper courtyard. It is this disruption which exposes how recent urban development actively constructs what belongs to the future and what does not through the spatialisation of time. It is this reading of recent urban development and sectarianism as temporal and spatial practices which gives critical and political urgency to Long’s question of the future. It is a question which not only registers post Agreement as a critical juncture but indicates how the political rhetoric of ‘community’ and ‘market’ both look to the future through evoking the past, whereby the annual bonfires and the Titanic Quarter are made coterminous as endeavours to determine the political and social meaning of place across time.

As a question without immediate answer or resolution it turns to the challenge of how alternative potential futures might be imagined and negotiated. It is a question which not only indicates how conversational praxis can produce a mode of political sociality but how the disjunctive space of photographs by making complex the relation between the real and imagined, the lived and the fictive, the past and the present can generate alternative symbolic and visual vocabularies of political and social change.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Place as Archive**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In one sense place as archive is intended as a way of reading the landscape as an active repository of meaning – lived and symbolic – which not only contours the way place is understood but makes culturally intelligible notions of the national and national belonging. As a curatorial framework it links to spectrality and urbanism in its endeavour to uncover the affective meanings of place as a public discourse.

By conjoining the terms place and archive through the preposition ‘as’ my intention was to explore how place functions as an archive – to explore both the ways in which place holds memories and the way in which memories are overwritten by new frames of reference. It is an approach to place as an archival record of cultural, social, historical and political meanings which is necessarily responsive to the histories of political violence, which has intensified the symbolic and affective meaning of place – in the rhetoric of militancy and liberation, community and solace.

Like the preceding chapter Place as Archive attempts to provoke the emergence of translational thinking about ‘community’ and ‘identity’ to look again at place, of Northern Ireland and photography. Intended therefore to disturb both direction and meaning of place and archive, ‘as’ points to the ambiguities and ambivalences of how the past is interred and recovered, remembered and forgotten.

In considering the topographical correlates of the memory of violence, place as archive explores how the uncertainty of post Agreement animates the landscape, where the binary of anxiety and optimism, the benign and malevolent, transmits the past as the future. In looking at the images of Mary McIntyre and David Farrell

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through the curatorial framework of place as archive is therefore to see how the histories of the Troubles still constitute a reality, as forms of identification and trepidation, where place as located history is both contested and open to the contingent. The insistence on ‘as’ is therefore intended to direct attention to how images function as an active layering of interpretations and affective meanings - social, political, psychological and physical.

I am nevertheless aware that this curatorial framework is based on two types of discourse. I am therefore not supposing that the terms place and archive have no meaningful referent, or that in their combination certain critical demands are not imposed upon the photographs. It is an attempt to be both about place and archive insofar as it tries by conjoining the terms to foreground how ‘Place is space to which meaning has been ascribed’ (Carter, Donald and Squires, 1993: xii).

However, this is not to gloss over the mix of attribution and affirmation that the word archive proposes, which, as the recent fall-out over the Boston College Archive, Belfast Project<sup>24</sup> attests to, is not sheltered from political and legal interest and re-use. Setting aside the criminal allegations made against senior members of Sinn Féin in the interviews, which at the time of writing are without resolution, the political and legal fall-out from the Boston College Archive, Belfast Project exposes the lack and need for a coherent ethics in dealing with the past. In contrast my concern here is less to do with the attribution and affirmation of testimony either as an inventory of ‘our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations’ or as ‘truth telling’, or as the judicial issues of guilt and complicity and is instead more concerned with memory as a dialogic process, where the dynamics of conversation provide the discursive conditions for the recognition of difference and resemblance, continuity and discontinuity across time and experience that throws into question post Agreement through the affective description of the past as the present. There is therefore in this association of place as archive an attempt to consider the process of representation

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<sup>24</sup> The Boston College Archive, Belfast Project is an oral history of Irish Republican and Loyalist paramilitary testimonies gathered 2001-2006 and archived in the Burns Library at Boston College. Conducted by lead researchers Anthony McIntyre and Ed Moloney the archive is the subject of legal disputes – with subpoenas issued by the British Government. On Friday, September 13th, 2013 the US First Circuit Court of Appeals entered its formal mandate that approved the release of 11 interviews from the total archive of 65 interviews to the PSNI. The legal dispute over the archive is ongoing.

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and cultural authority, where the history of the Troubles and the theologico-political description of sectarianism, function as the subject of discourse and the object of psychic identification.

Unlike Boston College Archive Belfast Project which was centrally concerned with ‘testimony as truth’, Place as Archive is very much a cultural question, which shifts from the representation of the aftermath of the Troubles to the social realities of this aftermath caught between expressive evocation and history. The conversation, freed from the constraints of an archival impetus toward testimony, opens a space that accepts antagonism to reveal the aftermath of the Troubles in its private and public dimensions, its historical past and narrative present. It is a difference which lies not only in the status and construction of testimony, but also in the ways in which such constructions activate an archival claim to validity, obscuring the power of archival practice in determining personal claims to political and historical ‘truth’. The affirmative inflection of Place as Archive is therefore proposed as a way to problematise in the process of the discussion, how the past is thought, remembered and imagined.

However I am equally aware that this curatorial framing is itself an inaugural narrative act that grounds the discussion of the photographs. The implied reciprocity and discursive affiliation between place and archive as repositories of meaning draws attention to the representation of landscape in the photographs of Mary McIntyre and David Farrell, which in the circumstance of the island of Ireland reiterates the tensions and schema of division and political claim of national belonging. It is a contestation which enfolds landscape within a wider sense of demand and loss of identity and identification, where place becomes the constitutive essence of division and unity, suspicion and plenitude.

In selecting the photographers Mary McIntyre and David Farrell I was interested in exploring different approaches to landscape photography that would enable a discussion on how place functions as an indispensable part of social, cultural and symbolic experience of the nation. In consequence I selected David Farrell in order to investigate how the violence of the Troubles, in particular the Disappeared, has reshaped the South. In moving between images of the North and the South through the work of Mary McIntyre and David Farrell my intention was

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to understand how the Troubles is re-signified across the territorial constructions of nation space, in order to more fully explore the affective dimensions of place as archive as relations between memory and forgetting, the symbolic and the real.

It is a movement between the place of the North and the South that was enacted by the co-researchers in the journey from Belfast to Wilkinstown in County Meath, in the Republic of Ireland – that repeats the journey taken by the IRA with the victims Kevin McKee and Seamus Wright in 1972<sup>25</sup>.

In hosting the second part of the event in the field near Coghalstown in Wilkinstown place as archive takes on a funereal resonance, a remembrance made all the more present by being in the field where the bodies of Kevin McKee age 17 and Seamus Wright age 25, are alleged to have been buried by the IRA in 1972. It also created a kind of visual diptych between looking at the photographed landscape and the landscape of the site, where the harshness of the term the ‘Disappeared’ which seems to speculate on the failure to locate the bodies of the victims, is made tangible in the failed searches for the bodies of Kevin McKee and Seamus Wright since the IRA’s admission in 1999. But while the field in Wilkinstown provides the scene for a post-mortem of place as archive, the analyses neither dissolve nor dissipate the impacts of violence on the present – a violence which calls for another mode of thinking beyond a mode of remembrance or commemoration.

This rethreading of the past, of the Disappeared and the Troubles, attempts to open an interpretative field which in its consideration of the present is also concerned with the historical. It also provides a consideration of landscape in its many guises and across an array of disciplinary formations: art history, art criticism, literary history and political theory. As such the following analysis of the discussion of Place as Archive moves between and across considerations of landscape, history and the political activated by the co-researchers specific disciplinary interest and response to the photographs.

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<sup>25</sup> There were sixteen people who ‘disappeared’ between 1972 and 1985. The IRA admitted responsibility for thirteen of the sixteen, while one was admitted by the INLA. No attribution has been given to the remaining two.

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It is an enquiry which is also poignantly caught within the specificity of the time and place as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, since subsequent to the event, the unconfirmed remains of Brendan McGraw, the twenty four year old abducted from Belfast and murdered in 1978, were found in a bog in Oristown, County Meath. The location of Brendan McGraw's remains by the ICLVR, The Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains on October 1, 2014 not only points to the persistence of the searches, but how time and place affects interpretation, when the speculative becomes historical fact.

In selecting the photographers Mary McIntyre and David Farrell for the event, I was interested to understand what would emerge in the discussion between the more formally post conceptual photography of Mary McIntyre and the documentary form of David Farrell – how considerations of landscape, history and the political might be refigured by their distinct photographic practice. But in doing so it also seeks to reopen the question of archive in the circumstance of post Agreement, where paradoxically the horizon of history, its meaning and futurity is already determined in its deferral. In many ways the photographs of Mary McIntyre and David Farrell are points of entry to a discussion on what knowledge is valorised, which subtends the production of an archive both in terms of its use and neglect, centrality and displacement. It is a consideration which retraces the initial research framework of this thesis – which was to explore the photographic archives housed by Belfast Exposed. This intention to look again at the photographs of the Troubles archive led to a questioning of why this archive was not actively used as a resource. What became apparent in my initial research was that this question had less to do with an institutional failing on the part of the gallery and had more to do with the way in which the Good Friday Agreement is conceptualised and installed as the end point of the Troubles. A conceptualisation of chronological time as a periodisation of history that shapes two forms of archive – the archive constructed *of* the Troubles (Belfast Exposed Archive) and the archive retrospectively constructed as a form of testimony and witness *about* the Troubles (Boston College Archive Belfast Project); it is a difference which more broadly speaks to the use of the post Agreement archive as a substitute political history and substitute truth and reconciliation process, where cultural memory is activated as the historical corollary of the Agreement, mediated as the



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culturalisation of political differences<sup>26</sup>. Moreover the retrospective account arguably mistakes memory for the raw material of history rather than understand memory as ‘an image of the past constructed by a subject in the present’ which may be ‘irrational, inconsistent, deceptive and self-serving’ (Megill,1998:56) These interpretative problems that attend the use of personal testimony, not least the political agency that the testimony replicates or authorises, indicates the potential for a selective and thereby limited historical, political and judicial comprehension of what took place. Moreover it points to the central paradox of the ‘memory model’ (Osborne, 2013:193) since it is reliant on the reconstruction and dramaturgy of memory in the present rather than a simple retrieval of information from the past.

My intention in this chapter is to disrupt this splitting between *of* and *about* to render the Troubles less punctually datable as an event in order to look again at the affects and affectivity of the past in the present and the present in authorising the past. It is an endeavour which follows on from the preceding chapter’s emphasis on the spectre to see how memory haunts history as an iterative insistence on a ‘debt to the dead’ (Ricouer, 1988: 118) which equally puts pressure on questions of documentary research and justice. As such the use of archive in the title is not an attempt to infer some historical truth, collective identity or to affirm memory as historical explanation that prioritises the present as post Agreement and the Troubles as a remembered distant. Instead the purpose of the curatorial doubling of place as archive is an effort to problematize the constructed use of subjective testimony and the representation of place as an enquiry into the documentary process and the conditions, desires, contra-desires and constraints that inform the meaning of the photographic image and the photographically inflected subject of Northern Ireland and the Troubles.

I am therefore not proposing place as archive as a curatorial trope of ‘cultural memory’, but as a curatorial framework that questions the motivation of the turn to memory in order to render intelligible the theoretical and political implications

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<sup>26</sup> In 2004 The Archives Task Force Report recommended that archives should be used to re-build a stronger sense of community in Northern Ireland and contribute to healing divided communities. See: Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure – Archives Policy for Northern Ireland (consultation document) Oct 2004.

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of this archival approach to history and historical understanding. An intelligibility that is reflexive, since the public nature of the event, the knowledge that the transcripts of the conversations will form the text of a publication points to the archival nature of the event itself - a reflexivity that makes apparent the problems and dynamics of interpretation. The co-researcher's comments are therefore not approached as citations of testimony but as constructions of interpretation and it is this aspect which guides the following account and analysis. This chapter is therefore not concerned with either validating or discrediting individual interpretation, but instead attempts to affirm the primacy of dialogue through an analysis of the intersection of interpretations - theoretical, political and historical – addressed in part experimentally by trying to weave together the interpretations while critically responsible to how interpretation is constructed. In this aspect the images which provide the focus of this analysis are those which generated discussion amongst the co-researchers. As such this analysis neither follows the selection which the photographers made nor does it prioritise the practitioner's description and explanation of their work, instead it attempts to follow the questions and responses which emerged from the discussion.

The event commenced with a discussion of Mary McIntyre's photographs, hosted at the MAC Gallery in Belfast and is followed by a discussion of David Farrell's work from the site of the Disappeared in Wilkinstown. The event was hosted on Friday April 5, 2013.

The co-researchers invited to respond to the photographs of Mary McIntyre and David Farrell were: Mhairi Sutherland, artist and curator; Mark Hackett, architect, Forum for Alternative Belfast; John Byrne, visual artist; Colm Campbell, Emeritus Professor of Law, University of Ulster; Neil Jarman, Director, Institute for Conflict Research, Belfast; Emma Grey, PhD Researcher, University of Aberdeen; Stefanie Lehner, lecturer, School of English, Queen's University Belfast; Dave Loder, PhD Researcher, University of Ulster, Belfast.

In putting together the co-researchers my interest was in understanding how the range of disciplinary interests and practices – human rights, social justice, architecture, curation, literature, visual arts and photography – could subtend an

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enquiry into place as archive across the lived, imagined and symbolic and across the politics of history and the historical dimension of politics.

### 3.2 Place as Archive

Mary McIntyre opened the event with an explanation of her move from sculpture to photography in the 1990s, a move which she expressed as an awareness that her interest in sculpture had really been about ‘creating imagery’ (McIntyre). Her shift to photography also coincided with a frustration with ‘being labelled a “woman” artist’, where the constant use of the prefix “woman” became the operating explanation and description of her work. In response McIntyre experimented ‘with how to make photographs that would make gender less apparent’ and ‘as a way of doing this I took the figure out of the work and began photographing interior spaces’ (McIntyre).

The first photograph that attempts this process of masking gender is *Aura of Crisis* (1998) (Fig 3.1), a photograph of an empty hall with a circle of 18 chairs placed in the centre beneath a curtained proscenium arch stage, the floor of the hall is marked with white and red lines for sports games – tennis and netball, and the circle of chairs face inwards. The mise en scene of the photograph, the institutional setting and the expectancy of a meeting that the arrangement of the chairs indicates, assumes an acute political significance in the photograph’s title *Aura of Crisis*, rephrasing the expectancy of a meeting and a conversation yet to be spoken as a demand for insurgent answers. In the uncertainty of what kind of future meeting will take place in the hall, the empty chairs make manifest the political exigencies of ‘the substantial differences’ announced by the Agreement. McIntyre is aware that the image’s caption results in an active reading of ‘the political terrain’ of Northern Ireland - an awareness that also results in a tension between what the work is about and how the work is understood:

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Mary McIntyre: I actually feel it would be disingenuous and exploitative of me to kind of piggy back on something because it's Northern Ireland. I could so easily have done that. Curators have wanted me to do that, they've wanted me to change titles, they've wanted to kind of sensationalise oh she's from Belfast and this work is about The Troubles.

The request made by curators for titles of work to be changed in order for Northern Ireland and the Troubles to be made more legible indicates both how the captioning of images provides a strategy of reading and regulating the meaning of an image. Moreover it suggests an expectation that Northern Irish photography should define a perspective on the Troubles through the referential frame of title and captions.

McIntyre's resistance to this expectation is made explicit in the choice of caption *A Complex Variety of Greens (From Emerald to Viridian)* (2011), (Fig 3.2), which makes place only partially present in the image of a bank of dense green foliage surrounding a stagnant pool. While the caption describes the experience of the colours in the photograph it does so by leaving aside location, the demand of identity that would address its use as a descriptive representation of Northern Ireland. This withholding of location which refuses a representational narrative nonetheless becomes a part of how the image is understood:

Mhairi Sutherland: You constantly stay away from being specific with the landscapes so there's always an ambiguity about place

Mary McIntyre: I would have no problem with anybody asking me where is that ? I would tell them. I'm not trying to hide the fact that it's in Northern Ireland. The photograph with the algae and with the long title, *A Complex Variety of Greens (From Emerald to Viridian)*, that was made at Stormont and I have no issue with Stormont being the title if that is the work, the works subject, but there are themes that I want to work with and explore beyond the reading that this is Stormont. A lot

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of the work deals with psychological space rather than just the actual context in which it was made.

David Farrell: Is it possible that the locations have such political weight to them, like for example the one in Stormont that would then push the image into a remit that you don't particularly want people to go to?

Mary McIntyre: I think the titles are as intuitive as the image making itself. So it's not like I made a conscious decision that I better not call this Stormont because..... but I do think it would close the image down in a way and that's what I want to avoid.

While the withholding of location 'is not a conscious decision' naming place would nevertheless inscribe the image with a layer of associated meanings in referencing Stormont, the seat of the Northern Irish Assembly. It is a withholding which in producing 'an ambiguity about place' (Sutherland) speaks to a broader consideration of how place is conceptualised. The title *A Complex Variety of Greens (From Emerald to Viridian)*, reverses in part 'she's from Belfast and this work is about The Troubles' by obscuring political signification beyond the content of the image - the suffocation of a verdant landscape by algae as a focus on neglect and enervation that corresponds to an emphasis on 'psychological space rather than just the actual context in which it was made' (McIntyre).

However the suggestion that the title *A Complex Variety of Greens (From Emerald to Viridian)* avoids closing the image down and keeps the image open to interpretations, nevertheless raises the question 'where is that?'; a question which speaks to the historical crisis in the conceptualisation of Northern Ireland, as place and subject of cultural and national representation. The endeavour to go 'beyond this is Stormont' while making an image in the grounds of Stormont symptomatically performs the perplexities of place wrested from 'the actual context in which it was made' (McIntyre). It is a displacement which pivots on a tension between the cultural experience of place and the generality of 'psychological space':

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Neil Jarman: There's a tension that's coming out here between the specific and the general. It seems to me the photographs are trying to avoid being pinned down to the specific to open things up to the general. But then there's the viewers, and what I'm doing is asking myself do I recognise that, can I see where that was taken, oh yes, I recognise that. And if you're from the area or lived here, you immediately put a different slant on it [...] we keep putting the photographs back to the specific

Jarman's account that 'if you're from the area [...] you immediately put a different slant on it' points to the ways in which place is envisaged and understood as a form of cultural experience. But if recognition of place is not exclusively delimited by cultural experience then the emphasis on psychological space not only implies an identification of the imaginary and the sensory but does so by foregrounding the signification of the historical and the geographical by their absence; whereby the tension 'between the specific and the general' is reworked as a dialectic of presence and absence. This complex intercut is made explicit in the following discussion of the image *Underpass* (2003) (Fig 3.3) – a photograph taken at night of a desolate sodium lit motorway underpass, with a pedestrian passageway hemmed in with a chain link fence. The soil behind the fence is parched from the shelter of the motorway above and the sodium glow whose source is not visible colours the soil sand.

Mary McIntyre: The Underpass is somewhere that I drive past every night on my way back from work. Two weeks after I had taken this photograph I saw it on the news practically from the same position as the camera viewpoint, and the area had been cordoned off. There'd been a loyalist murder there. So in making work in Northern Ireland there's practically nowhere that you can go that hasn't had some traumatic or violent event linked to it, you know, every corner, everywhere you turn. But I've never felt that I could directly reference that violence in the work despite the fact that I have been based in Northern Ireland all my life and

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lived through the worst of that period, although we're by no means out the other end at all. But I do think a sense of that history comes through the work in terms of the atmosphere created

John Byrne: The image of the Underpass where there'd been a loyalist murder and as you said, that's common and everywhere you look there's been some event.... but I am uncertain what I am being asked as a viewer. I remember the first time I watched a Willie Doherty video where he had put down his car headlights and followed the road to Armagh to an assassination, a sectarian murder, and the first time I saw it, it really affected me because I, like a lot of people here, would have felt under threat from actual death.

There was a guy in our school who was killed in a sectarian murder and taken and dumped in a forest here in Belfast and Willie Doherty's work demanded that we look at this place, it was powerful. Whereas some of these images leave me I wouldn't say cold, they just leave me disinterested. Perhaps it's because of that lack of identifying the place. And I know the difficulty, I've been called, we've all been called Troubles artists because we've been brought up with this violence.

This exchange speaks directly to the curatorial theme place as archive, asking what the representation of place uncovers when locational reference is removed. But rather than understand and reduce this exchange to a crude opposition between the 'specific and the general' it touches on a deeper identity between the two where the social and political genealogies of place as the residual traces of violence 'comes through the work in terms of the atmosphere' (McIntyre).

McIntyre's description that there is 'practically nowhere that you can go that hasn't had some traumatic or violent event linked to it' expresses a representational problem and difficulty in any intention to localise violence. This

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comprehension of a pervasive violence which is everywhere and nowhere, not only forestalls in advance the singularity of the 'actual context in which it was made' but corresponds to the attention on 'the atmosphere created' (McIntyre). It is an attention which relays the place of McIntyre's images back into the context of the Troubles, while at the same time opening the question of place for re-examination; a re-examination that both links the absence of 'identifying place' to the history of British colonialism, Irish partition and to the uncertainty of what comes after the Agreement. John Byrne's response that the lack of locational reference is a perspectival absence which diminishes the urgency of a demand to 'look at this place' is generated in part by his experience of feeling 'under threat from actual death' (Byrne). It suggests a belief in the political efficacy of visible representation while acknowledging the burden of the political and social violence of Northern Ireland's history that categorises in advance artistic practice. But this tension between political and social engagement and critical autonomy, between photography as a site of staging the histories of violence and as an aesthetic distancing or 'obscuring' of the violence, also indicates how the memory of the viewer informs the process of a photograph's reception, where images are relocated in the specifics of the lived experience. In this way Byrne's response follows on from Jarman's 'if you're from the area or lived here, you immediately put a different slant on it' where place is the repository of lived experience, its historical past, and the signifier of political contestation, its narrative present.

The central preoccupation of Byrne's 'look at this place' as a pedagogical and ideological objection is nevertheless complicated by *what* is recognised, which does not simply transform the content of recognition but marks the 'place' from which the political is spoken and envisaged. However if *Underpass* is understood as an image that describes the 'atmosphere created' by the past violence of sectarianism, it does so in direct opposition to the movement from one place to another that an underpass proposes. It is an opposition which also questions the splitting of past and present, which McIntyre's parenthetical re-presentation of the image as the site of a loyalist murder makes clear. In this re-description of the *Underpass* as an ante-mortem, a prefiguring of violence that is yet to happen, McIntyre's presentation of 'atmosphere' becomes a statement on political



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vigilance, a watchfulness on place and an inward view on Northern Ireland beyond 'the actual context in which it was made' (McIntyre). As such McIntyre's withholding of place can also be understood as a way to present what a place communicates while exposing locational identity as the paradigmatic force and consequence of segregation and division. This apparent paradox of exposure by concealment, which initiates the co-researchers discussion on recognition and (political) identification, suggests that the 'ambiguity of place' provides a form of political projection and counter visualisation in 'putting the photographs back to the specific' (Jarman).

In this decentring of place the images assume both the discursive difficulty of naming Northern Ireland /North of Ireland and the problematic relation between the factual and the projective where place functions according to political referents and priorities of loyalism, and nationalism. But while this partial presence gives expression to Northern Irish politics as an antagonistic struggle of identifications, McIntyre disputes this as a negation of place as the following exchange demonstrates:

Emma Grey:                   It's interesting that you don't give it a location. It reminds me of the work of the urban theorist Marc Augé who has claimed that these non-places lead to a crisis of identity - do you see your work as containing any sort of crisis of identity?

Mary McIntyre:               Well I'm kind of allergic to that theory. I don't think there's any such thing as a non-place. I just can't get my head around it when Augé talks about airport departure lounges and underpasses. I don't see anywhere as a non-place because I think everywhere has a function and everywhere is used by somebody for some sort of activity, even if it's not a very pleasant activity or it's a place of transition. For me it's less to do with the specifics of the actual location, it's more about the specifics within the photograph.

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This reading of non-place supposes that Augé's concept has no critically meaningful referent and that it designates no more than the erasure of place. However Augé's equivocation between an abstract conception of negation: 'a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity' and a dialectical conception of negation: 'the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten' (Augé, 1995: 75-79) indicates a more ambivalent theorisation of non-place. Nevertheless what is striking about this exchange is McIntyre's refusal of a simple identity between place and its means of representation, which turns to the construction of a photograph and the negotiation of 'the specifics within the photograph' as opposed to the 'specifics of the actual location' (McIntyre). While for Byrne this emphasis produces an ambivalence of address that recalibrates 'look at this place' to 'where is that?', retracing the demand to look as a demand to locate which Byrne identifies as an attempt to be unencumbered by the histories of the Troubles and freed from the discourses – artistic and political – that accompany it.

However McIntyre's appeal to the autonomy of the image: 'it's more about the specifics within the photograph' can also be understood as a turning away from the vicissitudes of interpretation to the question of the structured photographic gaze and its affects, its dislocatory presence that uncovers the tensions of the 'general and specific' disrupting the visibility of recognition. In the image *The Dream 1*, (2009) (Fig 3.4) the viewer is required to work at looking through the fog that creates a blue tinted mist in order to discern the 'specifics within the photograph': the road bridge over a river, three supporting rectangular pillars and vaulted archways beneath the bridge, a vertical upright traffic signal and next to it on the bridge railing, a life buoy.

As the horizon of the image and the destination of the bridge dissolves into the fog the traffic signal and life buoy are centred in the photograph at the intersection of seeing and not seeing. In this doubling of seeing and not seeing the image enacts a displacement of Byrne's demand to 'look at this place' as if the possibility of pictoriality or image-making associated with the Northern Ireland has been

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unsettled to reveal fog as a metonym of place. It is a disruption of recognition as the image fades into the fog which both estranges and makes uncertain the meaning of the image as the following exchange indicates:

Mary McIntyre: When I started to look into the landscape aspect of the work a bit more and started to read about the sublime and research into that, you know, the difference between what Edmund Burke would say about the sublime and this notion of terror safely experienced from a distance as opposed to Kant, I began to start to understand something then about what it was that I was feeling. I began to be able to put a name on it and the idea of the sublime had a real resonance. It suddenly made a lot of sense because I had those feelings about the place or the work before but couldn't quite articulate it.

Stefanie Lehner: I find it really interesting because the sublime, in a way, intersects with the notion of the uncanny where these liminal qualities come together and for me as a viewer it creates an alienation effect, a kind of distancing from the image which at the same time pulls you in.

Colm Campbell: That seems to me to be critical at least that's what I took from the images. It's sublime but there's also the question mark as to whether it really is. If you go back to the image of the bridge in *The Dream*, on one level there are elements of the sublime in the image and then there is the figure, which actually isn't a figure but in some way it stands as a figure and does so not necessarily in a good way. So with that photograph what came across quite strongly is this tension around the sublime versus the sinister.

David Farrell: I think that there is always that notion of terror involved in our understanding of the sublime, that we're both in awe but

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quite fearful of what it is we're looking at, even if what we are looking at can appear quite banal.

Colm Campbell: In the literature on atrocity there's a good body of thought associated with Hannah Arendt on the banality of evil. So something that's phenomenally significant can be banal, it can be both significant and banal because of a particular context, a particular history.

Mark Hackett: To me the photographs are not that sinister, for me they are about the beauty in the mundane things that we can all see on our doorstep and the prevalence of these banal suburbs. Growing up in County Tyrone, in rural Northern Ireland, there were a lot of quarries with this sort of Russian constructivist machinery. But then there was also the whole backdrop of The Troubles which shaped how you viewed the landscape as a kid growing up in it. The sense you'd have that you might run into some trouble. There could be British Army soldiers or IRA brigades hanging in the undergrowth or IRA brigades or the British Army stopping people on the roads. You were aware of that sinister tone but there was also this beautiful landscape which you'd relate to in a different way.

Colm Campbell: But a picture can be both sinister and beautiful at once, it's not an either/or situation. Several of these pictures straddle both these senses of the beautiful and sinister.

In this reference to Burke's formulation of the sublime, which stands in many ways as the presentiment of the Irish Gothic (Gibbons, 2003:4), the fascination with beauty and terror presents a volatile intersection of aesthetics and politics: 'we're both in awe but quite fearful of what it is we're looking at' (Farrell). For Lehner this use of the sublime connects to the uncanny and the liminal, where the in-between identity of the image, between seeing and not seeing effects a form of 'distancing from the image' (Lehner). It is a complex thought which suggests

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seeing and not seeing as points of recognition and alienation, of being pulled in and distanced from the image opens up the space of the sublime and the subliminal, where the traffic signal ‘in some way [...] stands as a figure and does so not necessarily in a good way’ (Campbell). This shift between first sight, the corrective looking again and then the incorporation of doubt into the reading of the image provokes ‘the tension between the sinister and the sublime’ (Campbell).

This misperception of the traffic signal in *The Dream I* for a human figure standing on the bridge, when understood as a part of the image’s embedded performance and anticipation of misreading, points to the slippage between the factual and the projective which like the photograph *Underpass* shifts between the image as post-mortem and ante-mortem. It is an apprehension of the ‘fearful’ which grounds the anthropomorphism of the traffic signal and provides a narrative apparatus for the development of a psycho-social vision of the ‘person’ and their contemplation of the river.

In this modulation of the beautiful and sinister, the banal and the significant and the benign and malignant *The Dream I* activates a complex interpretative process of the sublime and subliminal which calls into view ‘a particular context, a particular history’ as a form of misreading (Campbell). It is an interpretation of the sublime which mirrors the trajectory of the conversation of the co-researchers, where comprehension of landscape and recollection of childhood gives way to the ‘sense you’d have that you might run into some trouble. There could be British Army soldiers or IRA brigades hanging in the undergrowth or IRA brigades or the British Army stopping people on the roads’ (Hackett). But this return to the histories of the Troubles embedded in the landscape and unearthed in the exchange of difference and similitude, of the beautiful and the sinister, is also foreshadowed by Campbell’s reference to ‘banality of evil’ (Arendt, 1964). It is a reference, however oblique, to ‘The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal’ (Arendt, 1964: 129), that underscores the normalisation of the ‘backdrop of the Troubles’ that contrasts with ‘this beautiful landscape which you’d relate to in a different way’ (Hackett).

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This relationship with and to the landscape is explored in McIntyre's *Interior Landscape 1*, (2000) of an anonymous institutional space that appears abandoned (Fig 3.5). In the centre of the image there is an open cupboard, housing rows of empty key tags, a teaspoon covered in dust is on the shelf of the serving hatch, a coat hook is missing from the wall. Beneath the remaining coat hook an image of an unframed painting of a rural landscape remains affixed to the wall, providing a counter image to the interior landscape of the abandoned space and centring landscape as the photograph's subject: as idealised rurality, imagined past and the former workers' solace. It is this latter aspect, the investment of meanings of comfort and escape that the painting had provided for the workers that McIntyre registers in a visit to Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam:

Mary McIntyre: I was exhibiting in Amsterdam and on an afternoon off I went to the Anne Frank house and saw that Anne Frank had posted images torn out from magazines on her bedroom wall. On my return to Belfast I realised the correspondence with what the workers had done which I hadn't noticed before

The workers' display of an Arcadian landscape in contrast to the interior of the abandoned workplace directs attention both to how landscape functions as a signifier of nation, plenitude and beauty and to how these significations cross-reference art history. It is a point made in the image *Untitled (after Caspar David Friedrich)* (2002) (Fig 3.6) which as the title makes explicit acknowledges German Romanticism as a critical claim on contemporary conceptualisations of landscape representation.

However it is an acknowledgement which is interrupted, as the view from the river towards the mountains is impeded by an industrial plant. It is an interruption of sightline which reworks the idea of the sublime by replacing the force of nature with modernity, as a process of iteration and differentiation that undermines the narrative of 'landscape' as a stable system of reference:

John Byrne: It's strange how we inherit this idea of what is beautiful. I think I somehow inherited this idea that Ireland is the most

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beautiful place in the world. It's as if it were part of my identity that was communicated to me by my family despite the fact that my father never actually left Ireland so he never really experienced landscape beauty anywhere else

Mark Hackett: I remember flying over County Down and looking down at this whole landscape that I was familiar with and suddenly realising that my whole childhood of drainage pipes, people digging up and draining land, taking out hedges, that all of that which had been going on during my early lifetime is now almost complete. As I was looking down I realised there's no cows and I realised that this green landscape had very few trees and that all the grass was probably from four species which came out of a bag.

That flight really drove home to me how the whole of County Down has very few pockets of forest, very few wild fields. I remember sitting on the plane thinking this is like a desert, a kind of farming desert which is completely different to the view when you're on the ground and you have trees and roads. In a way there is a level of violence that we've done to the landscape, and we're maybe not aware of how much of it has happened. We're still presented with this image of Northern Ireland as a kind of rural ideal when it's been so scarred by the violence of the political and the mechanistic and now it's actually suburbs of people who don't work on the land.

Hackett's account of how an aerial perspective made visible the scars of political violence and intensive farming that counters the 'image of Northern Ireland as a kind of rural ideal' similarly challenges the certitude that 'Ireland is the most beautiful place in the world' (Byrne). Byrne's description of this certainty as a familial inheritance, 'I somehow inherited this idea', suggests an understanding of landscape which cannot be defined independently of the predicates of affect,

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emotion, desire and perception, since it constitutes one of its dimensions: 'It's as if it were part of my identity' (Byrne). This relation between place and identity corresponds to McIntyre's use of a figure in the image *Untitled (after David Caspar Friedrich)*, which forms a part of a communicative network of urban space, indistinctly and impersonally included. Stood wearing a black overcoat with his back to the camera on the mudded right bank of the river and facing toward the industrial plant and mountains, this figure has no referential priority over the other 'specifics within the photograph' beyond its function in the compositional perspective on the scale of the plant and in its reference to the use of the figure seen from behind in Friedrich's paintings. This appropriation, signalled in the photograph's title, presents landscape as both the symbolically charged imaginary of national space and as the psychic image of identification. It similarly presents McIntyre's cryptic suggestion that 'a lot of the work deals with psychological space' rather than the 'actual context in which it was made' insofar as the image is both a metaphoric substitution of a painting by Caspar David Friedrich and a photographic translation of German Romanticism.

Moreover the emphasis on 'psychological space rather than the actual context it was made' generates a productive contradiction in the work, being of Northern Ireland while calling the place of Northern Ireland into question. On the one hand the elusive designation of place in the titling of the work suggests access to the identifier Northern Ireland/North Ireland is exactly the place of contest and on the other that the elusiveness of place permits a reconsideration of Northern Ireland. It is a dialectical ambivalence described in the following exchange:

Mark Hackett:            They're actually spaces that I can imagine in so many different places. And in some way I think that is the importance of your work as Northern Irish work, because it reminds us that all around the world bad things happen in spaces like this. It's like the Scandinavian drama that we all watch which reminds us that in a real context Northern Ireland has had the same number of violent deaths as anywhere else, you know, 100 people per year was the



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average, well 100 people a year get killed in almost any small country by other means, especially car accidents.

David Farrell: That's why I think avoiding place and location in the titling is of interest because when people view an image they invariably go through the identification tag of the title and I think by giving them the titles that you do it gives the viewer a freedom to respond [...]

Mark Hackett: I suppose I was thinking the same. Looking at the images I'm kind of interested in the fact that they don't say where the place is and there's a part of my identity that doesn't want to be constantly caught here and so I understand that.

Mhairi Sutherland: We're looking over a particular period of time including the period of conflict and post conflict and there's a sense almost of a kind of alternative charting of this particular period. Even though your work is not specific in terms of place names, it seems very important that this body of work has been made over a particular time in this particular place.

The exchange indicates that the Troubles when understood as a metonym for Northern Ireland restricts alternate ways of looking at place and being. Farrell's 'freedom to respond' is therefore doubly inscribed in terms of place and being, connecting the question of interpretation with the desire to not 'be constantly caught here' (Hackett). It is a 'freedom to respond' that traces backwards to the images themselves 'as a kind of alternative charting of place' (Sutherland). But it is an alternative charting of the 'psychological space' which in many ways affirms the desire not to be caught within the histories of place.

The atmosphere of crime noir, of places to avoid physically and psychically or to be gone in the morning as McKinty proposes in the *Troubles Trilogy*, where Ireland is an 'island floating somewhere in the Atlantic, that all sensible people wanted to drift even further away, beyond their shores, beyond their imaginations' (McKinty, 2014:33), is captured in the images of rivers, underpasses and pathways

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which promise a route out but whose vista of escape is blocked by fog, algae, undergrowth and lost keys.

However the images also deploy a phenomenology of travel and time in terms of the journey undertaken to stand in the place to take the photograph, the time of standing still to photograph and the time of stillness to discern the detail of the 'specifics within the photograph':

Mary McIntyre: Over the last 10 years, I suppose I've been fog chasing [...] and we don't get much fog in Northern Ireland[...] So I've people texting me at 6am in the morning saying there's fog in such and such a location and I have to get in the car and just go, to try and capture it as quickly as I can [...]It's really about the connection that I feel that sustains over a period of time and so it presents itself to me as something I should photograph. Just to contradict my earlier statement, there is this one time when I was on my way to take a photograph in the fog and I stopped at the side of the road and came across this freshly turned earth and I think getting back to that idea of Northern Ireland I just felt completely disturbed by this kind of burial ground at the side of the mountain and I knew I should photograph it.

The ridges of freshly turned brown peat soil in the image *The Mound 1*, 2009 (Fig 3.7) contrasts with the slate grey fog of the horizon. It is a sight which prompts the compulsion to photograph in the immediacy of association of a burial without ceremony; an immediacy intensified by 'freshly turned earth', since the evidence will disappear when the next rain sweeps the piled earth back into the soil.

In titling the image *The Mound 1*, McIntyre chooses to editorialise what is seen, which like the titles *Aura of Crisis*, *A Complex Variety of Greens (From Emerald to Viridian)*, *Underpass*, *The Dream 1*, *Interior Landscape 1*, and *Untitled (after David Caspar Friedrich)* directs the viewer's attention and implicates a perspective on how the image is read. It is an editorialising, through framing and captioning, which masks Northern Ireland while disclosing the psychological

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resonance of the Troubles in the landscape: from the austere preparation for a meeting in *Aura of Crisis*; the algae choked pond of *A Complex Variety of Greens (From Emerald to Viridian)*; the crime noir scene of *Underpass*; the misperception of a possible suicide in *The Dream I*; the abandoned workplace of *Interior Landscape I*; the industrial sublime of *Untitled (after David Caspar Friedrich)* to the burial ground of *The Mound I*. The possibility of an exit from the continuum of violence is blocked as the images 'are emptied out of detail, where the landscape is almost erased and emptied out of the photograph, so all the viewer is left with is this atmosphere' (McIntyre).

While McIntyre's images of fog shrouded landscapes on appearance invert the foliage crammed detail of *A Complex Variety of Greens (From Emerald to Viridian)*, they are equally concerned with place as a sensory affect. But the dialectical ambivalence of an archaeology of affect and a distrust in the representational capacity of an image implies the violence of Northern Ireland has created the need for an 'almost erased landscape', as a kind of visual amnesia to force what is seen into a question of legibility. It results in an archive whose general taxonomy centres on the difficulty of place, as an ontological hesitation caught between the rural ideal and the scars of 'the violence of the political and the mechanistic' (Hackett).

It is a point explored in the concluding dialogue of David Farrell and Mhairi Sutherland:

David Farrell: I think this work is almost like an alternative archive to what would be considered the usual photographic archive of the last even 15, 20 years. You mightn't like the use of the word 'escape' but I almost feel that one of the things driving you was some sort of escaping the way other people were responding to this place, and so in a way also escaping what it was you were living through as a person and as an artist. I think there's this very interesting archive embedded within this work about what this place is.

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Mhairi Sutherland: And it's a very particular archive because as the work progresses the place becomes more and more obscure, it becomes darker, it becomes hidden by fog, so in a sense, the place is almost disappearing, as if it's being buried so all that's left is this psychological resonance. The place itself is literally disappearing and becoming veiled and becoming obscured as the series reaches its end.

Farrell's consideration of the 'archive embedded in the work' as a form of 'escape' from both the lived experience and the expectation of an artist's response to 'what this place is' rephrases Hackett's 'there's a part of my identity that doesn't want to be constantly caught here'. But there is arguably another level of psychological and political resonance that the images communicate by foregrounding the contestations over place, the equivocation of land as nation-space and identity as belonging. However Farrell's choice of the word 'escape' tellingly points to the difficulty and contradictions inherent in the work: between obscuring the place of Northern Ireland, as if the past and present of the place is not yet interpretable and the denial of 'escape', where sightlines of horizon and routes out are invisible and impassable. As such the 'escape' Farrell identifies within the work returns precisely to the place of Northern Ireland, as an imagistic discontinuity of how 'other people were responding to this place' (Farrell). A difference which Sutherland notes as a 'very particular archive' where place becomes 'more and more obscure' until it is 'as if it's being buried so all that's left is this psychological resonance'.

The implication that the psychological can only be exhumed when place is buried restages the 'kind of burial ground on the mountain side' in the image *The Mound I*, as a presentation of burial and exhumation that surfaces the violence of Northern Ireland's past in the affective force of the churned up earth. McIntyre's visceral response to the sight which compels the need to photograph is intimately connected to the violence of the Troubles transforming the benign to the malignant, remaindered as the trace of traumatic memory.

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It is a trauma of violence made tangible in the second half of the day with the journey to Coghalstown Wood in Wilkinstown, County Meath. In undertaking the 80 mile journey from Belfast the co-researchers retraced the journey taken by the IRA in 1972 with the victims of the Disappeared Kevin McKee, aged 17 and Seamus Wright, aged 25. The conversation took place in a privately owned field in Coghalstown which is alleged to be the burial ground and is one of the sites of David Farrell's *Innocent Landscapes* (2001). Standing in the field at the alleged burial site, the co-researchers navigated looking at photographs and looking at place making the photographs and the murders eminently present. The conversational shifts of image, place and speech correspond to the effort of Farrell's *Innocent Landscapes* to make the Disappeared politically visible:

David Farrell:            When it came to structuring *Innocent Landscapes* as a book what I decided to do was give each place and each person a chapter. So each chapter opens with the name of the place, it then has a twilight image to try and get back to that impossible moment, not just that physical moment years ago but to suggest how in twilight things fall into the shadows and you become uncertain of where exactly something is in this half-light. Next to the photograph there is also the map, again to reference the local knowledge and then there is the name of the person or persons and if the family had placed some sort of shrine there. I felt it was important to note if there was a shrine as a way of marking the Catholicism and the ritual of acknowledging the space where they may or may not be.

In this fold of identification as the Disappeared and as individuals, 'where each place and each person has a chapter' Farrell's *Innocent Landscapes* stages the demand for recognition. The sites photographed at twilight, when 'you become uncertain of where exactly something is' express the disorientation wrought by the 'impossible moment' from political idealism to political terror. In their contrast with the maps that detail the location of the sites, the images reactivate and repeat

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the imprecise information admitted in 1999 to the ICLVR (Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains):

David Farrell: In 1999 as part of the evolving peace process, the IRA finally admitted that they had ‘disappeared’ a number of people that had gone missing during the conflict in Northern Ireland. At that stage there was a list admitting to ten people, and they gave locations for the possible burial sites of nine. [...]

One of the key things about these locations is that they are all in the South and everyone had expected them to be in the North, which was interesting for me because for a long time I had wanted to make a work related to the North. During the troubles I lived at one remove in the South, so I had a very different experience to those of you who lived through all that in the North but it was always there on radio, on television and in newspapers.

I came to this subject through another conversation. My partner at the time was staying at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre an arts residency in Annaghmakerrig, County Monaghan and I would go up and visit her and the Disappeared came up as a subject at the table one night. Someone in the house had assisted the local coroner at a site where they'd actually recovered two remains and he agreed to bring me to the site. But that first evening when he brought me to Colgagh he couldn't find it, even though he had been there a few weeks before, locating just the laneway even from recent memory had become difficult.

The sensation I felt when I first walked into this place in Colgagh was the way the landscape had been violated in a way that seemed a very strong metaphor for the violence that had taken place there. When I went into that location,

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the bodies had been removed but there were trees lying uprooted on their side, there were rough gouges in the earth, stones scattered here and there, so it was a very powerful sensation and it really made me just say ok, go and look at the other locations.

The bodies that were removed from the bogland at Colgagh, Iniskeen, County Monaghan in 1999 were John McClory aged 17 and Brian McKinney aged 22 who disappeared in 1978. The image *Colgagh* from the series *Innocent Landscapes* (1999) (Fig 3.8) shows an uprooted tree encircled by a shallow pond and ringed by woodland. Stones form a pathway through the water to the base of the tree, upended with a root pointing skyward. With no markings in the landscape to show that bodies were retrieved, the uprooted tree becomes the metaphoric evidence 'for the violence that had taken place there' (Farrell).

In this focus on the landscapes that tracks the searches and memorialisation, 'the ritual of acknowledging the space where they may or may not be', *Innocent Landscapes* provides a public counter-document to the official images recorded by the Guards and the forensic teams:

David Farrell: I'm sure the guards and maybe the forensic teams made much more factual pictures that would be useful as a reference if they were to return here in 5 years. But I was coming at this with such a totally different perspective and so I don't think my work would be that useful as a sort of pure document.

Mhairi Sutherland: In your approach its value is as an archive.

David Farrell: Well that's what I hope.

Colm Campbell: It would be a fascinating exhibition to juxtapose your photographs with the forensics because that would bring out your point about the different perspectives of the official and the personal. Your emphasis is much more about the trace or what has been remaindered here.

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This different perspective lies in the treatment of the Disappeared as a part of landscape, a cultural representation that goes beyond the immediacy of historicising the searches. The emphasis on ‘the trace or what has been remaindered’ (Campbell) not only invokes the remembrance of what happened but also denaturalises the violence, where the uprooted tree in *Colgagh* is both metaphor and consequence. As such ‘its value as an archive’ (Sutherland) has a specific expository purpose to reveal the grief of relatives in an attempt to offer a burial to the Disappeared and to reveal the violence that was carried out in the Republic of Ireland, which confounds the North/South separation of the Troubles:

Dave Loder:                      But all the bodies were actually buried South of the border so those bodies that have been found have then been returned to the North.

David Farrell:                    Yes, that's true. In 99 and 2000 you'd see the excavation of these sites on the news in the South yet when people started to get to know that I was making this work people would ask me how's your work in the North going. I always thought do you not listen, I mean one of these places is in Wicklow, two are in Meath, so we're not talking border counties. But it's as if it was psychologically pushed up to North of the border. I found that interesting and in a certain way it mirrors the whole experience of the Troubles in the South, being at one remove from it even though you were affected by it and implicated in it.

Farrell's account of the error of mis-location of the South to the North to signal cultural, political and psychological difference and distance as ‘being at one remove from it even though you were affected by it and implicated in it’, crucially introduces a splitting and doubling of being affected (disturbed by) and implicated (incriminated) in the violence. It is a splitting which provides the ethical register of *Innocent Landscapes* as a process of remembering the Disappeared by relocating the threat of violence from being a problem of other people ‘psychologically



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pushed up to North of the border' to being a question of otherness for the people as one.

While on the one hand this refusal of the division of North and South provides a perspective on the landscape of the island it also introduces the uncertainty and ambivalence of affect and implication. In the image *Oristown (graffiti)* (2000) (Fig 3.9) these two memories of being affected and being implicated complicate the meaning of the photograph. It is an image at night time of a country road. On either side of the road there are fields. Graffiti has been painted in the middle of the laneway - the word 'Bodies' with an arrow pointing toward the left field. The graffiti is lit from the perspective of the camera view and the viewer's gaze. The letters and the arrow are painted white with each letter painted with care and clearly intended to be visible and legible. However the meaning of the graffiti is unclear and neither the visibility nor the legibility of the graffiti confirms or disproves its meaning and intention as information or mockery. This uncertainty and inability to readily reference the graffiti's meaning records and harbours suspicion, in a repetition of the conditions in which the Disappeared were murdered:

David Farrell: But there's this one picture that I made in Oristown in Meath which would be a fairly republican area. A lot of people when they see this image assume it's an official marking and so it's one image that I'm very careful labelling, I always label it *Oristown (graffiti)* 2000. This was a piece of graffiti that someone put on the ground when they were searching. What interested me about this graffiti was that it remained there, I mean no one painted over it, no-one tried to remove it, including the Gardai. It remained there and just faded away over time. Now in some ways it's unclear what this graffiti means, you can assume some joker put it there, but when speaking to a local man there was also the sense that the Guards were not looking hard enough.

John Byrne: So it could be saying you haven't looked here properly.

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David Farrell: Yes it could, who knows. I was talking to this man by the side of the road on a Saturday afternoon, this would have been in 2003 and we were talking for about 20 minutes. It's a very spooky place because it's kind of a twisty country lane by the bog and he was giving out about the Guards and then this car started to come down the laneway and as soon as he heard the car he said 'and that's the last I'll say to you now, all the best,' and he just walked away. He wouldn't be seen talking to a stranger because of where we were.

The condition of suspicion generated by place not only produces the jarring of meanings of the graffiti but also interrupts and cuts short the conversation on the laneway. An apprehension of being seen that reproduces the IRA's omerta, its code of silence, and overwrites the graffiti as both assistance and cruelty, rendering the directions incomprehensible. Moreover it establishes place, the sites of the Disappeared, within the redrawn boundaries of the Troubles from the North to the South, locating the Disappeared as both subject and prompt of a double edged discourse on social territories and temporalities of the north and south, presence and absence, repetition and disassociation.

But it is also an image which subsequent to the location in Oristown of the remains of Brendan McGraw in October 2014, might retrospectively be seen as an explicit insistence to keep on searching and the graffiti be read as directions to look again, insofar as historical fact implicates interpretative closure<sup>27</sup>.

The Disappeared, when understood as the unresolved past of the Troubles forces into view the limitations of a consensual and collusive sense of 'post Agreement' since the denied need of the families to grieve and formally bury the dead constitutes the continuation of the violence of the past in the present; re-assigning the physical and psychological place of the Troubles to the alleged burial sites of *Innocent Landscapes*. It is a need to grieve which is made apparent in the images of makeshift shrines that individuates the lived reality of the Disappeared and their

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<sup>27</sup> The Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains (ICLVR) located the remains of Brendan McGraw, who was kidnapped and killed by the IRA in 1978, in a bog in Oristown on Oct 1 2014. The location of the bog is in the same area as the image *Oristown (graffiti)* 2000.

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families. The images of shrines in *Innocent Landscapes* are both sites that speak of the desire and need to remember and are sites of exemplary 'truth telling' that subvert the antinomy of knowing/not knowing.

It is this subversion which is the focus of the series *The Swallowing Tree* (1999-2009) of Coghalstown Wood, which maps the double imperative to mourn and to locate, where the shrine contrasts with the continued search for the bodies of Seamus Wright and Kevin McKee. However as *The Swallowing Tree* images show this double imperative does not provide a stable system of reference, as the rosary beads on a silver birch tree are reclaimed by nature. The images from 1999-2009 not only convey the rhythm of nature's reclamation as the tree appears to swallow the rosary beads but how, despite this displacement of memory and memorial, the event is engraved in the landscape of the alleged burial site.

David Farrell: You can see how the religious image and rosary beads over time have been swallowed by the tree. I think it's a very powerful metaphor for everything about the disappeared. So every year as part of the revisits series I started to photograph this swallowing process.

John Byrne: And would that have been placed by the family?

David Farrell: Those were placed by the family, at the time of the initial search. There was also a portrait photograph attached to the wooden cross but the frame on that eventually disintegrated. I always hope that they will never cut down this tree because in one way it reminds me of Gerry Adam's phrase 'they haven't gone away'. It's like a punctum of remembrance to remind you [...] It's through the growth of the tree that the marker of remembrance is being swallowed, which for me is about swallowing the memory, making the evidence of what has taken place here disappear. So for me, it's very powerful.

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Farrell in foregrounding the sites of the Disappeared brings into view how the land is caught up in the transmission of history, as places of reclamation and dispossession, desolation and healing, banishment and home neither stable nor unequivocal. In centring the 'natural' landscape as a way of offering a symbolical burial to the Disappeared, the memory and remembrance of the Disappeared is extended beyond the private grief of the immediate families. The image of *The Swallowing Tree* (Fig 3.10) from 2000, shows bouquets of fresh flowers beneath a silver birch, a rosary bead and an image of Christ is affixed to the trunk and in the distance an orange JCB digger searches the field. It is an image which dovetails the family's grief with the official searches, a funeral ritual with exhumation, marking the boundaries of family and State and the respective densities of the time of grieving and forensics.

The image when understood as symbolic burial and visual eulogy enacts a restoration of the individual and the personal, of the public and the social which similarly centres the politics of point of view. But it is a centring which arguably opens the image to contestation and disagreement since the politics of point of view is predicated on a consideration of the past. Farrell's repetition of Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams 'they haven't gone away' which was made at a public rally outside Belfast City Hall in 1995, in response to the shout 'Bring back the IRA' from the crowd, on the one hand transfers the threat of violence as judgement on the political ideas and principles that informed the decision to execute the Disappeared and on the other transfers the description to the Disappeared as the unresolved issue that won't go away. The 'swallowing tree' as 'a punctum of remembrance' of the Disappeared doubles as an indictment of political terror and the psychical process of identification crucial to the justification of violence:

David Farrell: I don't think what I've done will change anything. It's really about bearing witness and acknowledging what took place but it's also trying not to hang it on the Provisional IRA badge. It's trying to look at how a society can become so brutalised that it will start to take its own people out, how, when things have gone so seriously wrong, society reaches

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this level of brutality where a group are policing their own community for their own reasons.

This attention to the brutalisation of a society not only retrieves the Disappeared from the occluded secrecy of present time but also from historical simplification that tends to a 'normative and moralising periodization built into the post violent depiction of violence' (Feldman, 2004:164). The insistence on the critical question and questioning of 'how a society can become so brutalised that it will start to take its own people out' (Farrell) not only confronts the institutional procedures that produce such violence but also directs attention to the difficulties involved both in the task of memory recovery and critique of memory loss, given the potential for a project of restitution to be politically misused, 'where memories of war... become weapons in a war over memory' (Dawson, 2007:15).

In tracing the mutations of the land as it is variously transacted by the private and the public, the families and the state, Farrell's images reference both the immediate histories of the Disappeared and the histories of land as the territorial subject and political objective of violence. In combination its critical purpose speaks to the histories of the Troubles and the political arrangements of post Agreement, where the demand 'not to hang it on the Provisional IRA badge' asserts the need to extend critical and political response, and the subject of analysis. It is this endeavour which shapes the following exchange:

Neil Jarman: It became unacceptable within the community and acknowledged as a human rights violation. But it also raises the issue of the suspicion within the IRA of engaging with this process, that whole sense of this as an unresolved issue. All the difficulties of dealing with the past and the inequalities coming out of that, the fact that it's something that is focused on dealing with paramilitary activities rather than with the state activities and the state's violations.

So it's one of those unresolved issues which is also a part of that wider process of how do we deal with the past, do we leave it to lie, do we try and dig it all up and then what do

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we do with it after we've done all of that. And that sense here is that if we do dig it all up it might give comfort and closure to the families but it might also open up things for people who are involved in it and their uncertainty as to whether they're going to get prosecuted and dealt with.

Mhairi Sutherland: I think that is what makes your work so compelling because it's working on a number of levels. It's not just the tracing of the individual but the absence of the individual that speaks of the disavowal and the denial of those decades. In a sense your work is a record of that absence, you make that absence present. For me your work stands as a kind of mute testament of that denial, not just of the individual but of that period [...]

But the disappeared is this issue that can't be properly resolved in the peace process, it's like the stumbling block to other kind of discussions because it hasn't been resolved and nobody's quite sure how to resolve it. It's like the remnants of the rosary beads that are still in the tree here, they are still there because people haven't been recovered and there hasn't been proper explanation, not that there could be proper explanation. But the beads are there because it won't go away.

David Farrell: In the 80s even to ask risked that you'd suffer the same fate, it wasn't something that you could even ask about, you were told to go away or else you'd.....

There's a story written by Seamus McKendry who is the son in law of Jean McConville about a guy coming up to him in a bar in the early 90s and saying oh I believe you're looking for Jean, do you want some help and he said yeah and he went outside and he came back in with a spade and he gave it to him. So really horrible stuff, you know.

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Neil Jarman: When you were saying that some of this you can't resolve, it can't be finalised because the remains can't be found and there is insufficient information ...but standing here in this field it's almost as if the earth is involved, it has done its job and all traces have disappeared.

This exchange points to some of the inherent difficulties involved in any representation of the Troubles, where a drive to closure to 'deal with the past' cannot be a resolution to all that has been opened - 'what do we do with it' (Jarman). It is a difficulty already caught up in the histories of the Troubles, where the desire for the Disappeared to be re-membered as part of the community, anxiously circles a fear that this memory is already political or at least might be politicised as a tacit silence on the State's violations: 'the fact that it's something that is focused on dealing with paramilitary activities rather than with the state activities and the state's violations' (Jarman). It is a difficulty which *The Swallowing Tree* images trace in the absorption over time of the rosary beads into the bark of the silver birch. It is an absorption which centres the tensions of memory and forgetting, recognition and denial, presence and absence and equally forces into view the Disappeared as the subject of incomplete mourning, which shifts between an injunction to remember and the difficulty of making historical sense since 'there hasn't been proper explanation, not that there could be proper explanation' (Sutherland).

It is a difficulty of making sense made more acute with the passage of time from the historical context of the Troubles when 'even to ask risked that you'd suffer the same fate' (Farrell). This passage of time in which memory is dislocated from history both in terms of how the Disappeared have been 'psychologically pushed up to north of the border' and in the difficulty of information that afflicts the search for the bodies, exemplifies the insistence on remembering the dead which the images present. It is a remembering that registers and documents the crisis of dealing with the past, since the images are the prompt of memory constituted by incomplete mourning and inadequate commemoration 'because the remains can't be found and there is insufficient information' (Jarman). On the one hand memory is preserved, 'it's almost as if the earth is involved' and on the other suspended 'it

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can't be finalised' (Jarman). This opposing alliance in its resemblance to a photograph's suspension of time and preservation of the past in the present equally disrupts and disperses what is buried, materially, symbolically and visually:

David Farrell: One of the interesting things about the reclamation of this area by nature is the role the searches have played in this. Many of the trees have grown from the dispersal of seeds that took place as a consequence of the searches, so you have these trees which have grown in that 10 year period since the first search [...] People often talk about a landscape holding a memory, but whatever memory was here has been scattered.

Dave Loder: But isn't that what your books are also doing, you're in a way actually dispersing that memory that you've collected from here, so you're actually taking part in that dispersal

This dispersal and scattering of the memory of the Disappeared which the searches and Farrell's images have participated in, also indicates how the reclamation by nature is intimately linked to the effort to locate and retrieve the bodies. However Farrell's memorialisation of landscape as topography of the victims' 'burial' expresses both the violation of nature and its reclamation. It is a double perspective which, like the maps and the twilight images of *Innocent Landscapes*, reveals and conceals. In the use of twilight to suggest how 'things fall into the shadows and you become uncertain of where exactly something is in this half-light' (Farrell) the images indicate the lack of information and evidence, where the uncertainty of 'where exactly something is' forms a part of the continued obfuscation. As potent markers of the difficulty of seeing and knowing, the images of twilight also expose how the act of memory is affected by and implicated in the histories of the Troubles, where the significance of the effort to remember 'where exactly something is' is analogous to the 'difficulties of dealing with the past' (Jarman).

Jarman's caution that to remember 'for the people who are involved' risks uncertainty about prosecution or being 'dealt with' not only provides a



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contextualisation of the cultural and political significance of the difficulty in remembering, but also presents memory as an action in the present, shaped by the pressures of actual social, judicial and political power including the power to limit or subvert the power of others to remember. It is an uncertainty that is shaped by the absence of a formal process of 'dealing with the past' - 'do we leave it to lie, do we try and dig it all up and then what do we do with it after we've done all of that' (Jarman) - which moves between the option of forgetting and the option of restitution to the final 'what do we do' as a question which remains unanswered and unresolved. It is a question directed at the past in the present and constitutes 'the stumbling block to other kind of discussions because it hasn't been resolved and nobody's quite sure how to resolve it' (Sutherland). It is also a question that speaks directly to the problematics of how and what is remembered, since it is precisely in the details between denial and silence, speech and restitution that the 'difficulties of dealing with the past' are formed since 'memory breathes revenge as often as it breathes reconciliation' (Margalit, 2004:5).

Nevertheless the Disappeared as the unresolved issue retain a presence both as the individual victims and as the 'subjects' of an internationally recognised war crime. It is this presence which *The Swallowing Tree* traces in 'the remnants of the rosary beads' as a 'record of that absence' and to make that 'absence present' (Sutherland). However what is notable in both Sutherland and Jarman's response is the reflexive emphasis on being present, from Sutherland's 'the rosary beads that are still in the tree here' to Jarman's 'but standing here in this field'. It is an emphasis on an embodied response to bearing witness, recording the intimacy of 'standing here in this field' that revokes the intention that the Disappeared, Seamus Wright and Kevin McKee be made permanently depersonalised in death and repeats Farrell's description of photographing the sites: 'It's really about bearing witness and acknowledging what took place' (Farrell). However in the absence of 'evidence' with the repeated failed searches for the bodies of Seamus Wright and Kevin McKee, bearing witness is a task which necessarily turns to 'the trace or what has been remaindered here' (Campbell). In so doing the images of *The Swallowing Tree* chart the fading imprint of 'what took place' over time, as

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if the event and the victims have become interiorised by the land, 'as if the earth is involved' (Jarman).

In documenting the effects of time, Farrell's images methodically observe and track the fading imprint of 'what took place' as an act of remembrance and recognition which counters the 'dread... of dying without leaving a trace' (Margalit, 2004:91). It is a trace both of the desire for recognition and as an expression of remembering which is repeated across a decade of images of *The Swallowing Tree*. An iteration which dramatises the lack of resolution of the past and symbolically institutes the silver birch tree as a memento mori and remembrance that this was not a history that happened elsewhere. Moreover it underscores the connection between photography, landscape, memory and remembrance that Farrell describes in the following account:

David Farrell: It is this trace which fascinates me. The *Irish Independent* does this feature on a Saturday where they ask photographers to share a photograph that they're most proud of. I was recently invited and initially I questioned them about this idea of being proud and the journalist came back and said well maybe we can change the title to 'the one that you are reasonably happy about'. And the photograph I chose connects up with these ideas on photography, memory and remembrance.

In the early days of making pictures and trying to understand photography, my father told me this story. He told me that as a kid he lived on the North Circular Road in Dublin and across from the house where he lived, him and his mates had carved their initials into the wall on the corner of the school in 1942. So in 1994 I went back to see first of all if they were still there and they were and I made a picture.

John Byrne: The carvings were there?

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David Farrell: The carvings were still there in the red brick and it was done with such care. When he passed away recently we showed the photograph at the funeral because it said a lot about his meticulous care to doing things properly. So there is this kind of interesting thing of a trace of a trace and how photography is always collecting those traces and as a photographer you're always trying to see those traces that can be activated later, which is in a way a kind of archiving.

There is a clear resemblance between the photograph of the carved initials in a Dublin schoolhouse wall and the photographs of *The Swallowing Tree*. Both are concerned with the material form of a trace as the residual past in the present, which like photography makes visible an interruption in time. It is an interruption, which in *Innocent Landscapes* and *The Swallowing Tree* exposes the conflicts of knowledge and disavowal, absence and presence and 'the denial of those decades' (Sutherland).

As a gathering of traces over time, *The Swallowing Tree* series refuses a single image as reference, and instead activates an archive of place, and place as archive that reveals change and growth, dissolution and decay. In its primary focus on the silver birch tree the images trace nature's reclamation as a form of healing and a fear of oblivion, of forgiving and forgetting opening a critical space to consider a future responsive to but not specified by the past. However this future is difficult to discern. A difficulty made explicit in *Small Acts of Memory, Coghalstown Wood*, (2009) (Fig 3.11). The image shows rows of young saplings planted after the forensic searches to restore woodland. All of the saplings stand thin and dying unable to take root in the grey dust soil. The sparse sapling leaves are coloured rust brown yet in the distance the green foliage of trees and bushes can be seen. It is an image of a blighted landscape which stands in stark contrast to nature's reclamation in *The Swallowing Tree* series, a contrast which not only points to the unevenness in the restoration of the landscape but is suggestive of the affective and psychic resonance of the Disappeared within the landscape:

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Colm Campbell: When we were moving through the trees earlier, I remember thinking, in reference to the earlier discussion this morning, this is not banal there is a profound bleakness here

David Farrell: There have been some attempts at replanting the saplings as you can see in this picture but the saplings immediately died.

Mark Hackett: It's a beautiful photograph and then of course we're back to that challenge of beauty and terror and how an image can speak of the aftermath of violence and yet hold a quality of beauty

The 'profound bleakness' of place experienced by Campbell in walking through the woods and recorded in *Small Acts of Memory, Coghalstown Wood*, (2009) registers the past that haunts the historical present. It is a haunting which like McIntyre's *The Mound 1* and *Underpass* disrupts the proposed perspectival distance between past and present, producing a disorienting and unsettling affect.

It is an affect that puts pressure on and revives the question of the past as an unresolved issue that won't go away. In this encroachment of the past on the present, where place is the archive of the traces of what happened, history is staged as traumatic memory, as the memory that feels what is too painful to recall: 'I just felt completely disturbed' (McIntyre). It is a staging of memory, which corresponds to the process of taking the photographs - Farrell's revisits to the same field to take a picture and McIntyre's making a note of a place and returning to photograph. It is a journeying to a place which retraces a journey undertaken before, a retracing which like the drive from Belfast to Coghalstown Wood re-enacts the past. It is a retracing captured in final exchange of the day's event:

David Farrell: In 2009 and 2010 they searched all the way to the edge but again left this copse, this small wooded area of silver birch trees alone. That gives you some idea of how dense the growth was when they returned in 2009. And as I mentioned previously, you go, ok, they've taken out

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everything else in this field - so why not take those trees out? Why not search there? I could never figure that out.

Colm Campbell: So the bodies could be there.

David Farrell: The bodies could be there. What we can do now is walk round the back of this copse and out and you'll get a sense of the full extent of the search.

In walking through the field the disquieting insistence on the past in the present takes on a funereal and forensic aspect in following the tracks of the searches for the bodies of Kevin McKee and Seamus Wright. But it is also a disquiet which involves the process of questioning 'how an image can speak of the aftermath of violence and yet hold a quality of beauty' (Hackett). Which is equally to ask how unease becomes a visual experience and how the resonance of the traces of the past are made visible even where in McIntyre's images 'place is literally disappearing' (Sutherland) or where in Farrell's images 'it's almost as if the earth is involved, it has done its job and all traces have disappeared' (Jarman). However in putting landscape under surveillance through the studied concentration on the materiality of place, the images of Mary McIntyre and David Farrell provide a prompt for the discursive excavation of what has been remaindered' (Campbell). It is an excavation of the past and of place as archive which surfaces fear, threat and uncertainty as a restive apprehension of what happened and what might yet happen, which similarly shifts between an emotional response and the negation of a certainty in this response. It is an apprehension that forces into view the lack of cultural synthesis between terror and beauty, violence and explanation, event and response which charges the landscapes of the images with expectancy and stasis.

In the impossibility of narrative explanation and in the uncertainty of action the past remains unresolved and interred as 'psychological spaces' and inscribed in the estranged certainty of meaning and location. McIntyre and Farrell's landscapes in activating the otherness of beauty and terror, of absence and presence reveal place as the effective history of the Troubles and as an archive of traces of political terror, suspicion, melancholia, mourning and emotional and cultural loss.

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The denial of synthesis that the landscape images convey, speak directly to the histories of the Troubles and to place as archive.

In combination the work explores the histories of the Troubles within the island of Ireland, in which the place of Northern Ireland is called into question, as a form of displacement and mis-location. Despite their distinct representation of the aftermath of violence, both McIntyre and Farrell are concerned with the social and psychological effects as the contingency of the histories of the Troubles, an indeterminacy which expresses the 'difficulty of dealing with the past' and equally holds the potential to negotiate a different future, to make subversion and revision possible. The images in directing attention to how place is 'inscribed space' (Carter, Donald and Squires, 1993:xii) that holds expectation, desire, exile, fear and loss similarly reveal how the experience of place is embedded in the relation between the historical and the fictional, the remembered and the imagined.

However in the images of Mary McIntyre this evocation of place as 'inscribed space' is not explicitly locked into the materiality of the violence of Northern Ireland, insofar as the captions by decontextualizing place refuse the prescriptive expectations of a 'Troubles artist' It is an approach which contrasts with Farrell's intimate detailing of Coghalstown Wood that charts not only the changes within the landscape but records the passage of time which doubles as an act of archiving and remembering.

Despite these important differences of emphasis, an encompassing perspective is shared by McIntyre and Farrell in the signification of Northern Ireland through a process of estrangement from the place of Northern Ireland – in the form of the denied location of McIntyre's images, where the accent on 'psychological space' deterritorialises the specificity of geographic location, or in Farrell's images of the alleged sites of the Disappeared which relocates the physical and emotional injury to the South. It is a process of estrangement which operates as a double movement, on the one hand dispersing the place of Northern Ireland and on the other locating Northern Ireland as the subject of violence and violent affect. While the images of McIntyre and Farrell delimit and disperse the place of Northern Ireland they nevertheless link the Troubles with Northern Ireland as a

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‘psychological space’ and as the traces of the searches for the Disappeared, a linkage which exposes the obduracy of the Troubles in how place is represented and imagined. This resonant interplay of place as archive, where the history and geography of Northern Ireland is resituated within the island of Ireland and linked to the psychological, constructs and configures the affective meaning of place at the intersection of history and biography, of the publicly acknowledged and the privately felt. It is an intersection legible in the conversations, where the co-researchers’ exchange shifts between the historical and the biographical, the seen and the remembered.

These shifts which contour the co-researchers’ exchange detail the ways in which affective response ‘is always one in which one finds oneself transported elsewhere, or into another scene’ (Butler, 2013:xi). It is a process which not only threads together the sociality of the event when the historical gives way to the biographical but embeds the images in the lived and the experienced, mediated and framed by the demands of making an argument. Moreover it points to the complicated affective and psychic dynamic involved in looking at images – where seeing and remembering, the historical and the biographical are implicated in one another as the ‘cultural politics of emotion’ (Ahmed, 2004).

In the day long time frame of the event the relations between the co-researchers became more socially familiar, where the conversation turned from the insistent questions of place as physical location and speaking position to the incidental in the coach journey from the North to South. While the conversation of the morning and the afternoon present a wide ranging dialogue with points of convergence and difference, what is nevertheless consistent is the difficulty of dealing with the past even when registered obliquely. It is a difficulty that not only responds to the irresolution of the past, but to the proximity and distance of the Troubles to post Agreement as a difference from and continuity with, which is therefore also about when difference from and continuity with are put to work. At one level the use of proximity and distance can be understood within the political field as threat and disavowal. But it also has affective resonance in the way place is understood, when place as archive is charged with the emotional intensity of irresolution and the desire for justice – where standing in the field in Coghalstown Wood registers

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the proximity of the violence of the Troubles on voice, eye contact, gesture and posture. These bodily effects, the slowing and quietening of speech, the avoidance and minimisation of eye contact and the alertness to being overlooked and intruding, acknowledged being there physically, emotionally and intellectually. An embodiment of the difficulties of dealing with the past that is legible in the shift from the morning's consideration of interpretation to the affective meaning of a 'debt to the dead' (Ricouer, 1996:6). A shift which in part records and documents the effects of retracing the steps walked by the forensic teams, where the failed searches for the remains of Seamus Wright and Kevin McKee not only document the irrecoverable loss but also the grief and fear. In the midst of this montage between the site and the images, the traumatic past re-enters the present outliving the process of working through or the justificatory narratives of explanation. It is a process through which place as archive takes on a critical and political urgency - both in the literal sense in the search for the bodies and in the metaphorical sense of searching for a way of understanding what took place as the grounds for ideological introspection and critical questioning.

This movement between the literal and the metaphoric, between intimacy and critical distance imitates the real and constructed, presence and absence of photographs. But in the shifts between looking at the photographs and looking at the field, there are of course also visual adjustments between the unbounded and the bounded views - 'the photograph shows objects in sharp focus in and across every plane, from the nearest to the farthest. We do not - because we cannot - see things this way' (Snyder, 1980:505). Moreover it aligns the co-researchers' perspective to the sightline of the photographer insofar as the contemplative distance and intimacy of looking at images is reframed as the distance and intimacy between the image and the place itself. It is a difference which modulates the response to the images of *The Swallowing Tree* through the enactment of the position of the photographer at the point of viewing the images.

As such place as archive stages the negative dialectic of two imperatives - to conceal place and to make place visible. The two imperatives not only visualise the difficulties of dealing with the past in the present but in mapping the perspectival shifts between the proximate and the distant challenge the



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periodisation of post Agreement as a break with the past. It is a challenge which reorganises the experience of temporality by bringing forward the past of the Troubles into the present as unreconciled and incomplete – where place as archive is both a crucial aspect of this reorganised experience of time and the embodied desire for reparative justice.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Between Memory and Mourning**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In the most general sense *Between Memory and Mourning* as a curatorial framing was an attempt to centre discussion and response to the photographs of Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert on the personal and political uses and affects involved in thinking through the aftermath of the Troubles. As the final event in the series *Between Memory and Mourning* carries forward some of the concerns and interests of *Spectrality and Urbanism and Place as Archive*, where motifs of haunting and history are inflected in the terms memory and mourning. In particular it expands on some of the ideas about memory in the preceding chapter, where memory understood as a critical category evokes and constrains ideas of future and past, as both the conservation of the past and its neglect and as a ‘crucial aspect of what justice demands as a measure of repair’ (Scott, 2014:24).

In the stress on ‘between’ memory and mourning my intention was to provide a critical space for the public and the private, a space that would enable consideration of the past in the present as trauma, recollection and reconstruction. The ‘between’ of the title also signals to the present as a transitional moment that makes hesitant the periodization proposed by the term ‘post Agreement’ and similarly makes the determination of what is remembered and what is mourned as an active construction of the past aimed at the future. Moreover in this attempt to articulate the present as ‘between’ memory and mourning, between what is remembered and the mournful effect of this remembrance I was interested in how the trauma of violence which outlives the process of working through and the narrative of historical consciousness is made distinct and affiliated.

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In doing so my interest was not in encouraging an approach to the meaning of post Agreement that equates to a form of transitional justice, but rather to consider how the uncertain and contingent nature of post Agreement might affect a semblant solidarity in the task of recollection and reinterpretation of the past among co-researchers. However rather than understand this task as the recovery of the past, the curatorial premise of the event was to open a critical space through which cultural representation is debated, and where the patterns of recognition of what is seen and what is not seen respond to and are informed by the difficulties of dealing with the past as the historicity of the present.

It is therefore informed by an understanding of the ‘contemporary’ as a coming together of different temporalities rather than its more ‘commonplace function as a label denoting what is current or up to date’ (Osborne, 2013 :17), whereby post Agreement is understood as the simultaneity of past and future. It is a simultaneity which, like the measure of the different temporalities of memory and mourning, puts pressure on both the question of how the trauma of the Troubles is transmitted through the photographs of Paul Seawright and Malcom Craig Gilbert and what this transmission entails, in terms of the pathos of personal memory and in the political calculations of what is remembered and what is forgotten. Moreover it is a question that centres a correspondence on the ‘between’ of memory and mourning and the interstitial nature of the photograph as the ‘between’ space of absence and presence. However in stating this correspondence my intention is to reach beyond the merely formal and rhetorical attributes which oversimplify the challenge to documentary certainty, in order to consider more fully the points of intersection and uses of photographic evidence and affect in the broader contestation over the political, social and cultural meaning of post Agreement.

In the following account of the event I have therefore sought to reconstitute analytically the patterns of recognition among the co-researchers, of the seen and the not seen, the spoken and not spoken. As such *Between Memory and Mourning* is both about the photographs of Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert and equally about the afterlife of the Troubles, where the affective meanings of the images produce connective narratives of trauma and violence, the lived and the

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imagined, the theoretical and the activist, the private and the public. These connective narratives that emerge in-between the political polarities of nationalism and loyalism and the 'political' effects of discourse respond to the images as both evidence and affect. It is an approach which at the conceptual level conjoins photography and post Agreement since both are rendered contingent and contextually specific, in a form of double vision which not only discloses the temporal uncertainty of images but also post Agreement.

This doubling of uncertainty and specificity on the one hand gives force to the argument of image as evidence and political visibility and on the other to image as the trace of an affect that cannot be repressed or recuperated. This shifting dynamic between evidence and affect operates in part as a rephrasing of memory and mourning, recasting the Troubles as both subject and object of cultural and 'national' representation. It is a foregrounding of representation as political claim, visibility, psychic and physical injury and paranoia which arguably forestalls in advance post Agreement as an historical event which announces the closure and restitution of the past.

As such it is a conversation that lays bare Foucault's 'ethics of discomfort' (Foucault, 2007:121 -128) in its challenge to 'being completely comfortable with your own certainties' (Foucault, 2007:127). In this challenge to be attentive to how knowledge becomes 'evident' and ceases to be historically formed, it similarly follows Foucault's line of argument in the transition from the political to the ethical, where uncertainty becomes a critical loosening of 'one's hold on oneself' (Foucault, 2014:305) that problematizes the historical intertwining of 'truth' and 'reconciliation'<sup>28</sup>.

The conversation juxtaposed between the two domains of memory and mourning is therefore concerned with both the ambiguity and opacity that shapes interpretation as the grounds of protection and detachment, exposure and risk. The conversation that emerges touches on what cannot be reconciled despite the desire

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<sup>28</sup> In pursuing Foucault's argument 'For an ethics of discomfort' (The Politics of Truth, Semiotexte, 2007), as an effort to rethink the theoretical, historical and ethical relationship of self and other in order to weaken the hold of identifications, I have combined it with Foucault's critique in 'Truth Telling, Wrong Doing - The Function of Avowal in Justice', University of Chicago Press, 2014, in order to consider how a formation of subjectivity and social intelligibility is conceived and constructed through the process of 'truth-telling'.

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for resolution and reparation and historical and documentary certainty. The elusive nature of historical certainty not only complicates memory and mourning but indicates how memory is at best a partial recollection of the past which ‘remains under the influence of the present social milieu’ (Halbwachs, 1992:49).

The following analysis of the event explores ‘the influence of the present’ on what is remembered and what is mourned, whereby memory is understood as a cultural and ideological practice produced in the interest of present and future expectation. It is therefore an analysis which both looks to the question of whose memories are remembered and to the processes of association and disassociation with the past of the Troubles.

The invitation to co-researchers to participate was informed by the curatorial logics of the event: to provide the discursive conditions and space ‘between’ memory and mourning that allowed both for the consideration of the afterlife of trauma that cannot be repressed and the desire for historical and documentary certainty. In consequence the co-researchers were drawn from different disciplinary and political histories in order that this space between memory and mourning could be also understood as an act of transmission caught in the antagonistic vocabularies of victim and oppressor and as an interstice between demand and desire. The selection of the co-researchers also mixed generational perspectives in order that memory as the recollection of lived experience and post-memory as instructed recollection and the transmission of memory could be effectively staged.

As such the event sought to stage an ethical responsiveness to the experience and expression of trauma, not in order to minimise disagreement, but to reflexively consider how disagreement and the spectral re-workings of the past undergirds the political character of the divided social life of Northern Ireland.

The photographs of Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert reframed in the language of cultural description that is in part autobiographical and in part historical, moves from the lived experience to the wider social and historical relations in which these experiences are expressed. As in the previous events the discussion was prompted by the photographs, interrogated and reinitiated in the

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contextual specificity of post Agreement. In locating the images in the borderline 'between' memory and mourning, between the traumatic personal psychic history and the wider histories of the Troubles the symmetry of private and public is disturbed, revealing memory and mourning both as an iterative social framework and personal experience.

Much of the following analysis revolves around three related issues: the desire for images to provide documentary evidence as a form of political intervention and historical record; the consideration of how images give depth to the language of political criticism; and how images can effectively subvert and transgress the binary of us and them thereby extending the domains of memory and mourning to all victims. As such the conversation encapsulates arguments on the relation of politics and photography predicated on an understanding of the photograph as a cultural form that can address questions of immediate political relevance. It is an argument or more properly an expectation and desire that the image provide a form of narrative to recover history by overcoming the historical which is tested by the co-researchers' exchange, since memory in the context of Northern Ireland is caught within the organising principle of identity politics of nationalist and loyalist, Catholic and Protestant. It is this organising principle that the curatorial emphasis on between memory and mourning sought to stage as political, social and cultural actions which restate memory as tradition, and mourning as loss of tradition or the threat to tradition, a translation of terms and meaning closely related to the two community model of governance established by the Good Friday Agreement. It is therefore an attempt to track the ways in which the contextual specificity of post Agreement when understood as a critical juncture or a moment of crisis forces into view the question of memory since when 'identity becomes uncertain, memory rises in value' (Megill, 2007;43).

This consideration of the link between memory and identity also entails a consideration of how this linkage is conceptualised as tradition and community, reifying the essentialist and reductionist binary politics of Catholic/Protestant, nationalist/loyalist. In consequence the chapter follows the flow of arguments which the images produce while attempting to keep open a critical space to think differently, to think outside of tradition and community. It is therefore an attempt

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to counter the logic of partisan politics invested in the Manichean division of the Agreement's declaration of 'the substantial differences between our continuing, and equally legitimate, political aspirations'. Nevertheless it is an enquiry aimed at the present, while embedded in the contingent network of history and the cultural and political function and use of memory and mourning. As an attempt to consider how the Troubles produces a way of thinking in the present and forms 'a grammar of the concept of moral insight' (Critchley, 2012:14), it is equally about how the variability and vicissitudes of what is remembered and what is forgotten are symptomatic of the trauma of violence and the political expediency of the memories made 'other' to the predetermined identities of the Agreement.

The event commenced with a discussion of Paul Seawright's work and was followed by a discussion in response to the work of Malcolm Craig Gilbert. In the individual presentations Seawright chose to show images via a projector, while Craig Gilbert chose to share prints. A difference that afforded more time for individual consideration of Craig Gilbert's images but perhaps more importantly made the experience material, compounding the intimacy of psychic injury and translating 'the abstract and representational 'photography' into 'photographs' as objects that exist in time and place' (Edwards, 2004:2).

The event was hosted at the Golden Thread Gallery, a Belfast city centre visual arts gallery on Friday April 19, 2013. The co-researchers invited to respond to the photography of Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert were: Colin Graham, writer and critic, NUI Maynooth; Des O' Rawe, lecturer School of Creative Arts, Queens University, Belfast; Breandán Clarke, North Belfast Interface Network; Peter Richards, Director, Golden Thread Gallery, Belfast; Eamonn McCann, journalist; Ciara Hickey, Gallery Manager, Belfast Exposed; Lee Lavis, Heritage Education Officer of the Lagan Legacy; Colin Darke, visual artist and writer; Iain Griffin, visual artist and Caragh O'Donnell, PhD researcher, University of Ulster.

The co-researchers were selected to provide a generational mix in order that the political temporality of post Agreement could be explored at the intersection of lived experience and its transmission as post memory. Moreover this generational mix provided the scope for an exploration of the lived experience of time passing, whereby the past as the time of memory is not only the subject of the present but

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also the anticipation of the future. Additionally the disciplinary mix – journalism, curation, literature, visual arts and community development – and personal histories, including former histories as an RUC officer (Malcolm Craig Gilbert) and British soldier (Lee Lavis) provided a discursive space for a critical consideration of ‘between memory and mourning’ as questions of lived experience and its generational transmission.

### **4.2 Between Memory and Mourning**

Paul Seawright opened with a presentation of work made before the Good Friday Agreement (1998) since ‘it would make no sense just, to present work made after the Agreement, without showing some other work. There are [...] images from a series I made in 1980s which I think provides another context for talking about memory and history in terms of Northern Ireland and also about the personal in terms of my history, my memory and my development as an artist. So to begin with I would like to return to the earliest work, a series called *Sectarian Murder* which were made between 1985 and 1987’ (Seawright).

In opening with the series *Sectarian Murder* (1988) Seawright exposes how the history of the Troubles is equally a history of documentation and reportage. The sites in Belfast that Seawright photographed are captioned with cuttings from newspaper reports of murders that had taken place in 1972-1974, with one image in the series from 1975. Importantly Seawright omits the direct reference to the victim’s identity as a Catholic or Protestant from the newspaper reports, an omission which is a critical act since it peremptorily disrupts the sectarian reading contained in the series title. It is a choice that makes complex and difficult the meaning, since political circumstance and explanation is displaced and thwarted by the omission.



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Colin Darke: You've removed the names and the faith of the victims.

Paul Seawright: Yes.

Colin Darke: And that's something that can't be found, that's gone in relation to....

Paul Seawright: It can be found.

Colin Darke: It can be found if you look at the old newspaper reports but that's not going to be easy, so for somebody coming in and having a look at your work, it's gone. Of course in this conversation here we can actually re-contextualise it, but there would be other occasions where people can't, it's gone forever. And when you said that it made me feel that looking at the pictures was in some sense an act of collusion, it made me feel very uncomfortable, because this deletion of the names of the victims is really removing the specific historical aspects of the image.

The exchange highlights the difficulties involved in a representation of the Troubles, since Seawright's attempt to cut through the politicism that accompanies such representation is recast as a repudiation of political values and effects. While this repudiation expresses the desire for an account it is equally caught in the process of iteration and differentiation and therefore equally attests to the difficulty of providing an account of the complex politics and pathos of the Troubles:

Paul Seawright: It's the only piece of work where I'm trying to say something in a fairly direct way. The reasons for that was really about my experience of being in England at 18 and having conversations about what was going on back here and people would tell you that anyone who was being killed over here was probably a soldier or a terrorist, there was that kind of stripped down understanding of what was going on here.

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So naively I thought ok, I'm going to photograph civilians as they were tagged at that time, although now all these terms are problematic. But civilians, as they were categorised at that time, were statistically two thirds of the casualties. So it was about me saying how do you get people to reappraise the situation from that perspective and see that these are people, that they are people who are not combatants, they haven't signed up to any organisation, they're just ordinary people. And their religious tag made that difficult because of course for some people it meant they couldn't be seen as innocent civilians.

But it took a long time for that work to be shown in Belfast, it had been shown in about 15 countries before it was ever shown in Belfast. And when it was eventually shown here in the mid-90s the local news did a short piece on the work for the six o'clock bulletin. The first question they asked was how many of these are Protestant and how many of them are Catholic? Now you could probably work that out if you know the landscapes, and that's another issue, but at that time I was trying to remove that because that was something I thought was confusing and simplifying what was going on.

Seawright's efforts to displace identity politics and the spatialized politics of identity as explanation, is both undermined by the journalist's question to classify and count the dead as Protestant and Catholic and local knowledge of the landscapes. However Darke's response that the omission dehistoricises the content, despite the framing of the sites as sectarian murders, suggests that the restrictive identities of Protestant and Catholic are the subject of history. Moreover his use of the word collusion which carries the implication of a cover up, forcefully restates the omission as a political calculation and judgement, rather than the difficulty that attends a critique of sectarianism through a concealment of its constitutive violence. It is a response, which like the six o'clock news bulletin

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questions a construction of history based on such a displacement. It points to how the effort to deconstruct the political categories of Protestant and Catholic, produces a problem of how the Troubles are understood without the referential 'truth' of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist. Darke's argument that the images cannot be made to address the Troubles since without the 'name and faith of the victims' their meaning becomes uncertain, also suggests that this omission makes certain this uncertainty. On the one hand it is an unease that can be read as an argument about the limitation of the *Sectarian Murder* series and on the other as an argument for photography as a form of narrative, which in analytic terms could establish historical memory. Despite Seawright's reservations about the series, his retrospective perception of naivety, his intention to 'get people to reappraise the situation [...] and see that [...] they're just ordinary people' is arguably achieved in the insistent omission of the victims' names and faith which transgresses the demand to know 'how many of these are Protestant and how many of them are Catholic?'.

Paul Seawright:        With the actual photographs of the sites I included text from the newspaper reports from the time. In the original news reports the religion of the victim, which was usually Catholic, was included but I deleted all reference to the religion of the victim and the victim's name [...] All these places which are very ordinary are given significance, not just by photographing them but by tying them specifically to the event that had happened there, events which were rarely talked about because of course people don't want to remember. And while there is this specificity of place you could also argue that it's impossible to find parts of this city which haven't been touched in some way by the conflict, that there are so many places like this.

The image of a playground in Ballysillan (Fig 4.1) is shot from the view of a merry-go-round, its six diagonal alternate markings of red and blue are scratched

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with graffiti and the paint on the three visible handrails has peeled, revealing the metal beneath. In the distance there are four swings, three are empty and on the fourth a young boy is mid swing and a man in a black suit stands in front of the child. Behind the swings there are pale blue railings marking the perimeter of the playground, beyond which housing can be seen. The caption reads: 'Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 1973. A sixty year old man was found shot three times in the head in the Ballysillan Playground. The area showed signs of a struggle'. In this split between the ordinariness of the playground and the caption, the violence of the Troubles is embedded in the landscape and at the same time made arbitrary. The caption intrudes on this scene of play between a father and son, as an incident which lies outside the content of the image:

Paul Seawright: In revisiting these sites there's also a revision of these landscapes with the texts constructing a new landscape text that recognises the unstable nature of the relationship between place and identity and time and truth. I also made the photographs of these sites deliberately banal to show how these places have returned to being benign, unremarkable and unmemorable, with the disruptive nature of the violence that is no longer present reintroduced through the artwork

In the production of this 'new landscape text' the text both displaces and frames the image of the ordinary, undercutting the content of the image and providing an insufficient narration of the murdered dead. The *Sectarian Murder* series of fifteen murder sites registers the complexity of historical time 'because of course people don't want to remember' making this desire to forget analogous to the denial of image as memorial and text as obituary, a rejection of memorialisation which the following exchange makes apparent:

Peter Richards: In looking at the *Sectarian Murder* series it made me think about how a memorial functions. Memorials are often these figurative representations that relate to an event, and a date, I'm thinking particularly of the kind of civic or war

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memorials of the First World War. With your work it kind of functions as a memorial but there is this ambiguity that is created by the absence of the victims name and their faith, which moves it into the universal.

Paul Seawright: Someone sent me an Arts Council report from a few years ago on memorials in Northern Ireland and the Sectarian Murder series was included at the end in a small section on alternative memorials and I was horrified because they're not memorials. If they were memorials they would not only have the names and faiths included but it would be something altogether different. Part of the purpose of removing the faith was for it to stand for more than the 15 people but of course the problem here is that when you know the landscape of Northern Ireland you are able to pick out every location, so when you show this work here not only can people calculate the faith, it's likely that people know the people too.

And actually that became a real problem because then it opens up conversations about individuals and individual situations and circumstances, which was never the intention of the work. The intention of the work was to point people to the situation here in the late 80s when people had had enough and the media were reporting less and less because the conflict here had become a kind of backdrop

The exchange indicates how in making a return to the murders of the 1970s in the circumstance of the 1980s, *Sectarian Murder* is constructed as a critical comment on how the violence 'had become a kind of backdrop'. The 'question' of the victims' names and faiths notwithstanding, the past, signalled by the date of the murders, becomes a component of the present 'when people had had enough' (Seawright). The historical introduced by the date of the murder, signals a looking back at the landscape of violence in the midst of conflict, as a form of critical

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distancing across time. It is an attempt which at best is partial since knowledge of the landscape provides a calculus of the politics of place and is similarly thwarted by the detail of the colours in the image of the playground, where the alternate diagonals of blue and red of the merry-go-round identifies the location in a Protestant community. The worn and peeling paint of red and blue not only interrupts the task of thinking through dis-identity posed by the series, but reveals the 'normative' identity politics of sectarianism. Moreover it is a trace which relocates the 'benign, unremarkable and unmemorable' murder site as a place marked by contestation and by the pervasive violence of territorialisation. It indicates that memory and violence are linked on the level of the political organisation of social and public space, which makes the task of dis-identity impossible to sustain. It is a difficulty which while forming the substantive enquiry of *Sectarian Murder* exposes the crisis of the Troubles as a crisis of memory, both personal and social, where the omission of the victims' names and faith discloses not only how faith is a mediated synonym for nationalist or loyalist but how faith functions as political identity and allegiance.

Darke's challenge that the 'deletion of the names of the victims is really removing the specific historical aspects of the image' (Darke) is borne out by the difficulty of finding information on the identity of the sixty year old man, not simply in terms of his name and faith but as a record of a murder at the site of the Ballysillan playground on the date given. Notably the publication, *Lost Lives*<sup>29</sup> which details all the murders in Northern Ireland from 1966 -2006 contains no record of a murder at the site of the playground on the date given which counters the historicity proposed in the use of the captions. In the tension across the fifteen images between the decentring of the murdered victim as the subject and the partial retrieval of the memory of murder the images stage the loss of the social capacity to remember and to narrate, since 'seeing one thing is not seeing another. Recounting one drama is forgetting another' (Ricoeur, 2006:452) and what is seen and what is not seen are equally symptomatic of the crisis of bi-partisanship:

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<sup>29</sup> See: *Lost Lives – The Stories of the Men Women and Children who died as a result of the Northern Ireland Troubles*, (eds) David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney, Chris Thornton and David McVea, Mainstream Publishing, 2006. The publication chronicles the deaths from 1966-2006.

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Paul Seawright: For me what photography lacks in the majority of occasions when you encounter it in relation to places of conflict is complexity or openness. It's often made to be too easily readable and I guess what attracts me is how can I make work that counters that.

Des O'Rawe: [...] on some level the experience of growing up in the Troubles here does affect everyone who is from here profoundly, and that eye that you develop and that sensibility is something that travels with you

Paul Seawright: Yes, but it's very hard to quantify.

Colin Graham: I think in some way you can quantify it in this work. In *Sectarian Murder* you frame the work through the time lag which counters the immediacy of photojournalism since it is created by a 12, 13 year time lag. This seems to be the most extraordinary thing about that work is that somebody in the 1980s would go back to the 1970s. And I've never heard you say how difficult it was to get the information because of course the information was put into the past very quickly because the present was so full. And you can see that time lag then continuing through the work in the 90s and late 90s into the 2000s which, just as it does with *Sectarian Murder*, it allows that distance and that space to see things in a different way.

The time lag 'which counters the immediacy of photojournalism' is also the mechanism that makes complex the *Sectarian Murder* series, where the murdered dead are both the prompt of memory and its suspension. In creating a critical space from which to see things differently the time lag of *Sectarian Murder* is made more emphatic by the incomplete memory of the captions, which not only disrupts and suspends the narrative of sectarianism but also exposes how this narrative is constituted as memory 'placed in the service of the circumscription of the identity defining the community' (Ricoeur, 2006:85). It is a disruption and injunction to

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remember which similarly registers the conflict of the Troubles as enactments of memory and forgetting, both as a consequence of the information being ‘put into the past very quickly because the present was so full’ (Graham), and as a consequence of memory’s function as a supplementary condition of political identity. As such the abbreviated and edited report of the sixty year old man murdered in the Ballysillan playground is an epitaph which both chronicles and registers unease in a victim not being assigned Catholic or Protestant, forcing into view the question whose answer is withheld in the captioning of the images: how many of these are Protestant and how many of them are Catholic? It is a question which implies the captions edit destabilises both memory and mourning since it denies selective recognition and denial which ‘is as much about politics as it about visual representation’ (McCann). This use of memory as a potent marker of self-identity and community identity challenges the possibility to ‘see things in a different way’, since what is seen is not simply a question of ‘different points of view but of heterogenous investments’ (Ricoeur, 2006:259). It is a heterogeneity and antagonism between different points of view that both produces and reflects the crisis of Northern Ireland and is at the core of the following exchange between co-researchers:

Eamonn McCann: Our difficulty here is this implicit and at times explicit endorsement of this version of us, that there are two sides Catholic and Protestant, when there are not just two sides. And this two community model is very attractive visually because there are symbols and colour and flags and harps and all the rest of the stuff that you see, I mean we identify ourselves visually, don't we, at least the two communities do [...] which is as much about politics as it about visual representation

Paul Seawright: I think coming from this place makes it so difficult to do that because if there's subjectivity it's political anyway. I think perhaps I almost tried too hard to go the other way, to kind of look for some kind of neutrality and maybe that's wrong. I think it's why I've ended up working elsewhere



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and making less and less work here because in other places I can challenge in a way that I don't think you can here.

Des O'Rawe: I often think one of the problems with the two community model and all this discourse about reconciliation is the fact that in reality these differences are irreconcilable. In some ways if they weren't irreconcilable nobody would have any identity, in the same way that you can only forgive the unforgiveable. So there are all these paradoxes at the heart of this and I think for film makers and photographers there is sometimes that anxiety that their work will be misinterpreted or they'll be identified with a particular cause or trivialised or propagandised and recruited for this and that.

Colin Graham: There is this tension in the work between removing yourself and also pushing yourself with this place that you're from.

Paul Seawright: Well there's always that tension because when you're from here you have a community identity and a political identity, like it or not, and if anything I'm always trying to push that down. This is something that I've really struggled to work with because of the questions of authorship and subjectivity in terms of my place here and my own history and identity

What emerges in the preceding exchange are the complexities and contradictions involved in trying to 'see things differently' as the tensions between history and authorship, subjectivity and identity are overlaid with the 'irreconcilable differences' articulated by the bipartisan phrase the 'two communities model'. It is a difficulty which foregrounds and attenuates a principle of identification that 'when you're from here you have a community identity and a political identity, like it or not' (Seawright).

The two communities model as a complex rhetorical strategy of cultural and political reference raises in its turn the question of representation, restricting

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possible challenge 'I don't think you can here' (Seawright) or producing an anxiety that work will be 'trivialised or propagandised and recruited for this and that' (O'Rawe). In this linkage between identity and representation, what is shown and not shown and what is seen and not seen are equally charged with symbolic representation and signification, since the two communities model both demands self-objectification 'my place here and my own history and identity' and sanctions that these 'differences are irreconcilable' (O'Rawe).

This stark judgement that reconciliation is inconceivable within the ideological framework of the two communities model produces a dilemma which afflicts representation, since image of place and community is already compromised. It is this practical difficulty of representation which both informs Seawright's approach and hesitation in working in Northern Ireland:

Paul Seawright: It took some time before I found not just a strategy but found something I wanted to engage with in terms of meaning. I read Graham Dawson's book *Making Peace with the Past - Memory, Trauma and the Irish Troubles* [...] this made me start to think about the ways in which the two competing constructions of the 'same' history are so radically different that it's impossible to present a coherent version and coherent narrative of the Troubles.

What is notable is that Seawright's work produced in the context of post Agreement charts the shift in the active social and political language used to describe Northern Ireland – from *Sectarian Murder* (1988) to *Conflicting Account* (2009), where the alienating violent language of sectarianism is replaced with the more conciliatory rhetoric of narrative difference sustained by the Realpolitik of the 'two communities model' as the impossibility of a social totality, 'of a coherent version and a coherent narrative of the Troubles' (Seawright).

In the image *Martyrs* (Fig 4.2) a white brick wall is painted with black vertical and horizontal lines. In the right and left upper corners of the image black outlines of two men are partially visible –the image of the man on the right is cropped horizontally, his mouth and nose is visible, he has a moustache, shoulder length

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hair and is smiling, while the image of the man on the left is cropped vertically so that the left side of his face is visible, he is wearing glasses is clean shaven and is also smiling. The partial visibility of the mural, cropped to deny the full identity and representation of the two men, hinders the mural's effectiveness as a form of public rhetoric, political commemoration and projection. It is a hindrance which necessitates seeing what is not shown, a necessity which focuses on the role of representation in the practice of memory, history and identity. Like the edited newspaper captions to the *Sectarian Murder* series, the double edit of *Martyrs* exposes the politicisation of memory and commemoration through the refusal of identity-in-representation. This productive inversion of exposure and masking, of seeing and not seeing, where what is not seen and what is not written becomes central to the images' meaning, stages the problem of representation as that which cannot be resolved but only evaded. However it is an evasion which is tested by knowledge of place:

Breandán Clarke:      With the two faces you clipped in the image, my editing process is to turn them around as it were to see them more clearly as Mickey Devine and Kevin Lynch who were both INLA volunteers. So with that picture your edit made me bring my own edit and authorship to the work, which of course is community and memory.

Clarke's recognition of the INLA founding member and hunger striker Mickey Devine, the tenth and last hunger striker to die on August 21 in 1981 at the age of 27, and Kevin Lynch who died on 23 May 1981 after 71 days on hunger strike at the age of 25, symptomized as 'community and memory' fills in the partial visibility of the image.<sup>30</sup> It is a recognition which is proposed as an expression of

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<sup>30</sup> On Oct 27 1980 seven prisoners at the Maze Prison in Belfast commenced a hunger strike. Their demands were: the right to wear their own clothes; the right not to do prison work; the right to freedom of association; the right to organise their own leisure activities; and the right to restoration of lost remission (reduction of sentence). After 53 days the hunger strike was called off mistakenly believing their demands had been met by the British government. When it became clear this was not the case a second hunger strike commenced on March 1 1981. During the 217 days of the protest, ten strikers died; seven from the Provisional IRA and three from the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA).

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community identity through the performance of memory, where the dynamics of seeing what is not shown in the image *Martyrs* constitutes the demonstration of 'community and memory'. But it also indicates the pedagogical function of 'community and memory' where what is to be remembered is aligned to community, and what is community is aligned to what is remembered.

The Hunger Strikes resignified in the present as 'the epic and heroic chapter of Irish history' (An Phoblacht, Oct 3, 2013), translates 'the historical into the commemorative' (Ricouer, 2006:91), whereby the Hunger Strikes are commemorated within a narrative of Irish unity which is yet to come. It is this assertion of iconic significance, emotional and ideological, that is interrupted by Seawright's double edit where the immediacy of recognition is delayed 'my editing process is to turn them around as it were to see them more clearly' (Clarke). It is a delay which not only initiates a correspondence between community and edit, memory and authorship, but also disassembles the mural's pedagogic function by slowing down both recognition and interpretation. This challenge to the immediacy of recognition makes the politics of point of view a task of editing and authorship foregrounding the construction of historical meaning as a performance of political strategy and calculation of 'two powerful grand narratives, one loyalist and Protestant, the other nationalist and Catholic' (Dawson, 2007:33). Moreover in the edit of the images of *Conflicting Account* the conciliatory rhetoric of two communities is shown as an active and residual trace of sectarianism, whose political and cultural function is to insist on the differentiation of historical experience and expectation. It is through the edits of the images that the 'two communities model' is both exposed and thematised as a restrictive way of seeing, wherein the edits constitute a disobedient and transgressive act of seeing.

In *And* (Fig 4.3) the image is cropped so that the word AND is all that is discernible of an oval shaped plaque at the top of the image. As the trace of the mural's public rhetoric 'AND' leaves uncertain which community and which memory is addressed, an uncertainty which denies the projected object of the plaques argument through concealing community and intended memorialisation. This cropping as a form of concealment repeats the painting over on the wall,

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where a strip of dark grey and cream coloured paint masks what had previously been there. In centring on 'AND' as a word that equally separates and joins, the image mediates and traces the divisiveness of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist as a division which is regulated discursively and visually:

Paul Seawright: By looking at these traces I was able to abstract and gather glimpses of the relationship between language and memory, identity and history [...] In gathering these traces and glimpses or the places where text had been erased was to reveal something about these conflicting narratives that accentuates this difficulty of presenting any one version or any one memory or any one identity or any one history or any one narrative of Northern Ireland.

These glimpses of the 'relationship between language and memory, identity and history' are presented in images of classroom blackboards where the cryptic words in white chalk provide traces of a class instruction. In *Between* (Fig 4.4) there are three lines of writing visible, the first line reads 'tics of', the second 'ons between' and the third 'between 1985'. The repetition of the word 'between' in the second and final line of writing, like the use of the word 'AND' in the image of the mural replays separation and division and makes literal the task of reading between the lines which the image presents. It is a repetition which signals both the difficulty of 'presenting any one version' and expresses the effects of a divided social and political imaginary, where the 'two competing constructions of the 'same' history' shapes the ideological, social and symbolic representation and interpretation of Protestant and Catholic. This difficulty where analytic argument is framed and located within the 'two competing constructions of the 'same' history' similarly shapes and informs conversation amongst the co-researchers:

Breandán Clarke: You know there are so many levels to conversations here, what's private and what's public. The conversation you have with people you're comfortable with over a pint is not the conversation you're going to present to the public which

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is always bounded by the politics of here, the politics of place and the possible consequences.

Lee Lavis: I'm not from here and when you speak about the two communities I have to live within that model but I feel in a grey area between. My background deems that I could never be part of one community and my political beliefs make me a kind of traitor in another. I have to live with the two communities ideas and the images as they are portrayed but I don't feel part of either and it's always difficult to say my history. My reaction to these photographs is guided by this sense of not fitting in, so the edits of these photographs is similar to the way I have to edit myself continuously in conversation with people because of my background, the baggage of my history.<sup>31</sup>

This uneasy sense of 'possible consequences' and the difficulty 'to say my history' defines the inviolability of 'community' that measures transgression: 'I could never be part of one community and my political beliefs make me a kind of traitor in another' (Lavis). It is a language of community that assumes a limit to political imagination consonant with the lexicon of post Agreement management of 'our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations'. The triangulation of religion, politics and violence that structures subjectivity regulating speech and silence, trust and suspicion, empathy and indifference underscores how the political discourses of the two communities model 'accentuates this difficulty of presenting any one version' and institutes the conflict as 'two powerful grand narratives' (Dawson, 2007:33). Implicit in this formulation is an ontological assumption of a lived continuity of experience understood only by the use of memory – where the two rival interpretations of Northern Irish history are deliberated as a form of editing: 'with that picture your edit made me bring my

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<sup>31</sup> Subsequent to participation in the event Lee Lavis with Veterans for Peace brokered relations between former British Army and former IRA members for roundtable private conversations. See: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/mar/04/road-reconciliation-ex-ira-members-british-soldiers-face-to-face> (accessed March 2015)

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own edit' (Clarke); 'the edits of these photographs is similar to the way I have to edit myself continuously in conversation' (Lavis). This self-conscious editing which the images produce mirrors Seawright's deliberate use of editing where the anticipation of audience and reception is inseparable from the historical knowledge being constructed and deconstructed. In denying the full visibility of the INLA volunteers and in focusing on the traces of the words left on the blackboards *Conflicting Account* critically mediates on the role of representation as pedagogy, where the duality of Protestant and Catholic is made systemic and totalising, produced and exemplified by 'the politics of place and the possible consequences' (Clarke).

The 'two communities model' established by the Agreement as a mode of life and ethos of intensity raises the question of the limits of Catholic and Protestant alliance as a mode of sociability that could exceed the dialectical opposition that forms its condition: 'Our difficulty here is this implicit and at times explicit endorsement of this version of us, that there are two sides Catholic and Protestant' (McCann). Seawright in foregrounding editing as a form of concealing the immediacy of political signification and recognition, stages the question of the limits of Catholic and Protestant alliance by making apparent the link between community and memory. As such the edits of the images are transgressive in their disruption of the visual and discursive narrative of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist. It is a transgression which exposes how historical discourse is irreducibly perspectival, connected in inextricable ways to the logics and governmentality of the designations of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist. Moreover the re-editing that the co-researchers perform on the images in seeing what is not shown expresses how both the designation Catholic and Protestant are produced as self-reflexive enactments of historical being.

Seawright's edits when understood as a form of editorialising the subject of conflict as an experience of representation identifies the challenge of working in Northern Ireland as being less to do with the uncovering of the past than the redirection of the future where 'coming from this place makes it so difficult to do that because if there's subjectivity it's political anyway' (Seawright). It is a comment which underscores how representation is mobilised as a form of

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solicitation that compels a perception and anticipation of cultural and historical difference, of us and them, them and us which circumvents the possibility of translation 'between' communities as a form of ethical recognition and connection. It is this space between the two communities which Seawright editorialises by obscuring the exclusionary assumptions of nationalist and loyalist visual narratives in the images of the murals *Martyrs* and *And*. While the images emphasise the mediation of the 'two powerful grand narratives' (Dawson, 2007:33) as a process which obscures the possibility of the 'multiplicity of experience and outlook' (Patterson, 2006:126), they do so by staging the dialectic of recognition and non-recognition as the performance of identity 'reduced to one thing or the other, Protestant or Catholic; dead words, tit for tat words, words to settle scores by' (Patterson, 2006:124). As such recognition and non-recognition are reconceptualised as critical and conditional terms in the formation of self and other that both embodies the division of the 'two communities model' and defines which deaths are grievable and memorialised 'as a selective and differential framing of violence' (Butler, 2010:1).

This definition of whose deaths are 'grievable' is deliberately blurred in the image *Memory* from the series *Conflicting Account* (Fig 4.5) where the names engraved in the granite stone memorial are out of focus and the only word legible is 'Memory'. By leaving obscured the names of the people who are commemorated the image directly poses the question - whose memory? Moreover by emptying the image of the names of the dead, memory is instituted as an action of political judgement and calculation about 'whose lives are considered valuable, whose lives are mourned, and whose lives are considered ungrievable' (Butler, 2010: 38). In disrupting the iconic function of the memorial the image registers how the 'two communities model' conditions and circumscribes memory and mourning. In making the names of the dead illegible, which like the *Sectarian Murder* series leaves unanswered the name and faith of the dead, it also reveals how affect and meaning are regulated and limited by representation. As such it documents the failure of personal and historical memory to overcome the violence of differentiation of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist that lies at the centre of the 'two communities model' and by the same token it documents how



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the elimination of this model entails an inherent dysfunction of memory and identity, producing an uncertainty of meaning and affect. This doubly tensioned formation of memory as necessity and impossibility is presented as an ideological impasse since the naming of the dead involves a violent dimension: how many were Catholic and how many were Protestant? It is an impasse which informs the following exchange between the co-researchers:

Eamonn McCann: You've been talking about the difficulty of dealing artistically with the situation of the North. But I am thinking about where there's a potential to challenge the narratives and not just to present them

Paul Seawright: Acknowledge them.

Eamonn McCann: Acknowledge them, but also challenge them [...] it is possible to present some of the iconic and defining images in a way which actually challenges the narrative [...] And it just seems to me that what can go unmissed and unnoticed when we constantly discuss the two communities model, even when we discuss the two communities living peacefully side by side, is that we are endorsing that model [...] I think there is a possibility to challenge without as it were spitting on tradition

Colin Graham: Part of the problem with challenging the politics of Northern Ireland from within is that when you challenge from within you're restricted by the boundaries of the very things you're trying to critique. And one of the things I think is interesting about Paul's work is that it uses the landscape to try and see both the limits of the identity that exists, that forms a political landscape but it also tries to see through to other forms of living that might happen in that landscape[...]And that seems to me photographically to be an interesting way to represent the attempt to see beyond the boundaries of the politics of this place by looking at this

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place and looking at the way this place, almost in a literal way, frames its own barriers and frames the clenching of its own identity by setting a limit on what's possible.

Colin Darke: That's the strength of this work you're forcing people to wonder about what's gone on here. After the ceasefire lots of photographers then went into the Maze, they went into police stations, so we were able to see what had been hidden before and for me that work was always disappointing, this sudden right to see felt trivialising..

The tension between acknowledgement and challenge, of visualising Northern Ireland beyond the boundaries of identity 'without trivialising this sudden right to see' (Darke), is contoured by the limits of representation imbricated in the metaphoric and metonymic registers of the 'two communities model'. On the one hand the acknowledgement risks 'endorsing that model' (McCann) and on the other it forces 'people to wonder what's gone on here' (Darke). But if, as Graham considers, *Conflicting Account* provides a way of looking at the limits of representation where the politics of place 'frame its own barriers and frames its own identity by setting a limit on what's possible' it does so by framing the 'two communities model' as a crisis of representation. But it is a crisis of representation which is equally about the 'politics of place' as it is about photography – where response to the edit of the murals *Martyrs* and *And* from the series *Conflicting Account* shifts between a reading of the images as a commentary on the 'politics of place' to the capacity and the limits of photography as a form of representation.

In the former reading the images prompt a consideration of murals as the symbolisation of the crisis of representation and the 'politics of place' at its most pervasively effective, referencing both territorial claim and comprehension of the past in the present:

Eamonn McCann: This morning I was walking through the Bogside in Derry where I live, and they're retouching and repainting the Bogside, where some things are painted out, things that in my view are appalling, and I know other people have a

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different view of it. But what they do is they present to the community what the community is comfortable with. So now with the murals in the Bogside there isn't a single IRA man with a gun. It's all about us as victims.

In the latter reading Seawright's images prompt a consideration of how photography disrupts the temporality of the present, enabling a way 'of looking at this place' (Graham). It is a disruption which in *Conflicting Account* is concerned with the 'two communities model' as a master-code of what can and cannot be thought and imagined, a master-code which remains immanent in the very intelligibility of transgression as transgression: 'with the two faces you clipped in the image, my editing process is to turn them around as it were to see them more clearly as Mickey Devine and Kevin Lynch who were both INLA volunteers' (Clarke). In the one sense the territorial and historical claim and reference of *Martyrs* and *And* is of less importance than the photographic edit which threatens the affective and effective meaning of the mural as a structure of representation of the 'two communities' and as an 'obligated, commanded memory' (Ricoeur, 2006: 452). However it is a process which nevertheless relies on the structural residue of the 'two community model' as it puts into play the oblique underside of the preservation of memory as a form of forgetting - 'It's all about us as victims' (McCann).

This doubling of remembering and forgetting, recognition and non-recognition provokes an interpretative strategy that is situated within the visual and discursive history of the Troubles and is at the same time at a critical distance from that history, in a repetition of the rhetorical logic of continuity and discontinuity of the Good Friday Agreement. Moreover in staging the images as tasks of recognition and non-recognition the series initiates both a critical investigation of identity-as-representation and of photographic meaning:

Des O'Rawe:                    But in your work particularly with these occluded views where we're presented with these habitats and these barriers and walls, the viewer actually has to make the photograph, it's as if you give us a piece of work to make work from.

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Paul Seawright: It's very much that. I've now photographed over 700 houses in America where sex offenders live and on one level they could be estate agent pictures, because they're pictures of houses [...] I'm really struggling with how far to make these pictures interesting to look at or not interesting to look at, because I want the meaning to be constructed entirely by the person looking at it and for the horror and uneasiness to be outside of the photographs.

Colin Graham: With your work it's like a lot of repeated rectangles with very messy lives contained within the rectangle or implied within the rectangle, which is itself then what a photograph is, which is time and space, people's narratives and their bodies contained within the framed rectangle of a photograph.

Paul Seawright: On one level it's wholly unsatisfactory that so much complexity is hidden and not dealt within the photograph and I've real doubts about that [...] It is about me exploring how close you can get to the limits of that without it losing meaning altogether, and that's something I'm fascinated by really. And this relates to the questions about the work I've made here in Northern Ireland, if it is a critique of this place and of what's going on here, but I think my work, if anything, is a critique of photography.

This final exchange to the first part of the event productively maps the challenge involved in destabilising the interpretative grounding of an image – whether in refusing the reference to Protestant or Catholic or in refusing the reference to sex offenders in the images of America. The challenge that the images retain meaning while ‘the horror and uneasiness’ sits outside the analytic framing and ‘time and space’ of the photographs effects an interpretative strategy which is diacritical insofar as image and context are not made synonymous. As such it both subverts and extends the conceptualisation of photography as a form of documentary

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realism by making interpretation a process of labour where the ‘politics of point of view’ are pressed back into service dialectically: ‘the viewer actually has to make the photograph, it’s as if you give us a piece of work to make work from’ (O’Rawe).

Seawright’s proposal that the work made in Northern Ireland is ‘if anything a critique of photography’ rather than a ‘critique of this place’ marks a differentiation and distinction, which the images of classroom instruction, the murals and the memorial, in effect merge, since both recognition and non-recognition are politically charged and become ‘effective as affect itself’ (Butler, 2010:52). This association between ‘critique of photography’ and ‘critique of this place’ is potentially made more apparent by the curated event, since the localised knowledge of place amongst the co-researchers is shaped by a ‘community identity and a political identity, like it or not’ (Seawright).

However what is also notable in the first part of the event was that none of the women co-researchers spoke – an absence that refigures the conversation of identity as representation as a specifically male oriented conceptualisation of the Troubles as both interpretable and inexorably unnegotiable in its principle. In the absence of womens’ speech the ideological impasse proposed by the ‘two communities model’, which is now a part of the history of the present of post Agreement, is arguably achieved precisely by the non-admittance of womens’ stories into the history, wherein the ‘two communities model’ can be passed off as a natural tradition and as the sign not of change but of stasis. At the same time to overstate the meaning of this absence is to perhaps draw false conclusions, but it nevertheless holds relevance insofar as the discussion prompted by Seawright’s images are concerned with questions of subjectivity and authorship and the counter-task of destabilising the regulatory effects of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist.

In the second half of the event the curatorial theme, ‘between memory and mourning’ turned to the consequence of violence at the level of personal psychic injury, where traumatic memory as an endless reiteration interrupts and unsettles the historical schema proposed by post Agreement. The dissociative crises of

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trauma are explored by Malcolm Craig Gilbert through two inter-related series – the staged enactments of *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* and the response to the environment in *Flashbacks: Irrational Fears of the Ordinary*:

Malcolm Craig Gilbert: I am going to show work from two series Post Traumatic Exorcism and Flashbacks: Irrational Fears of the Ordinary. But to put this work in context I want to start by way of a personal introduction. I was born and raised in East Belfast from a working class background and after leaving school at 16 I worked in local industries until the age of 20 when I became a police officer, serving in Northern Ireland for 18 years before being medically retired due to the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder in 2003.

I was in counselling for 3 years and felt that I was getting nowhere. I had always been interested in photography but began to explore it as a way to become more reconciled with my past.

The two bodies of work are connected - with the first series Post Traumatic Exorcism I was constructing a kind of pastiche of memories and dramatisations of my paranoia and anxiety.

In this introduction Craig Gilbert presents his use of photography as a way of working through the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, to reflect upon his past as an RUC officer in order to 'become more reconciled' (Craig Gilbert). In the first image shown from the *Post Traumatic Exorcism* (2008-2010) series, *To Stifle Paranoia* (Fig 4.6), a man sits on a stool at the front door of a home, his back to the camera, the keys visible in the door lock. He is wearing a beige t-shirt with a CND logo, a woollen beanie and is holding a gun pointing to his head. In the hallway on a table there is a copy of the Sunday Times its magazine still polywrapped, a hardback DIY Manual and a disposable cigarette lighter decorated

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with the union flag. There is a diagonal shaped window in the front door, the white light of outside and the reflection of light on the wall from a window that is unseen indicate that it is daytime. These details of the image both domesticate the staging of suicide and in their arrangement provide visual cues which ‘politically’ identify who the man is - the choice of newspaper, the union flag decoration of the lighter. It is an identity which is intimately part of the assault on the ‘self’, as if what is at stake is not merely the death of an individual but an ideological and symbolic order of ‘community and memory’ (Clarke). The image’s title *To Stifle Paranoia* provides an additional source of narrative explanation to the scene, where the intention of suicide combines with the watchfulness of sitting at the front door as a dramatisation of fear and remedy. As such it is not just that violence is depicted, but that this violence against the ‘self’ is made an active solution in the verb ‘to stifle’ of the title.

The series *Post-Traumatic Exorcism* is remorseless in a similar vein to Seawright’s fifteen images that comprise the *Sectarian Murder* series, insofar as each image supports the main action of the series title in a ghastly parody and pastiche of a therapeutic model of working through trauma. In *Remembrance Day* (Fig 4.7) a woman stands in a garden, behind her a wooden fence edged with a gravel border and a stone ornament rabbit. The woman looks directly at the camera, in her left hand she holds open a card and in her right a semi-automatic handgun. In a child’s handwriting the card reads: ‘Happy Birthday from Malcolm to Nanny B, I had no money to buy you a card so this is my photograph. The end of my verse.’ On the opposite page there is a photograph of a young boy wearing a shirt and tie and a v-neck pullover and beneath the photograph two medals are affixed to the card by ribbons. From the light green ribbon with a red, black and dark green central stripe there is a silver medal with the queen’s head and crown and from the red, white and blue ribbon the queen’s head is stamped on a gold medal. The image’s title *Remembrance Day* both mobilises the language of commemoration of Armistice Day and the Remembrance Day bombing on 8 November 1987 in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, that killed eleven people, ten civilians and one RUC officer – references to past violence made present in the semi-automatic handgun:

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Malcolm Craig Gilbert: In this image Remembrance Day this is my mother who has now passed away. In her hand she has one of the few photographs of me as a child. I'd given my mother my two service medals to look after because she was proud of what I was doing. But the staging is about a recurring dream that I always had when I used to stay at my mothers'. The dream was about somebody attacking the family home and within the dream my mother had taken up arms to protect me. So it's a staging of the memory of that dream and what she would have done to protect me and all she had left of me in a way, the two medals and that old photograph and the note that I wrote to my grandmother.

The recurring dream of an attack on the family home and of a mother's protection both reveals the vulnerability that undergirds paranoia, expressed by the self-representation as a boy in the childhood photograph and the summary presentation of life 'all she had left of me in a way, the two medals and that old photograph and the note that I wrote to my grandmother' (Craig Gilbert). It is an account which puts into language the solitude of fear and violence which is presented in the image as a woman's violent defiance against the threat of an attack. However the violence of the image is doubly inscribed both as the threat that will attend the disruption of the family home and as the loss of a past innocence of childhood. In the temporal organisation of the drama of the image, the boyhood verse, the boyhood photograph, the service medals and the suburban back garden, the family in the concise and extended political sense of community is already compromised by the semi-automatic handgun. This depiction of family threatened by violence, both external and internal, is also the subject of *Generations 1*, (Fig 4.8) again staged in a suburban back garden. In the foreground of the image there is a rotary washing line pegged with two black balaclavas, a young boy is standing facing the camera wearing a spiderman mask, blue camouflage army trousers and holding a toy gun. The second boy also dressed in blue camouflage army trousers is sitting



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on a chair beside a table, on the table there are two toy guns, a semi-automatic and a pistol. The composition with the adult balaclavas on the washing line and the boyhood game of soldiers and comic action heroes presents the family as the site of instruction in violence, where memory is a form of sociality that relays one set of events on to another generation.

The *Post-Traumatic Exorcisms* in their deliberate staging and mode of storytelling contrast with the melancholia of the *Flashback* series:

Paul Seawright: One set is performative and kind of constructed and the other set are actual locations from real situations that you're bound to have been in.

Malcolm Craig Gilbert: Yes. The landscapes themselves are about my fears and paranoia about what lies within the landscape

Paul Seawright: Which is related to the PTSD in a sense too because the landscape is a visual trigger of that

Malcolm Craig Gilbert: Yes. They are the memories of being out on patrol when you always had to be aware of what was going on around you. You learnt to be frightened even when you were inclined to trust

Paul Seawright: Is there a part of this that is you referring back to that, because someone who is untreated and suffering from PTSD would find it very difficult to be in an alley if they'd faced real fear in that situation unless they'd somehow been through some way of dealing with that. So I'm just wondering is that a visualisation of PTSD. We've talked a lot about authorship and I think it's more relevant here than it is in my work, so is the PTSD important in the work or is it incidental?

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Malcolm Craig Gilbert: In some ways it is the work. The landscapes themselves trigger the memories. I don't go hunting for them or anything like that. A lot of the time I'm drawn to things and then I start wondering - why am I drawn to it?, why does it frighten me?.

In this presentation of the photographs of the *Flashbacks* (2011-) series as visualisation and symptom of PTSD, landscape is both the prompt of memory and the arena of its suspension and irresolution: 'The landscapes themselves trigger the memories. I don't go hunting for them or anything like that' (Craig Gilbert). It is an iteration of post-traumatic stress disorder which across the series of landscape images transforms the everyday into threat. In *(IV) A Report of a Man Approaching Children in an Alleyway* (Fig 4.9) a discarded child's toy helicopter lies in an alleyway, graffiti sprayed in black on a wooden fence reads 'Trespassers Prosecuted'. The image's title in its mimicry of a police report registers the threat in the language of sexual offence, identifying that what is fearsome and dangerous is a man approaching children. As an interpretative framework the title not only presents the image as a crime scene but invokes the violation of social and familial roles and bonds, which like *Remembrance Day* equates the threat of violence with the loss of childhood. The discarded toy translated back into the language of a police report not only provides a narrative to the fear of place but also in regulating perspective on what is seen in the image records traumatic memory as the loss of innocence and intensified vulnerability. In Craig Gilbert's account however, the toy helicopter takes on another formation of personal memory:

Malcolm Craig Gilbert: This alleyway is near where my father lives. When I went round to see him the children's toy helicopter was lying there. I always had this feeling of unease with this place but when I saw the toy like a downed helicopter that sparked the memory, the flashback of my service in Newry when they were trying to shoot down helicopters. And then with it being a toy, there's that temptation to pick kids toys up, so there's this temptation to go forward and pick it up,

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that sense of going forward on trust that could leave you open to being murdered

It is an account which indicates that the series *Flashbacks: Irrational Fears of the Ordinary* is not intended as topographical representation of specific memories and is more concerned with the effect of urgency and anxiety. While the images lay claim to representational status as 'flashbacks' the 'unease with this place' is registered and authored in the dramatisation of fear of the titles: a garage driveway blocked by bushes at house number 202 becomes *A Report of Youths trying to break into a Garage* (Fig 4.10) and an image of a grey corrugated metal fence dented and damaged against a blue sky becomes *Memories of a Mortar Attack* (Fig 4.11).

Malcolm Craig Gilbert: This image *Memories of a Mortar Attack* stems from when I was 20 years of age on the 20th February 1985 in Newry at a Police Barracks, where 9 Police officers died. I left the depot on the Friday, I was meant to go Coalisland but instead of going to Coalisland I was redirected to Newry. This battered fence, the marks and the way it's bent and twisted was a direct memory of my first day on the job. I was 20 and the first thing I saw when I was sent down to Newry was the aftermath of a mortar attack with the jagged edges of the surrounding fences [...]

I walked past this fence all the time and it kept reminding me of that memory to the point where I had to take a photograph of it.

Paul Seawright: It's so interesting you say that because an image I didn't show from the police series is a photograph of a gas bottle which actually is one of the unexploded mortar bombs from that attack. In the book there's a text by Ciaran Carson about how everyday objects like a gas tank which is used to connect your cooker

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to the back of your house or to put in a Superser gas fire - how an ordinary object in the context of the Troubles becomes something else altogether, and this is the same thing. An ordinary garden fence re-contextualised in this history becomes something extraordinary. In the text Ciaran has this list of things milk crates, milk bottles, lemonade bottles, sweet jars and shopping trolleys which in any other place are ordinary everyday things but here trigger something quite different. And that really reminds me of that.

Lee Lavis:

My first memory of arriving in Northern Ireland as a British soldier would be a very similar image. We were flown into Aldergrove, and from Aldergrove we went by helicopter to Rossleigh and the first thing you saw on landing was the battered fencing and in some cases there were these round holes where mortars had come through. So that picture really resonates with me. Probably most soldiers who served here would have pictures like that because it's not like you get told what's going on. You arrive on the base and the last regiment leaves straight away and you're left there and the first thing you do is look around at your environment and you see battered fences with holes in them. The first thing I saw was the aftermath of the mortar attack in Rossleigh.

Iain Griffin:

A lot of the discussion today has been of people who lived through the Troubles. But we're 15 years post the Good Friday Agreement so there's a whole other generation who don't have those lived memories. So to understand what happened, for me to understand

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what happened all I have are these crumpled bits of metal with which to interpret the memories of someone else.

The ordinary as visual triggers of traumatic memory and of a landscape booby trapped 'there's that temptation to pick kids toys up, so there's this temptation to go forward and pick it up, that sense of going forward on trust that could leave you open to being murdered' (Craig Gilbert), reshapes an approach to landscape as a double vision of true and false, disguise and exposure. It is a double vision inscribed in the discrepancy between image and title, where the interpretative matrix of title and image evidences threat.

Notably the discussion prompted by the 'battered fencing' of *Memories of a Mortar Attack* shifts toward a more visceral account of the Troubles, where the dichotomy of public/private and the 'difficulty to say my history' is less centrally meaningful. However while the image prompts disclosure: 'My first memory of arriving in Northern Ireland as a British soldier would be a very similar image' (Lavis), the semantic tension of public and private is reproduced as the lived and the imagined: 'there's a whole other generation who don't have those lived memories' (Griffin). It is a difference which suggests the image is subject to two different modes of reception, on the one hand the image 'resonates' with the lived experience and on the other it performs as the residual memory of the Troubles: 'all I have are these crumpled bits of metal with which to interpret the memories of someone else' (Griffin). It is an acknowledgement which not only implicates memory within the differential interpretations of the image, but does so through a process which preserves the authority of the Good Friday Agreement as a decisive break with the past: 'A lot of the discussion today has been of people who lived through the Troubles. But we're 15 years post the Good Friday Agreement' (Griffin). Moreover this interjection suggests that what is at stake is how future perspectives on the Troubles come to inhere in the image *Memories of a Mortar Attack* as an interpretative frame of reference. As memory and interpretation are made intersecting concepts it follows that what is seen and not seen become acts of affirmation and/or disavowal of both experience and perspective:

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Breandán Clarke: I understand the point that you're making about walking past a certain fence and that fence goes bang but I don't get that from the image. I don't get that sense of doubt or trepidation. We all walked about like that in Belfast, whether you were a combatant in the RUC or a combatant in the IRA. But without the context of you introducing yourself as a former police officer or the title of the photograph I wouldn't have got that

Lee Lavis: The thing with the uniform as well is that whole rhetoric of motivation. For someone trained in the army, I'm not sure about the RUC, you were taught to mistrust everyone in the republican community in every single situation - that behind any fence can be a bomb, any gap in the fence can be a pressure point that you can tread on. So even the most innocuous situations you were taught to view from this perspective.

Breandán Clarke: It's also a landscape that we all had to traverse, it wasn't unique to combatants.

Lee Lavis: I didn't mean that

Breandán Clarke: But were these the scenes of places that you had been called out to while you were a serving officer and then revisited and photographed

Malcolm Craig Gilbert: No these are random flashbacks, random triggers

Lavis' explanation of the 'rhetoric of motivation' as a military rationale directed against 'everyone in the republican community' and linked to the capacity to survive is a description of fear as a taught point of view. Moreover it is a description which is imagistic – behind any fence can be a bomb, any gap in the fence can be a pressure point that you can tread on – which like the series

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*Flashbacks - Irrational Fears of the Ordinary* views place from a conditioned perspective of vigilance and mistrust. Despite Clarke's assertion that this way of seeing and being was a shared condition, 'it wasn't unique to combatants', *Memories of a Mortar Attack* does not prompt this recollection: 'I don't get that sense of doubt or trepidation' (Clarke). It is a political argument registered in the denial of the image's affect and in the subsequent explanation which makes equivalent the State and non-State by describing RUC and the IRA as 'combatants'. It is therefore a denial of the image's affect which is used to demonstrate an ethical argument, mediated by the personal experience of being 'subject' to the surveillance of both the RUC and the IRA: 'We all walked about like that in Belfast'.

However it is a judgement which is made on the basis of the imagery alone, as if the image title is not a key element of the work which frames and mediates 'how an ordinary object in the context of the Troubles becomes something else altogether' (Seawright). As such it is the image title which contextualises the Troubles by assigning a perspective on how the image is seen, and it is this disjuncture between image and title which replays the intellectual and psychic uncertainty and mistrust of the landscape. Consequently Lavis' recollection of the aftermath of a mortar attack in Rossleigh does not legitimate the referential claim of the title, since the image is not the aftermath of a mortar attack but is instead the memory as trauma that endlessly repeats as 'random flashbacks'(Craig Gilbert).

As such the series *Flashbacks* is in one sense more therapeutic than epistemological since the images are not 'scenes of places' which are revisited but are instead triggered by an emotional apprehension of 'what lies within the landscape' (Craig Gilbert). But while the titles of the *Flashbacks* series seek to convey and determine what is seen and give narrative to the content of the image, the imprecision of the images call into question the determination of the titles.

Caragh O'Donnell: What strikes me about the two bodies of work and also about the contrast between Malcolm and Paul's work is the difference between the deeply personal and the impersonal. With the first series *Exorcism* it's almost voyeuristic, you

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feel like a voyeur looking at it, it's so personal [...]with the unstaged images, the *Flashbacks* series, [...] there is the shift from the representational to the more abstract. But part of that abstraction can also remove the politics from the work and there seems to me to be a tendency with a lot of artists from here to try and conceal what it is that is so difficult when you are from here.

Eamonn McCann: I am more interested or more drawn to the *Flashbacks* series because although there's nothing there, you know there's something going on, like having the tree in front of your garage and not cutting it down because you immediately ask yourself what's going on there how do they get the car in or with the abandoned child's toy - you know there's something there, it's not precise but you feel there's something slightly sinister going on

McCann's response to the *Flashbacks* images suggests a certain loosening of meaning from the determination of the series titles, which in turn produces a new trajectory of affect: 'you feel there's something slightly sinister going on' (McCann). It is a reframing of the images which repeats Craig Gilbert's initial 'why am I drawn to it ?; why does it frighten me?', which both exposes the limits and contingency of the image titles while at the same time centring a sense of unease. Moreover it is a sense of unease which is located in the image 'although there's nothing there, you know there's something going on, like having the tree in front of your garage and not cutting it down', whereby the image exceeds the narrative explanation and description of the title *A Report of Youths trying to break into a Garage* (McCann). For O'Donnell the unstaged and more abstract images of *Flashbacks* in contrast to *Traumatic Exorcisms* arguably removes 'the politics from the work', since specific reference to Northern Ireland, what 'is so difficult when you are from here' is no longer centred as the *mise en scene* of the image (O'Donnell).



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But while on the one hand this concealment of the politics of place ‘can also remove the politics from the work’ it also gives rise to thought ‘you immediately ask yourself what’s going on there’ (McCann). This tension between narrative and abstraction, dramatisation and the post dramatic recorded in the shift between the internalised landscapes of *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* and the external landscapes of *Flashbacks: Irrational Fears of the Ordinary* speaks more broadly to the ‘difficulties of representing trauma and the poetics of witnessing’ (Baer, 2002 :70)<sup>32</sup>.

The discomfit that is registered in looking at the images of *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* ‘you feel like a voyeur looking at it, it’s so personal’ (O’Donnell), also forces into view how ‘conflict resolution is a psychic as well as a political process’ (Dawson, 2007:57), wherein post-traumatic stress disorder becomes the object of inquiry:

Colin Graham: This may be a very intrusive question but I’m just trying to work out the relationship between the two series. When you look at the two together you would think that in the timeline of your own practice and in the timeline of psychoanalysis that the landscape images would come first, that you would get the flash of the real that sparks off something bigger, that is the memory trigger for a larger narrative.

And the thing that seems extraordinary to me is that first you created the narrative photographs, the *Post Traumatic Exorcisms*. So the question which is perhaps really crass is that these exorcisms feel like they worked in a way, because you were able to go back to the flashes in a more considered way. And I

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<sup>32</sup> For a discussion on the intersection of photography and the emergence of trauma as a clinical condition see Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence – The Photography of Trauma*, MIT, 2002. Baer’s examination of images from the Holocaust as crises of reference and witnessing dispels the idea that what is seen is what can be known.

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would have expected in terms of the practice of psychoanalysis to have to deal with the landscapes, the memory triggers first and to have used those to find a point of access to the larger stories. But these larger stories which are being played out and dramatized, all these things that you would expect to happen in the later stages of psychoanalysis or psychotherapy are at the beginning. So it's really interesting to see this, which is the opposite of what you would expect -that these narrative photographs led to the consideration of what these spaces mean.

Malcolm Craig Gilbert:

I'm not in control of post-traumatic stress disorder, you know, it happens when you're asleep, it happens if a car backfires, it happens every time I see a Land Rover or every time I see a police station or every time I see a riot on TV. Even though I haven't been in the police for 10 years, it's still like I haven't left. So there's the sequential order to the work, I did the *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* first and it was followed by the *Flashbacks* series but the disorder isn't ordered, although the process was to first deal with what was inside of me, enacting the fear and paranoia and then looking to the environment, the ordinary places that hold these triggers.

Colin Darke:

I'm not quite sure how we're supposed to look at these. I'm not sure how to look at these photographs because in many ways I'm looking at your mental health history and I'm not used to that in looking at art work

This exchange points to how PTSD as the subject of the photographs informs an interpretative approach to the work, including the extent to which the work is

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representative of psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic stages of recovery. Craig Gilbert's account of staging the *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* and then photographing *Flashbacks: Irrational Fears of the Ordinary* charts a shift from internal to external, from the dramatic and the performed to the post-dramatic and unstaged. While the images function, in part, as a way of registering and exploring PTSD, this is not immediately clear on the basis of the imagery alone or in the shifts between re-enactments and flashbacks. Nevertheless the work provokes unease 'I'm not sure how to look at these photographs because in many ways I'm looking at your mental health history' (Darke). This reflexive uncertainty of 'I don't know how to look' which is at the same time an auto-critique of the role of the viewer 'I'm not quite sure how we're supposed to look' points to a sense of disquiet in seeing images which detail 'mental health history' (Darke). In consequence the images not only force into view trauma as the aftermath of violence but also how psychic injury as the subject of the images is a restricted theme 'I'm not used to that in looking at art work'. As such the images not only present PTSD as the subject but also stage the ability to see as a critical concern, where the demand on the viewer to see the unfamiliar points to the ways in which restriction on what is seen 'works to undermine both a sensate understanding of war, and the conditions for a sensate opposition to war' (Butler, 2010:100).

In *The Patsy* (Fig 4.12) from *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* a man in a dark green RUC uniform sits on a chair in what appears to be an abandoned building. Behind the man there are shelves spray painted in graffiti and on the second shelf is an RUC hat. The man's mouth is open, his head leant backwards and he is blindfolded with a red cloth. His arms are outstretched, his hands are nailed to the shelves and his naked feet are nailed to the floor. On the floor there is a red plastic canister, a box of matches, a pair of pliers and a small pool of blood. This staged scene of torture of an RUC officer alongside the title *Patsy* presents the principal argument of the work – the RUC as the scapegoat and the sacrificial victim. Like the image *Generations I* it stages a polemic against victimisation while claiming the status of victim through performance; in *Generations I* it is the children's imitation of paramilitaries as action heroes and in *The Patsy* it is the performance of self-harm as torture, performances which both underwrite the polemical

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argument and constitute the symbolic representation and signification of us and them, self and other.

Ciara Hickey: The more horrific images like this of the patsy, are those friends?

Malcolm Craig Gilbert: No, this is me. When you left the RUC you were given your uniform so I kept it in a wardrobe because I knew I'd find some use for it in some way. Now I know it's graphic but it's a personal perspective. The patsy to me, and I know not all people would agree, as I've said it's from my perspective or my feelings of it, the patsy is somebody who is sort of singled out to be blamed. I felt like a sacrificial lamb, in a way, on a personal level. When they finally moved on to achieve a more balanced police force, which was right, I felt I was made personally accountable for everything that happened here.

Colin Graham: In the photograph, *Generations 1* with the two balaclavas. I mean the balaclava itself is an odd kind of article, it has all these connotations, it's both absurd and comical and clownish and fairly frightening.

Malcolm Craig Gilbert: But it's also about what happens here on both sides, you know you have the children on the one side with the dark glasses and the berets and then in the Unionist side on the Orange marches you've got the children with the banners. Children are still brought up with the ethos of old quarrels that they have to keep carrying on for the matter of their own identity or else that identity is lost.

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In both the description of the RUC uniform, kept in the back of the wardrobe because there would be ‘some use for it in some way’, and the two balaclavas ‘comical and clownish and fairly frightening’ the affective connection to the past is presented as a form of dressing up –where the politics of identity is constructed as performance. It is a presentation which characterises the cultural narrative of violence as performance and enactment of ‘the ethos of old quarrels’, where identity and performance, self and other are made interdependent since without the nominalist imperative of Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and loyalist ‘identity is lost’ (Craig Gilbert). Moreover this interdependency shifts between the performance of a remembered future in *Generations I* and the belated and imagined past of *Patsy*, where trauma as ‘the disorder of memory and time’ (Baer, 2002:9), effectively blocks the conversion of experience into memory or forgetting. It is an argument which in making identity the explanatory referential frame and context for understanding the violence of the Troubles both repeats the ‘long standing ideological stance’ that the source of the conflict is ‘an ages-old ethnic antagonism between two polarised communities’ (Dawson, 2007:45-46) and emphasises that part of that reality has not receded into the past. It is an argument which prompts a conversation on the reciprocal implication of memory and identity:

Breandán Clarke:

We're talking in the context of post Agreement and recently footage was uploaded to youtube of the Republican march in Ardoyne earlier this year, with children dressed up with berets, gloves and dark glasses.<sup>33</sup> Now I think that's abhorrent, but the footage was a sensationalised and opportunistic way to record and comment on this. Because as we move towards the eventuality of equality here, you see that retraction, fear and threat being posed on identity, so I think there's a wider context to be looked at rather

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<sup>33</sup> For footage of the Republican march in the Ardoyne, April 4, 2013 see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQUNESzxePc> (accessed on Sept 10, 2014)

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than just saying that there's a passing on to another generation

Malcolm Craig Gilbert: But my photograph is not about a particular side, it's not in that sense from a particular point of view. It's to suggest that this dressing up is a circumstance that is happening

Breandán Clarke: I understand that but I think it's too big a generalisation to put it into that generational question. I just don't know about that. I'm still undecided about that.

Colin Graham: I think what's interesting is that when we talk about the way in which we're moving away from the levels of political violence into a new future and a shared future and all that, there is always the question of what will replace that. That in actual fact it won't be more equality and dialogue and tolerance and creativity but what will replace it will be what existed before the Troubles which is conservatism, conformity and a very entrenched social moral position on things. I wonder about that sometimes whenever we're dealing with these things. And these photographs relate to that in a broader sense rather than simply the question of republican or loyalist parents passing down to their children their political views [...]

Breandán Clarke: What happened in Ardoyne in putting those kids in the berets, the black glasses and the black gloves showed an overt fetishism for militarism that everyone's trying to move away from. It's not about denying the past but that footage was laying down a very specific future.

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Colin Graham: But it's exactly a fetish rather than a promise of military action. It's the left over and it's not surprising because the Good Friday Agreement is based entirely on the notion that people have an identity [...] It's meant to be this essence that's within you from the moment that you are born and that's the political agreement that was signed in 1998. The Agreement is based on that philosophical premise, it wasn't based on the premise of a shared future in the sense that those identities would fade away. It was based on a paradox that there would be a shared future where those identities were ever more secure than they were in the past.

So it's not surprising that people think through a fetishized identity which is exactly what's happening in the photograph *Generations 1* and it's exactly what happens with putting black gloves, a beret and sunglasses on children, you are parading the fetish of an identity because the society itself has fetishized identity through the Good Friday Agreement.

The image of the young boys in *Generations 1* and of the young boys in the youtube footage of the republican parade in the Ardoyne when understood as a parody indicates how identity is performed and how the violence of the Troubles interpellates the subjectivities Protestant and Catholic. It is an interpellation which puts pressure on how identity is summoned as explanation, knowledge and experience since 'when you're from here you have a community identity and a political identity, like it or not' (Seawright).

Crucially for Graham the children dressed up with berets, gloves and dark glasses in the republican parade does not signify the laying down of 'a very specific future' but is instead 'a fetish rather than a promise of military action' (Graham).

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While for Clarke the footage of the march is not only a 'sensationalised and opportunistic way to record this and comment on this' it also pre-empts a more considered discussion of the 'threat being posed on identity' (Clarke). Moreover, for Clarke the threat posed on identity is signified and contextualised as post Agreement, where for Graham the Good Friday Agreement is 'based on a paradox that there would be a shared future where those identities were ever more secure than they were in the past' (Graham).

It is a difference which articulates the challenge of interpreting the meaning of the Good Friday Agreement, since on the one hand it is understood as the obligation to forget while not denying the past and on the other as the obligation to think through a fetishized identity. It is a difference which arguably produces a supplementary frame of interpretation where what is seen in the image *Generations 1* affirms or contradicts a comprehension of post Agreement. The staging of identity as performance for Graham captures how 'the society itself has fetishized identity through the Good Friday Agreement', whereas for Clarke the intergenerational perspective risks minimising the perplexity of cultural identity and the 'retraction, fear and threat being posed on identity'. In both instances it is a response to post Agreement as a syntactical, political and rhetorical arrangement of the 'two communities model' that is brought into the picture - a difference of comprehension which introduces into the process of judgement and interpretation, the cultural temporality of post Agreement as both a way of seeing the past and imagining the future.

While Seawright's series *Conflicting Account*, opens a space for the uncertainty of cultural meaning, however partially, by truncating the signifiers of Protestant and Catholic, Craig Gilbert's images destabilise and unsettle the break with the past issued by the chronology of post Agreement. In reading the relationship between the series *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* and *Flashbacks: Irrational Fears of the Ordinary* dialectically, a simple phenomenology of memory is disturbed, since what lies behind the landscapes is the disorder and distortion of time and memory figuratively staged and dramatised:



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Colin Graham: What for me is so fascinating about the *Flashbacks* landscapes is that the *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* pictures lie behind them. With the first series what we have is this staging of identity of the kind that we've just been talking about, and what this fetishism of identity means is that now you have to actually perform it. It's not just saying you are Celtic from the moment you're born but it's about how you show and how you perform that identity from the moment you're born. So you dress up, just as in these images all the people are dressed up, these are people performing their identity, not in a sectarian sense but in the sense of their life story. I think in looking at these photographs it's not about us understanding what's happened to Malcolm, it's about us understanding something a bit wider than that and the first thing you notice is the fact that these are all being performed. What is being implied is that to understand this society you have to understand it as something that is a kind of staged performance of something that's meant to be real, meant to pass itself off as real.

And I think that's a very good way to consider how this work is a critique of a post agreement society where identity is something that passes itself off as essence but is actually performed. I think that's what's interesting about these photographs as different stages of mourning, is they ask us what stage are we at.

In tracing the relationship between the landscape images which 'lie behind' the *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* images, Graham not only indicates how the different registers of the images intersect to reveal the latency of psychic pain and of wounds that will not heal but also how this process that denies perspectival and historical distance requires the performance of identity 'to pass itself off as real' (Graham). It is a performance of identity that is blocked in Seawright's *Conflicting Account*, where the carefully framed images not only deny immediate

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intelligibility of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist, but also amplify the sense of stasis in how the conflict is remembered and maintained as a reality of 'irreconcilable' differences - whether in the murals or the incomplete narratives of classroom instruction. It is a conflict that in Craig Gilbert's series of work becomes the irreconcilable trauma of lived experience, where the dimension of personal response to violence remains fundamentally unresolved yet central to the images.

But what is apparent in Graham's concluding remarks is how the investigation of the photographic opens a broader consideration of post Agreement: 'it's not about us understanding what's happened to Malcolm, it's about us understanding something a bit wider than that and the first thing you notice is the fact that these are all being performed' (Graham). In shifting the focus from the autobiographical to the contextual Graham underscores how Craig Gilbert's images reveal that 'the model of history-as-narrative is a construction' (Baer, 2002:2) but additionally how this narrative construction mistakes generational memory for historical memory, with its attendant emphasis on 'how you show and how you perform that identity from the moment you're born' (Graham). It is a model of history-as-narrative which is critically explored in both Seawright and Craig Gilbert's images – in *Conflicting Account* the images are subject to the viewers' reconfiguration to discern what has been disrupted and in Craig Gilbert's *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* the traumatic discordance of time and memory is re-signified and made coherent as narrative through the staged performances of suicide, torture, child's play, and dreamscapes. In both, what is at issue is how history-as-narrative defines what is remembered and what is transmitted as memory, where the account of the past is both a reciprocal recognition of self and other, us and them and the performance of this recognition of difference as interdependency and separation.

This complex, affective, political and psychic dynamic involved in 'people performing their identity' follows the dyadic lead of the Good Friday Agreement, where the identities Protestant and Catholic are made 'more secure than they were in the past' (Graham). In this regard the Good Friday Agreement arguably enacts traumatic memory, whereby the past inflects and debilitates the premise of a shared future through the repetition of differentiation, antagonistically phrased as

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‘the substantial differences between our continuing, and equally legitimate, political aspirations’.

As such the photographs of Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert suggest that the trauma of the Troubles consists in the difficulty of ‘presenting any one narrative’ whereby the binary of Protestant and Catholic equally serves forgetting and denial and commemoration and remembrance. It is a difficulty which in Seawright’s *Conflicting Account* is framed as the politics of recognition, where the image’s perspective on the visual and discursive conventions of Protestant and Catholic, is made indistinct, forcing into view the loss of a shared history. In translating this absence of a shared history into sight Seawright’s images deny the full visibility of place and story thereby making apparent how the impossibility of ‘presenting any one narrative’ is intrinsic to the conflict. These incompatible ways of seeing that remain unresolved become in Craig Gilbert’s *Flashbacks*, the disjunction of time and memory where the landscapes simultaneously suppress memories, since the images are unmarked by the signifiers of Protestant and Catholic, and elicit memories of imagined crimes.

Graham’s suggestion that the images actively interpret mourning, raising the question of ‘what stage are we at’ is in part addressed to a conceptualisation of post Agreement as an affirmation of the cultural, political and historical differentiation of Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and loyalist and a repudiation of the past. It is also addressed to the question of grief, of loss and absence, which is implicitly linked to what is seen and shown in the images, where sight is the politics of point of view and photography, like trauma, disorders time and memory. It is this sense of the profound and unresolved crisis of representing a contested and violent history, which shifts between the materiality of trace to the signification of memory as staged performance, from the voided visual and textual narratives of *Conflicting Account* to the performance of *Post Traumatic Exorcisms*.

The question ‘what stage are we at’ in directing attention to how the images generate a sense of mourning situates the viewer in relation to a political and ethical response to loss. Moreover it does so by locating the central meaning of

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post Agreement as the politics of mourning, inextricably linked to which lives are 'grievable and memorialised' and to the performance of identity politics as a preservation of 'community and memory'. However in the images of Seawright and Craig Gilbert what is also put under pressure is the time of 'post Agreement' since replicated within this time is the mimesis of Protestant and Catholic as the reproduced values and attitudes and index of conflicting accounts, which not only points to the failure of a new shared history and future, but also suggests that 'post Agreement' is a modification of the Troubles rather than a new cultural dominant. It is this residual trace of the Troubles as a mode of reciprocal interaction which underwrites both the staged trauma of Craig Gilbert's images and the perspectival disruptions of Seawright's *Conflicting Account* – where the infrastructural description of 'substantial differences' are recalculated and regenerated within a performative dynamic as cultural, social, political and historical identities and destinies. It is an argument which suggests that the use of the term 'post Agreement' is caught within an obligation to perform 'something that's meant to be real' and which similarly requires the repression of what is internally conflicted and contradictory in order to 'pass itself off as real' (Graham). As such the images equally speak of the Troubles and post Agreement by problematising memory – as the internalised conflict of trauma and the external conflicting accounts – where memory predicated on the identity Catholic or Protestant is effectively held in check by being made accountable and attributable to a central 'essence that's within you from the moment that you are born' (Graham).

In the course of the exchange amongst the co-researchers the challenges of understanding the image in the context of post Agreement is linked to an understanding of the past violence of the Troubles – where understanding and interpretation is fissured by its own aporias and repressions, projections and phantasies, oblivion and memory, shifting between historical and psychoanalytical conventions of analysis. These shifts not only track the politics of knowledge but do so by putting pressure on questions of desire, embodiment, representation and signification – where the details of the peeling diagonals of red and blue paint on a child's merry-go-round, the incomplete narrative left in white chalk on a blackboard and the discarded toy helicopter – peer into a past that has been

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consolidated by the 'two communities model' as an axis of exclusion and inclusion, of Catholic and Protestant, of suspicion and suspense.

In the discussion that emerged in response to Seawright and Craig Gilbert's images the designations Catholic and Protestant are presented as a precondition and *sine ne qua non* of power sharing and participation where the 'I' of speech is already implicated in the social temporality of post Agreement: How many were Catholic and how many were Protestant?. It is a question which not only assumes the designations of Catholic and Protestant form a condition of moral enquiry and ethical deliberation on the past but that 'community and memory' is carried forward in the task of critical understanding, whereby ethical deliberation is contextualised within the constraints and perspectival anchor of Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and loyalist. Nevertheless the assertion of the politics of recognition as a politics of knowledge is interrupted by the apprehension of the limits of knowledge: 'I felt like a sacrificial lamb; all I have are these crumpled bits of metal; I'm not sure how to look at these photographs; I didn't mean that; I'm really struggling with how far to make these pictures interesting; I know other people have a different view of it'. These responses in their acknowledgement of the limitation of the biographical 'I' speak to the uncertainty of definition, where the Troubles as a contested history unsettles a more substantive and integrated critique. Moreover the circumspection of the responses suggest not simply unease with the subject of Craig Gilbert's *Post Traumatic Exorcisms*, but rather that the images in giving definition to psychic injury linking the personal with the political are pedagogic in function insofar as the images stage the pain of a former RUC officer.

As a mode of public exchange the images open the question of between memory and mourning to the test of self and other and to the social dimension of living in the aftermath of conflict. As such, the conversation generated by the images undertakes responsibility for the effects of the images as a 'task of giving an account of oneself' (Butler, 2005:10) where memory and mourning takes on an ethical disposition of the relation between self and other aligned and realigned within broader discourses on post Agreement. Articulated within structures of affect and meaning mediated by the images, the co-researchers' exchange points to

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the complex historical and social restraints that work to shut down the ethics of political and social empathy and the anxiety of critique turning to dogma.

In contradistinction Seawright's images seek to disrupt the pedagogical function of representation by attempting to refuse a perspective that adheres to the politics of point of view of nationalist or loyalist that would effectively close down deliberation or reflection. The occlusion at work in *Conflicting Account* is however both subtle and complex, where each image becomes a marginalised representation that barely represents, which like the traces of writing in white chalk on the blackboard leaves unsaid and unseen the extent and intensity of social, cultural and political division. It suggests that the categorical designations of Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and loyalist, as well as the boundaries established by their symbolic distribution are impossible to sustain, despite their trenchant form of interpretation and limitation on social, cultural and political life.

The occlusive strategy of *Conflicting Account* not only makes visible how history is claimed as both interpretable and unnegotiable in its principle, but also how this process pre-empts reflexivity by centring identity as historical explanation. Moreover in interrupting the ways in which history is visualised and written under the aegis of the two communities model, *Conflicting Account* makes apparent how the historical blockages and deprecations of seeing the Other are intimately linked to the uses of memory. It is an aspect which is legible in response to Craig Gilbert's *Memories of a Mortar Attack*, where 'I don't get that from the image' underwrites a denial of the distinctive experience of the 'other': 'We all walked about like that in Belfast, whether you were a combatant in the RUC or a combatant in the IRA' (Clarke). It is a question of memory which is therefore far from straightforward since it underpins constructions of cultural and political identity and is similarly countered by the difficulty, discontinuity and fragmentation of remembering. It points to how the conflict of the Troubles in constituting a frame of memory shifts between political calculations of the past and its traumatic effects, through which the complex politics of mourning are mobilised and repressed.

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The differential of the seen and not seen, of recognition and non-recognition in regulating the duopoly of political power sharing and the formation of loyalism and nationalism equally puts pressure on the future, negatively calculated as the loss of a secure identity ‘the fear and threat posed on identity’ (Clarke) or negatively imagined as a return to ‘conservatism, conformity and a very entrenched social moral position on things’ (Graham). This reactionary imagination of the future touches on the uncertainty of what will emerge from post-Agreement, an uncertainty which resonates in the internalisation of the Troubles in the intimate and the emotionally charged theatre of the ‘family’ and ‘community’ of *Generations I*, *Remembrance Day* and in the performance of social bonds displayed by murals and parades. A ‘performance’ that responds to the conjunction of post Agreement as both the precarity and fetishisation of identity, where identity is understood to be threatened and is simultaneously recast as an unfolding essence, moving without change from the past to a promised future. This double inscription of threat and essence which circumscribes and socially constitutes the identities of nationalist and loyalist, Catholic and Protestant, is dependent on a denial and unwillingness to conceive of other forms of association and subjectivity. It is a denial tested by the images of Seawright which defy the essentialist logics of political argument and representation and by the images of Craig Gilbert which challenge the willingness to see and acknowledge the pain of the Other. As such the event in testing the capacity to live with difference, analytically, culturally and socially opens a critical space through which the regulatory frame and political genealogy of nationalist and loyalist identities are explored as historical and performative constructions, which like Butler’s account of the performativity of gender requires the embodiment of processes of signification of ‘acts, gestures and enactments’ (Butler, 1990:136), in order for difference to be sustained and repeated.

In making apparent how memory is constituted through a complex process of social construction and legitimation, *Between Memory and Mourning* unpacks how perspective functions as an inventory of ‘truths’ through which the past and present are interpreted, whereby the competing circulation of ‘truths’ lose propositional status. This is not to suggest an absence of historical facts but rather

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how the journalist's question 'how many were Catholics and how many were Protestants?' in response to Seawright's *Sectarian Murder* series sustains the dialectic of identity and difference and conceals the potential for memory to be reconfigured as a 'context of ethics' (Margalit, 2004:45). The journalist's question not only works against the edit of text and image of *Sectarian Murders* but rearticulates identity as the locus of meaning and as the frame of memory. Moreover the question of the body count reproduces the organisation and disposition of the visible as Catholic and Protestant, as an anticipatory act of seeing difference that circumscribes and qualifies the interpretation of the images as visual evidence. As such the context of the Troubles is not exterior to the question but conditions the form that the question takes, insofar as questions are 'formulated or stylised by the historical conditions that prompt them' (Butler, 2005:6).

In contrast the co-researchers' exchange attempts to interrogate the ellipsis between memory and mourning, reflexively registering the loss and absence of a 'context of ethics', which not only make the disagreements productive but also puts pressure on the question of how the past is mourned, resituating the images as 'different stages of mourning' to the final critically reflexive question of which stage 'are we at?'. But it is a question which lays bare the complexity of what is remembered and what is mourned since both are in part edited by the exigencies of the present of post Agreement and the identity politics of nationalism and loyalism. It is an aspect which not only has implications on which past is remembered and which forgotten but also on which past functions as post memory, the simultaneous coming-after and coming-into-being of memory.

This editing of the past through omission as a control on what is permitted for public view is illustrated by the murals in the bogside where 'there isn't a single IRA man with a gun. It's all about us as victims' (McCann). This use of murals as an idiom of remembrance whose pedagogic function is for the 'whole other generation who don't have those lived memories' (Griffin) is disrupted by Seawright's images that force into view editing as a political and historical process that underscores and justifies the identity politics of division through the reiteration of loss and victimisation. As such the murals regulate political



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identification and public memory, foreclosing the public sphere of critical debate on the past and its future meaning. Moreover the murals as a visual form of regulation cut across both what can be seen and how to see as apprehensions of the past and anticipations of political futurity that displace and preclude other ways to remember the past. It is this systematised regulation of memory and mourning whereby the murals as public memorials are ‘agents of remembrance and instruments of forgetting’ (Scott, 2014:119) which Seawright’s *Conflicting Account* disrupts. It is a disruption that makes apparent the political memories and theoretical imagination of the Troubles as a set of affective, temporal, social and historical relations of distance and proximity, us and them, self and other. But it is also an editing of the past where what was once not permitted for public view is remade as the subject of photographs, where the ‘sudden right to see’ (Darke) reconstructs the spaces of incarceration as public spaces.<sup>34</sup>

This relational dyad of private and public, distance and proximity, similarly maps a generational difference between the co-researchers, between memory as personal recollection and post memory as the trans-generational transmission of a ‘sense of living connection’ (Hirsch, 2012:104). It is a difference which not only highlights the problem of how the past is represented but also the limits of historical understanding predicated on memory as a privileged resource of explanation.

What is notable is how the personal recollection of the co-researchers instigates the memory of the Troubles as the circumstance of fear: ‘We all walked about like that in Belfast’; ‘you were taught to mistrust everyone in the republican community in every single situation’. It is this circumstance which is staged in the images of Craig Gilbert, in the enactment of fear and paranoia in the *Traumatic Exorcisms* and in the images of the triggers within the environment that reactivate traumatic memories in *Flashbacks: Irrational Fears of Ordinary*. However this staging of traumatic memory arguably mutes critical debate on the Troubles, replaced by a consideration of the clinical condition of post- traumatic stress disorder as a psychoanalytical frame of reference that makes conspicuous the

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<sup>34</sup> For an example of a photographic project that made public the previously restricted, see Donovan Wylie, *Maze 2002/03* and *Maze 2007/08*, Steidl, 2010 a photographic exploration of the 270 acres site and interior of the Maze Prison, subsequent to the prison closure.

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temporal reversal of distance and proximity in the interruption of the social and psychological injuries of the past in the present. In the explicit stagings of the past haunting the present in Craig Gilbert's *Post Traumatic Exorcisms* the present is exposed as a crisis of time compounded by the central and persistent problem of the politics of identity that pre-empt reflexivity, even as it seemingly promotes it. Moreover it exposes how post Agreement in its double of continuity with and disavowal of the past connects memory and mourning as critical questions of political expectation, longing and loss. As a corollary of the Agreement's insistence on two communities the performance of identity becomes a substitute form of memory as a claim to historical continuity. It is this paradox of historical continuity and discontinuity which the Agreement both establishes and is dependent on, since without the maintenance of the binary of Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist the political arrangement and logic of power sharing would lose legitimacy.

This temporal relation between remembered pasts and anticipated futures not only puts pressure on the present as both an accommodation with the past and the future, but institutes memory as both a political discourse and as a marker of political identity and identification. As such the performance of 'community and memory' embodied in parades and represented through murals, are not simply claims to historical continuity but are also, paradoxically, expressions of approval of the political discourse established by the Agreement. It is a reframing and repositioning of the past in relation to post Agreement which points to some of the hesitations and uncertainties of the present, both for the co-researchers who lived the political and personal loss of the Troubles and for the co-researchers who experienced this loss at a generational remove.

As such the event in navigating the space between memory and mourning attempts to both account for some of the protracted aftermaths of the Troubles and to generate new forms of solidarity and generosity that accommodates difference rather than demands difference as a prerequisite of identity. Moreover by establishing how 'community and memory' are conjoined as comprehensions of the past and anticipations of the future the strategic, pedagogic and performative function of what is remembered and what is forgotten is revealed. This is, of

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course, not to suggest that the historical facts of sectarianism or the history of Catholics as an oppressed minority within Northern Ireland be overlooked, but instead to differentiate between historical fact and the signification of these histories to sustain the binarism of Protestant and Catholic.

The event by emphasising 'between' as a critical space of translation and transmission, both between the conceptualisations of memory and mourning and between the two communities, indicates how the identities Protestant and Catholic are temporally and politically constructed and socially performed. In so doing it points to how decentring the temporal and political logic of 'our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations' would not only free the future from the determination of the past and free the past from the expectation of the future, but would also de-ontologise the categories of Protestant and Catholic which the two communities model supposes, seeding the possibility for a critical reimagining of subjectivity, political agency and the work of mourning.

## **Conclusion**

In threading the three events together this conclusion explores the critical vocabularies that were generated by the social dynamic of looking at the images of John Duncan, Kai Olaf Hesse, Mary McIntyre, David Farrell, Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert through the curatorial framings of Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning. It responds to the methodological premise of staging the 'event of photography' as both a curatorial model of research and as a discursive platform of negotiation which tracked the difficulties of dealing with the past. As such this conclusion considers how the Good Friday Agreement as a promise of political futurity regulates the politics of recognition that presses on the boundary between image and speech, the visible and the sayable. As a cumulative analysis of the three events it is an exploration of the political temporality of the aftermath of the Troubles, where questions of representation and mediation or 'ways of seeing' (Berger, 1972) are understood as critical comments and insights on the relation between image and speech, the past and the future. It is therefore an attempt to consider, across the three events, the co-researchers' 'ways of seeing' as posing questions of agency and everyday life, discursive structures and historical conditions, that foregrounds the Agreement's insistence on the non-identical political aspirations of Catholic and Protestant as the protracted aftermath of the Troubles and as a construction of the present that shapes historical enquiry. To be clear, the following analysis of the three events does not presuppose that the identities, Catholic, Protestant, nationalist and loyalist signal a stable core of self that unfolds without change, but instead explores the link between the politics of recognition and the politics of identification as enunciative strategies that mark the boundaries and production of difference.

It therefore explores how 'the dialectics of seeing' (Buck-Morss, 1989) across the three events not only called into question presence and absence, past and future but also provided the resources for a critique of the 'now of particular recognisability' (Benjamin, 1999:463). In consequence this conclusion does not

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follow the schema of the preceding chapters - the move from describing the image to considering the co-researchers' response to the image - instead it moves between the three events without faithfully following the actual dialogue of the three separate events, while acknowledging image and curation as generative context and research proposition. It is therefore a conclusion which pulls apart the thematic coherence of each event and pulls together the dialogically complex patterns of response, the moments of adversarial reasoning that diagnoses the seemingly intractable conflict of 'our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations' and the moments of reflexive awareness that move beyond the limitations of the present. While providing this cumulative account as a conclusion might appear to be a delayed analysis, the critical logic of the preceding chapters was to focus on the images as a mode of public exchange, to understand how meaning is socially produced shaped by the dynamic collaboration of the co-researchers and the specificity of the curatorial framing and pairing of photographers, whereby the integrity of each event provided both the context and structure of the dialogues that emerged.

In contrast this conclusion considers how staging the 'event of photography' provided a template for reconsidering images as both a prompt and record of 'ways of seeing' contextually framed by the paradoxical premise of post Agreement as the end of violence and the affirmation of sectarianism. This proposition of post Agreement as political project, premise and practice of disavowal and continuation guides the following analysis, where attention to the images across the three events is understood as both a record of the effects of the social and political conditions of living after the agreement, including the regulation and control on what is seen and not seen and what is known and not known:

Paul Seawright: I could have photographed the other side of course, it was 1997 but it was a very deliberate choice because what was beyond that occluded view had always been unknown to me and still remains unknown to me. Just because you walk around Tiger's Bay and walk around that community it can remain unknown to you [...]I never pretend that I am an



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make, mostly because the way I approach work is by walking round the city.

Kai Olaf Hesse: I remember calling John to ask if anything had happened at this particular site because I was nervous that it might have some sensitivity related to the Troubles.

Mary McIntyre: When I would be moved to go and take a photograph it was because I felt a resonance or a connection that I couldn't quite put into words.

David Farrell: The sensation I felt when I first walked into this place in Colgagh was the way the landscape had been violated in a way that seemed a very strong metaphor for the violence that had taken place there [...] During the original searches I had a dog that would come with me, an old pointer, and she wouldn't get out of the car at that site, she would howl, she hated the place

Paul Seawright: Growing up in North Belfast gave a very narrow perspective on life so the actual strangeness of this place only really became evident to me when I moved away and that reflection was enormous for me

Malcolm Craig Gilbert: you always had to be aware of what was going on around you because you learnt to be frightened even when you were inclined to trust

This complexity of context where the sense of fear and threat may have no actual referent in the present not only replays the past of the Troubles, but does so by becoming an abstract quality, whose affective presence is atmosphere and ambience. In this outline of the philosophical, psychological and physiological registers of affect, the visual process of observing is enmeshed with other sensory

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modalities, including imaginary and lived experience. As an evocation of the multi-dimensionality of ‘ways of seeing’ it connects image making to the complexity of place as context and object of study, where the conjuncture of post Agreement in its re-articulation of sectarian dynamics is traced and recorded in the apprehension of the past in the present.

It is an apprehension that is built upon across the three events where the subject of the conversations – the time and place of Northern Ireland – is refracted through the specificity of the social relational dynamic of the co-researchers. The forms and shapes these conversations assumed — both in terms of the responses to the images and the questions asked of the images – mediated by personal and professional interest and experience, defined the ‘now of particular recognisability’ in the political temporality of post Agreement, since ‘any consideration of these images yields some of the underlying motifs and pathos’ (Lerm-Hayes, *Spectrality and Urbanism*, 2013).

There is therefore across the three events a double process at work – locating the images within the conjuncture of post Agreement, through which the images become active assemblages of meaning on time and place and remediating images as affect. This process as a ‘dialectics of seeing’ that makes apparent context and contextualises affect is shaped in part by lived experience, where the consequence of the past informs an understanding of the present modulating the intensity and charge of affect, a process through which ‘experience as experienced, as lived, remains private, but its sense, its meaning, becomes public’ (Ricoeur, 1976 :16). As such the images prompt an intersubjective exchange of ‘sense’ and ‘meaning’ uncovering how what is seen is not simply an account of what the photograph is *of* but an active sensory re-description of an image’s content as the following excerpts from the three events demonstrate:

Fergus Jordan:           Where I live in the Lower Ravenhill in East Belfast there's a social housing development and the same kind of effect is there. You see the intentional intimidation through erecting flags right at the edge of a site where apartment blocks are going up. But these 60 dwellings, these houses are social



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housing, yet the same type of threat is there as if some unknown entity is going to move into the community. You can see the same thing that you see in John's photographs...

Colm Campbell: If you go back to the image of the bridge in *The Dream*, on one level there are elements of the sublime in the image and then there is the figure, which actually isn't a figure but in some way it stands as a figure and does so not necessarily in a good way. So with that photograph what came across quite strongly is this tension around the sublime versus the sinister.....

Lee Lavis: My first memory of arriving in Northern Ireland as a British soldier would be a very similar image. We were flown into Aldergrove, and from Aldergrove we went by helicopter to Rossleigh and the first thing you saw on landing was the battered fencing and in some cases there were these round holes where mortars had come through. So that picture really resonates with me..

The above comments all respond to an images' meaning through the double of representational reference and affect, to what the photograph is *of* and its sensory affect. But it is notable that the sensory affect is made the subject of the comments – the calculus through which the images are judged and the calculus through which the extended social and political reference of an image is contested:

Andrew Finlay: I teach sociology, I'm a kind of an anthropologist and when I was watching the images, I wasn't getting a big sociological hit, though I can see a certain reading of the Protestant community through these images. But the way I was responding was very much more personal, memories that some of the images recalled, recognition of places, recognition of events and demonstrations and some of that is really quite strong, some things more strong than others.

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John Byrne: I remember the first time I watched a Willie Doherty video where he had put down his car headlights and followed the road to Armagh to an assassination, a sectarian murder, and the first time I saw it, it really affected me because I, like a lot of people here, would have felt under threat from actual death.

There was a guy in our school who was killed in a sectarian murder and taken and dumped in a forest here in Belfast and Willie Doherty's work demanded that we look at this place, it was powerful. Whereas some of these images leave me I wouldn't say cold, they just leave me disinterested.

Breandán Clarke: I understand the point that you're making about walking past a certain fence and that fence goes bang but I don't get that from the image. I don't get that sense of doubt or trepidation.

These arguments suggest that an images' affect not only authenticates an images referential visibility and communication of meaning, but as a generative process moves beyond a strictly visual register of meaning encompassing the biographical, historical, cultural and social. This formation of meaning that is in part constituted by the personal and the cultural complicates the process of affective exchange proposed by Azoulay's 'civil contract of photography' (2011) which supposes that viewing atrocity photographs of the Occupied Territories can interpellate the viewer as an ethical citizen. While none of the images discussed in the three events are photographs of atrocity and therefore Azoulay's principal argument of the 'civil contract' is not directly tested, nevertheless the underlying proposition of 'civil contract' as a consensus formed by the ethical demand of seeing atrocity is challenged, insofar as the 'event of photography' not only uncovers how 'ways of seeing' are heavily freighted with the political but are functional articulations of lived experience and political, social and culturally shaped response, which therefore disrupts the recovery of a 'civil contract' assumed in the connection between moral feeling and ethical action.

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In this braiding of the political, the social and the psychic dimensions of photography and public life, the dialogues not only rendered questionable what a photograph is of as a primary vector of interpretation, but did so through the contestation and negotiation of the intrapersonal of historical experience, memory and identity politics. It is this negotiation of an images affect which not only brought to the surface how 'ways of seeing' are shaped by the political temporality of post Agreement, but how the dialectics of disavowal and continuity, tradition and change, identity and difference, link representation and affect. It is a linkage which strengthens the logics of the 'two communities model' as both the effects of the conflict and as an affective dimension of social and political life, as the following extracts from the three events indicate:

Fergus Jordan:            You see the intentional intimidation through erecting flags right at the edge of a site where apartment blocks are going up. [...] You can see the same thing that you see in John's photographs, even before the apartment block is built, this declaration that this is a loyalist area and this fear of people moving into the area and buying up the community.

Neil Jarman:                There's a tension that's coming out here between the specific and the general. It seems to me the photographs are trying to avoid being pinned down to the specific to open things up to the general. But then there's the viewers, and what I'm doing is asking myself do I recognise that, can I see where that was taken, oh yes, I recognise that. And if you're from the area or lived here, you immediately put a different slant on it

Breandán Clarke:        The conversation you have with people you're comfortable with over a pint is not the conversation you're going to present to the public which is always bounded by the politics of here, the politics of place and the possible consequences.

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This affective charge of the two communities model secured by the Agreement's commitment to 'the continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations' is therefore not only a constitutive part of the cultural history and politics of post Agreement, but is, more specifically, key in the formation of affective response to images where the differentiated visual and social perspectives encode 'the way this place, almost in a literal way, frames its own barriers and frames the clenching of its own identity by setting a limit on what's possible' (Graham, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013).

The three events in directing attention to the processes whereby the self is constituted as a classifiable identity, Protestant or Catholic, exposed the ways in which identity is determined as a dramaturgical condition of social life, that has to be staged, performed and recounted. It is an emphasis that is intimately connected to visual practices, where what is seen is not simply a form of recognition but is also a form of identification, which makes analogous community and memory in a move that ontologises and essentialises political, social and historical distinction: 'my editing process is to turn them around as it were to see them more clearly as Mickey Devine and Kevin Lynch who were both INLA volunteers. So with that picture your edit made me bring my own edit and authorship to the work, which of course is community and memory' (Clarke, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013). The logic of identity consolidated and substantiated by the conjunction of 'community and memory' produces a mode of recognition which therefore functions as an effect of reflexivity, where what is seen is both evidence of personal identity and the political intelligibility of 'community and memory' reiterating the Agreement's demand of 'our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations'.

But the events equally disrupted this theorisation of the social as 'two communities' since the affective turn of the 'event of photography' provided a complex view of causality and effect, description and explanation, self and other and the critical antinomies of restrictions on seeing and speaking and the effort to see and speak beyond these restrictions, as the following extract from *Place as Archive* demonstrates:

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Neil Jarman: In some senses what the photographs are doing is saying look at this which doesn't fit with the norm of classical beauty or contemporary beauty, there is beauty here. There is another way of looking at it.

Mary McIntyre: But I'm not assuming that anybody else will find them beautiful. You know, just because I find something which people would consider ugly of interest, I don't assume that other people are going to think - wow, that's beautiful.

David Farrell: But you are trying to frame it in a way that maximises or intensifies the beauty.

Neil Jarman: It's also interesting that in the process of framing you are also constraining interpretation. There are a number of elements going on in this framing, whether you use a title, the conjunction of different images and the body of your work that you've broken down into the interior scenes, the fog scenes and the night scenes. You are leading people to a certain point and you're constraining them up to a certain point and then giving them the go ahead from there.

David Farrell: But that's what photography does though, isn't it. It says look at this, this is important, hold onto this.

John Byrne: It's also saying this is important to me so therefore how do you feel about it.

At each event the work of the two photographers, while separated in the arrangement of the day were explored through the same curatorial framework – spectrality and urbanism, place as archive and between memory and mourning – whereby the images were linked into a new form, part comparative and part combination. In this curatorial framework which had its own procedural parameters of duration and topic, the interpretative matrix of the co-researchers determined the affective investments in reading between and across the work of the photographers, and did so in the variability of social interaction, whereby the

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images became the interlocutor and signposts directing the flow of conversation. What emerged from this process was the centrality of an image's affect, an affectivity that was not restricted to the register of aesthetic judgement but traversed the social context, the contested histories and the personal stories. In locating affect as a central line of analytic argument, this research arguably enacts the 'affective turn' of recent social research (Halley and Clough, 2007) insofar as the 'event of photography' makes an image's affect central to how response is articulated, negotiated, taken up, or refused. It is a process which in consequence raises the questions of how affect is theorised and linked to the curatorial proposition and the time and place of post Agreement - in other words how the images' affect is put to work or rejected as part of a broader argument on the political temporality of post Agreement and what implications this synchronic process of perspective and affect has on disrupting or stabilising the meanings of past-and-future as announced by the Agreement.

But to commence with the first task of theorising affect is a complex undertaking, since a broad definition of affect as the injunction to feel and think nevertheless leaves definition wanting – since it leaves indistinct a differentiation from emotional politics and thereby runs the risk of being so broad it loses specificity and runs the risks of being so specific it loses generalizability. To counter this tension between the general and the specific this research attempted to situate affect as the outcome of contestations over representations, identifications and forms of agency, whereby affect is marked by historical, symbolic, and social mediations. In opening up the issue of affective meaning making by staging the 'event of photography' is not therefore to propose that the emotional experience of photographs is made the central concern of the research, since this would run the risk of uncritically assuming that affect equates to feeling, rather than understanding 'ways of seeing' as affective practices which are interwoven with social life and which are 'simultaneously somatic, neural, subjective, historical, social and personal' (Wetherell, 2012:11). It is a theorisation of affect which is therefore intimately connected to the perspectival and context-related conception of interpretation which the 'event of photography' staged - a process which disclosed the relation between an images' affect and social, cultural and historical

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contexts and subjected this theoretical proposition to a broader interrogation that transects disciplinary interest, gender and age and the circumstance of the lived experience, where the meaning of post Agreement is produced, assumed, and contested.

In consequence the process took seriously the comment that ‘we identify ourselves visually’ (Eamonn McCann, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013) by situating the ‘two communities model’ as an affective practice, through which identity as difference is culturally, historically and visually ‘framed’ and interwoven with the textures of social life - revealing the cultural politics and the epistemological force of the ‘two communities model’ in determining and constructing what is seen. This dramatisation of ‘ways of seeing’ as pre-eminently social and relational is recorded in the shifts between the politics of authenticity and persuasion, and generosity and solidarity, between the use of ‘I’ and ‘we’: where explanation and description are the result of complicated determinations and translations of the private and the public, the lived and the imagined, which as the following comments show not only reframed the images but reflexively contextualised what is seen:

Gerry Tubritt:           Real tensions are being created in these areas, with some of the people who have moved into those communities objecting to the flags and the bonfires where there were never any objections before. I think the photographs show these tensions, it’s certainly what I see in them.

Dessie Donnelly:        I think what stands out for me is the response to this very normalised process of capital development and gentrification that is happening in working class communities around the city centre and how this response here in the discussion with the different communities to that development, which also comes out visually with the images, is this sense of loyalist working class alienation and loyalists not knowing how to respond to the change.

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Mark Hackett: I was struck by the photograph *The Mound* with the turned up peaty soil. And this connects to my childhood with all the drainage schemes, and all the ribbons of concrete that were being put along every laneway, seven inches of concrete all held by a plank against a ditch, and these ribbons of concrete would end up going brown within about two years [...] In a way there is a level of violence that we've done to the landscape, and we're maybe not aware of how much of it has happened.

Colin Graham: And it always seems to me that those photographs are not actually looking at the doorway that's blocked but forcing us to want to see through it, beyond it. As a viewer I want to see past the blocked up doorway to what's beyond that and beyond the barrier. They're almost trying to be sublime landscapes with some barrier dropped down in front of them.

This creative process points to how the relation between the imagined, personal reflection and historic fact constructs the sense of the self as the viewing subject – where the narrative of what is seen is both defined in response to the image and in relation to the social dynamic of conversation. This self-conscious and reflexive understanding of the ‘event of photography’ as attentiveness to the shared task of ‘making sense of the images’ (Hanrahan, *Spectrality and Urbanism*, 2013) made moments of disagreement productive by enabling discussion on the political temporality of post Agreement.

As a dialogical process it shares features with Chantal Mouffe’s description of agonism where the affective dimension mobilised by collective identifications activates democratic confrontation:

.....the aim of democratic politics is to transform antagonism into agonism. This requires providing channels through which collective passions will be given ways to express themselves over issues which, while allowing



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enough possibility for identification, will not construct the opponent as an enemy but as an adversary (Mouffe, 2009: 103).

This proposition of the critical and pedagogical value of agonism is nevertheless made complex in the circumstance of Northern Ireland, where the cessation of armed conflict has diffused antagonism, but the political and strategic logic of power sharing has essentialised identity as either nationalist Catholic or loyalist Protestant, closing down deliberation and reflection on the past and future. In consequence the transition to 'post conflict' while arguably converting enemies into adversaries has not de-emphasised the cultural politics of sectarianism but relocated its claim of identity as difference in the governance of the 'two communities model'. Agonism as a theoretical tool therefore informs the 'event of photography' as a critical curatorial research practice, while it is questioned in terms of its political efficacy in a post-conflict context. As such staging the 'event of photography' in dramatising a practical application of agonism, proposes photographs as Mouffe's 'channels through which collective passions will be given ways to express themselves' (Mouffe, 2009: 103); where the 'event of photography' as a dramaturgy of agonism translates visual experience into the flow of discursive exchange.

It is therefore at this theoretical level that Mouffe's model of agonism provides a framework for the 'event of photography' - firstly as a curated research process which orchestrates an enquiry into the conjunction of post Agreement through photography whereby the images provide the circumstance for the expression of issues and the possibility for identification. Secondly as a critical space for images' affect to be narrated, discussed and contextualised, without this process assuming that adversarial disagreement is disruptive or undesirable and lastly by foregrounding the contingent nature of meaning making.

This contingency of interpretation which shifts between the empirical and the speculative, the remembered and the imagined, in mapping the multiple critical positions generated by the images reframed the images through affective response, reflexively contextualising what is seen. It is a dialogical enquiry which therefore implies much more than simply describing what a photograph is of, since the

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sequence of images generated, ran in parallel to and intervened in the conversation, forming a kind of visual punctuation that grouped and separated thoughts. In this animation of different ‘ways of seeing’ across the three events the images became critical spaces through which the political and social meanings of post Agreement were debated and the co-researchers’ as audience and producers generated the questions and answers that located the images as both constitutive of reality and its representation.

In the sequencing of the three events, Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning there is a specific temporal and spatial operation at play – where the images move from speculation on the future in the first event, to the uncertainty of place and the irresolution of the past in the second, to the psychic effects of the history of violence in the final event. It is a sequence which in registering different affective intensities and impacts on what is seen, thought and felt produced a cumulative reading of the contemporaneity of post Agreement that is simultaneously of the past and the present. Moreover the spatial politics of this temporality in shifting between the territorialisation of the city, to the presentiment of the island, to the psychology of fear and grief produced a representation of place that was caught within epistemological and historical contestations of national longing and belonging.

While a reading of the transcripts as a continuous narrative deepens this sense of the intersection of spatial and temporal politics, the differential propositions of the three events and the different assemblages of co-researchers, not least in the mix of professional and disciplinary interest subtend different modes of engagement where the questions generated and addressed were shaped by the photographs, the curatorial and the co-researchers. In consequence this thesis has examined each event singularly, to trace the way specific images, the curatorial framing and the social dynamic of the co-researchers produced an account of place and time as an intersection of the visual and the discursive.

Through foregrounding perspectives of difference – social, political and epistemological – the staging of the ‘event of photography’ disclosed the realpolitik of the ‘two communities model’ as segregated lives, where the

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conjoining of the terms ‘community and memory’ puts limits on what is remembered, forgotten and mourned. In the first event its effects arguably dimmed the radical potential of the spectre to déjà vu, in the second event it circulated as the fear of a return to violence captured in the Gerry Adams quote ‘they haven’t gone away you know’ and in the final event it framed and edited what is remembered and what is mourned. As such the ‘two communities model’ as the normalisation of sectarianism re-describes the conjuncture of post Agreement as the aftermath of the Troubles and the stabilisation of its effects by constructing a limit on what is seen and known of the ‘other’. It is a construction which is physical and psychological, imposed and self-regulating as the following comment from the final event makes clear:

Lee Lavis: My background deems that I could never be part of one community and my political beliefs make me a kind of traitor in another. I have to live with the two communities ideas and the images as they are portrayed but I don't feel part of either and it's always difficult to say my history.

My reaction to these photographs is guided by this sense of not fitting in, so the edits of these photographs is similar to the way I have to edit myself continuously in conversation with people because of my background, the baggage of my history.

Lee’s British Army service during the Troubles effects self-regulation in the edits of speech and is imposed through the comprehension of betrayal. It is a statement which both reveals how the past is pivotal in framing intuitions of private and public, trust and suspicion, silence and speech and how the present is over-determined as epistemological and political certainties of self and other, Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist that assumes a set of relations between individual subjectivity and the process of history. The strategic and ontological essentialism of ‘our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations’ is both disrupted by Lee’s account and upheld, revealing how its political claim and demand constructs an analytical frame of reference of the social, historical and personal that pre-empts alternate forms of identifications and subjectivities.

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Moreover the image's edit by forcing into view an acknowledgement on what is repressed in order for sectarianism to function, effects the critical reflection on what is withheld in conversation, establishing a correlation between the visual and the discursive, between seeing and speaking in the management of identity politics. The edits by undermining the political intelligibility of the image challenges the categorisations Protestant and Catholic, nationalist and loyalist offering a critical space for non-compliance, of not belonging to either community as an explicit disavowal of identity politics. The image's edits are therefore translated into speech, reformulated and repeated in the rejection of the simplified ideology of the two community model and in the suspension of identity: 'I could never be part of one community and my political beliefs make me a kind of traitor in another'.

As a critical, dialogical and public practice the 'event of photography' nevertheless presents specific challenges for analysis, not simply in terms of the quantitative fact of multiple perspectives but in producing an analytical account that acknowledges the two communities model while resisting its reductive binarism and equally takes account of the complex of biographic, social, cultural and professional interest that informed response.

The analytical challenges presented by the 'event of photography', of the dialogic, the personal and the contextual are in many ways similar to those encountered in the curated research practice of Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty, documented in the transcripts of *Locating the Producers*<sup>35</sup> (2011), which sets out to understand the affective dimensions of durational place-based arts commissioning over a three year period. Likewise the 'event of photography' as a critical visual methodology which reflexively contextualises the act of looking at images, in drawing attention to the Agreement as a politics of public pedagogy makes complex the ways in which meaning is theorised in the 'governing of culture' (Hall, 1997: 237).

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<sup>35</sup> See *Locating the Producers: Durational Approaches to Public Art*, eds Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty, Valiz Amsterdam 2011. The durational research process examined five European projects at different stages in their temporal development – where the critical focus was on 'time' rather than the 'space' of public art commissioning.

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Across these two models of analysis, affective and contextual, there nevertheless remains the risk on the one hand of over emphasising an open ended research process that minimises how the curatorial frame is both a proposition of engagement and a modality of enquiry, and on the other of over-determining what is seen and not seen as effects of identity politics rather than examples of critical agreement and disagreement on an images' affective meaning. It suggests part of the core problematic of the analyses of the three events is in the interconnection of the affective and the contextual – where the perspectival dynamics of the 'event of photography' institutes an enquiry into a photograph's affect, the curation and the context of post Agreement. It is the interconnection between affect and context which this research has sought to uncover, to consider how staging the 'event of photography' provoked a form of questioning that was both speculative and historical, that responded to and drew attention to the inadequacy of the periodisation of the present as post Agreement in the uncertainty of dealing with the past in the uncertainty of the present:

Declan Long: In this period since 1998 when new forms of government are in place and new cultural projects are being supported, is there another mapping of Northern Ireland that can be done that is not purely about consumer identity or the sectarian mappings that we might be more used to? And where does this questioning take place? Does it take place with picturing or conversations like this?

Neil Jarman: So it's one of those unresolved issues which is also a part of that wider process of how do we deal with the past, do we leave it to lie, do we try and dig it all up and then what do we do with it after we've done all of that. And that sense here is that if we do dig it all up it might give comfort and closure to the families but it might also open up things for people who are involved in it and their uncertainty as to whether they're going to get prosecuted and dealt with.

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Colin Graham: I think in looking at these photographs it's not about us understanding what's happened to Malcolm, it's about us understanding something a bit wider than that and the first thing you notice is the fact that these are all being performed. What is being implied is that to understand this society you have to understand it as something that is a kind of staged performance of something that's meant to be real, meant to pass itself off as real.

And I think that's a very good way to consider how this work is a critique of a post agreement society where identity is something that passes itself off as essence but is actually performed. I think that's what's interesting about these photographs as different stages of mourning, is they ask us what stage are we at?

The above comments from the three events all register the uncertainty of the present moment, whether in the rhetorical line of questioning of how Northern Ireland can be reimagined or in the judicial implications and emotional complexities of dealing with the past or in the fictional exaggeration of the present as the past. What are put into play are both the images' affect and a conceptualisation of photography, as the intersection of institutional and visual affiliations, as documentary and as the dissemblance of the documentary form.

In part these conceptualisations of photography were shaped by the curatorial, not least in the second event where the discussion of the Disappeared was made both in response to the images and in response to standing in the field of one of the alleged sites, whereby the affective dimension of the event was intensified in an enactment of bearing witness. In signalling a turn to the past across the three events in the temporal co-ordinates of spectres, archive, memory and mourning, the uncertainty of the present moment surfaced in terms of imagination (Long, *Spectrality and Urbanism*, 2013); action (Jarman, *Place as Archive*, 2013) and time (Graham, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013).

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In this movement between past, present and future, the present tasked with resolving or accommodating the past in order to imagine a future yet to come became an extended time of deliberation on dealing with the past. While the present as a prolonged sense of deliberation on the past was in part shaped by the curatorial, it nevertheless turns to the specificity of post conflict as a transitional moment where the past in its social and psychic effects remains present. It is an aspect of social and political life in the aftermath of violence which in a discussion on the collapse of the Grenada Revolution, David Scott describes as being ‘stranded in the present’ (Scott, 2014:14)<sup>36</sup>. It is a description which is pertinent to the circumstance of post Agreement, where the prefix post assumes the chronology of coming after but in actuality precedes resolution and agreement on what took place, producing a sense of suspended transition between the past and a future yet to come. While this trope of temporal delay and time stalled could be read as part of a more general theorisation of the post-political, this reading would miss how it signals post Agreement as both the aftermath of the Troubles and its irresolution, its discontinuity and continuity – where the sense of being ‘stranded in the present’ is evoked and maintained by the Agreement’s claim that full historical intelligibility is to be derived in the future.

As such the temporal delay announced by the Agreement’s ‘our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations’ links the sense of being ‘stranded in the present’ with the political construction and governance of the two communities as incommensurable, where the future is held at a distance. It is a circumstance that has implications not only on how the future is imagined or foreclosed but equally on how the past is imagined, thought, narrated, remembered, grieved and forgotten. In this time loop of past presents, photographs as complex expressions of temporality, of the past of the photographed moment and the present of ‘watching’ (Azoulay, 2008:342) provide both a resource and metaphor for the complexity and disjunctions of time and memory – where the ‘now of particular recognisability’ (Benjamin, 1999:463) is a composite of the past and the present,

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<sup>36</sup> See David Scott, *Omens of Adversity - Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2014, for a critique of the postcolonial temporality of Grenada as time stalled and its implications for political action.

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of the real and the imagined. This conspicuous sense of time as past presents of the real and the fictitious is explored in the following comments:

Daniel Jewesbury: And this goes back again to ideas of the future and the past, we can say at some point people lived here and that was good but where's the future, where's the future that we can comprehend in the same useful simple way.

Declan Long: Is there some way to find in the past a vision of the future which would be a truly alternative future?

David Farrell: Recently I decided to do a still video of the swallowing tree and do one of them for each season. I don't know where that will go but it's just another way of trying to tease out that notion of very slow time.

Des O'Rawe: I often think one of the problems with the two communities model and all this discourse about reconciliation is the fact that in reality these differences are irreconcilable. In some ways if they weren't irreconcilable nobody would have any identity, in the same way that you can only forgive the unforgiveable.

As these comments indicate the linear chronology of past, present and future and its implied progressive dynamic is disrupted in each of the events - where the future is foreclosed or found in the past and the present is extended as slow time or fixed within the past. These readings of time – of an extended present and of a future founded in the past effects a temporal reversal of chronology by locating the future in the past and locating the past in the present.

It is a temporal reversal which is made explicit in the final discussion of the series, where the memory disorder of trauma interrupts the present with the past, as irrational fears and flashbacks in the work of Malcolm Craig Gilbert. In pursuing this logic of temporal reversal, the final question: 'what's interesting about these photographs as different stages of mourning, is they ask us what stage are we at?' is perhaps the analytical starting point of the series since it is a question which



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makes intelligible how the past remains pivotal. In drawing attention to the specificity of post Agreement as post conflict, to the violence that took place and the social and psychic effects of living in its aftermath, it is a question that reveals how the affective force of the irresolution of the past and incomplete mourning are transferred to the present as differentiated communities of memory, hindering the emergence of an alternative political imaginary of the present and the future.

It is a question which therefore points to the importance of comprehending what took place to fully mourn in order to yield new political imaginaries of the future. A need registered in Long's reflexive consideration 'where does this questioning take place? Does it take place with picturing or conversations like this?' (Long, *Spectrality and Urbanism*, 2013). It is a need which staging the 'event of photography' sought to address by making photographs the subject of public dialogue, where the narratives of interpretation disclosed the political temporality of post Agreement by mapping the affective dimension of images and context through the social and relational.

As a curated research process and dramaturgical model of agonism the 'event of photography' was explorative rather than definitive, its questions produced by the images' affect, the context of post Agreement and the disciplinary and generational mix of co-researchers. In pulling together the various strands of enquiry that were generated in each of the events from the shared task of looking at photographs - the personal memories, the diversity of photographic approaches, the different expectations and investments in what an image is and the differentiated experience of the Troubles – the sense of being 'stranded in the present' and the sense of an exacerbated duality of self and other emerged despite the heterogeneity of subject positions and perspectives.

This sense of estrangement, of being an outsider to both time and place - 'of being at home while not at home' (Long, *Spectrality and Urbanism*, 2013) - arguably revealed how the Agreement, far from being a project of the future is a political project which identifies and indemnifies how the past is reconstructed in the present and transcoded in the psychological and ideological categories of self and

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other, where the present is foreshortened in the capitulation to identity politics and extended in the deliberation on what took place.

The perspectival dynamics which the ‘event of photography’ generated, by providing a sustained enquiry into an image’s affect, of seeing, thinking and feeling, not only mediated the political, the social and the psychological, but did so through a rhizomatic<sup>37</sup> weaving which kept open the disjunctive nature of post Agreement. By approaching an image’s affect as an analytic reference the three events expand the field of vision of the photographs beyond the limitations of the frame and the specificity of what is seen and not seen. It is an expanded field of vision that not only brings into view what haunts the vision of place and identity, past and present, self and other, but also the ways in which the images are ‘always haunted by other images from Belfast, haunted by images from America and there’s always a kind of haunting of what this image could be, by all the other images it could be’ (Long, Spectrality and Urbanism, 2013). This spectral dimension which turns not only to what an image is of, but to all the other images that it could be, forces into view the imminent necessity of disrupting the past as the present – the here before – that forecloses the future. It is an aspect which in the second event, Place as Archive, takes on a funereal resonance, where the landscape of the island of Ireland as both subject and object of the contested histories of belonging and longing, draws together complex meanings and temporalities in a topology shaped by the historical, the political the symbolic and the imaginary. Throughout the event the complex layers of uneasiness, beauty, terror and anxiety underlined the understanding of place as simultaneously constructed and ‘real’ in an iterative process of historical and imaginary mediation. Moreover through this process of tracing the past which is not yet past, in the images of Mary McIntyre and David Farrell place was rendered a ‘liminal landscape, this in-between zone, this kind of psychic landscape’ (Lehner, Place as Archive, 2013). This sense of a ‘liminal landscape’ of history as a process of becoming contests the pedagogy of ‘our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations’ of the Good Friday Agreement that lays claim to history as

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<sup>37</sup> See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota, 1987 for conceptualisation of the rhizome as a non-hierarchical and heterogeneous mode of critical thinking and practice.

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teleology and the landscape as a symbolic and imagined 'nation space' of community and tradition, identity and identification.

In the final event of the series this sense of an 'in between zone' was made explicit in the curatorial frame of 'Between Memory and Mourning' where the disjunction 'between' instituted a reflexive consideration of the political effects of both memory and mourning: 'what I am doing is acknowledging that just as there is no correct reading of an image, nor is there a correct reading of a landscape or a history or of a text in relation to that history' (Seawright, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013).

This reading of Northern Ireland as the concurrent circulation of different perspectives on images, history and place provides an analogous description to the curatorial intention in staging the 'event of photography' whereby the 'now of particular recognisability' opened up the multiple perspectives on time, place and meaning of post Agreement. Across the three events the complex set of affective meanings produced by the co-researchers registered both how the social imaginary of 'community' remains divided and how ideas of community and tradition remain central to political and social life as a combative and closed politics of demand: 'one of the problems with the two communities model and all this discourse about reconciliation is the fact that in reality these differences are irreconcilable' (O'Rawe, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013).

By making apparent the ways in which differences are socially performed and are symbolically, culturally and politically constructed the Agreement's central paradox - the impossibility of community and its recuperation as future tradition - is revealed. In this way the 'event of photography' provided the framework for the exploration of the politics of irreconcilable differences rather than the politics of reconciliation. An emphasis on the agonistic rather than the consensual politics of reconciliation which destabilised the strategic, political and ontological essentialism of the two communities model and in so doing opened up a critical liminal space where the disjunctive times and meanings of post Agreement became a source of debate. A debate that both claimed post Agreement as a transitional moment of social reality - of contingency, ambivalence and

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uncertainty - and as the possibility of a future that is not predicated on the past or caught within the restrictive antinomies of self and other, us and them, Protestant and Catholic, nationalist and loyalist – but instead as an ‘in-between zone’ of translation, dialogue and enquiry.

In presenting photographs as political, social and psychic mediations of the real and the imagined the research undertook to explore specific responses to images to uncover the limits of the two community model as a regulative frame of interpretation and social being. In other words to understand how the images make legible and/or exceed the dialectical opposition of Protestant and Catholic which tacitly forms the condition of social and political life. The research was therefore both oriented to a disclosure of how meanings of images are actively produced and to a disclosure of how these meanings relate to and respond to the ‘now of particular recognisability’.

As a mode of research it both called into question any assumption of a photograph’s meaning as fixed or stable and effectively performed its displacement and critique by generating the social and cultural meanings of the visible and sayable across and between the perspectives of the co-researchers at the three events. As such staging the ‘event of photography’ enacted Farrell’s activation of images – ‘as a photographer you’re always trying to see those traces that can be activated later, which is in a way a kind of archiving’ (Farrell, *Place as Archive*, 2013) - producing an archive of response, of experience and signification, remembering and forgetting, the real and the fictive, whereby the images held in tension divergent perspectives.

The social dimension of the three events was therefore a crucial aspect to this research, in order to understand how the two community model effectively conditions ‘ways of seeing’ and to understand how compliance is realised and resisted. It is this aspect of compliance which informs the journalist’s question ‘How many were Catholics and how many were Protestants?’ in response to Seawright’s *Sectarian Murder* series, that stresses the need for the victims to be classified in terms of identity in order for their murders to be made intelligible within the social dramaturgy demanded by the Agreement. It is a question which

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in seeking to classify the murders through the identities of Catholic and Protestant both conforms to the two community model and attests to how identity 'passes itself off as essence but is actually performed' (Graham, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013). The dynamic of this performed identity shifts across the three events, between what is actively known and not known, where self is both constituted and conditioned by the two community model:

Paul Seawright:            But in in that whole series from the 90s of the blocked up doorways and the secluded alleyways I never once went to the other side of the wall. So that whole series was taken from one side of the wall. Well, I say 'the wall', I mean the metaphoric wall because it's not just one wall but from one community side. I could have photographed the other side, of course, it was 1997 but it was a very deliberate choice because what was beyond that occluded view had always been unknown to me and still remains unknown to me. Just because you walk around Tiger's Bay and walk around that community it can remain unknown to you.

The above extract both acknowledges the two community model and repeats the logic of the model through the repudiation of knowing the 'other'. It is a repudiation which affirms identity as difference and finds its visual correlation in what is shown and not shown in the images, where the occluded views provide both a metaphor of the limitations on knowing the 'other' and an enactment of the regulation of social and psychic life. This correlation between seeing and knowing as a reflexive acknowledgement on the limits of comprehension indicates the complex double of recognition and non-recognition, since both what is seen and what is not seen confirms identity. Uncovering this relation of experience and history in how images are seen and made sense of, nevertheless suggests how the simplified abstraction of 'community and memory' might be effectively breached. It is therefore through the establishment of this connection that the disconnection of 'community and memory' emerges as a critical and transgressive space through which an alternative political imaginary might be seeded. It is a disconnection which the 'event of photography' staged, since the multiple perspectives

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destabilised the sequential logic of ‘community and memory’ as the politics of the irreconcilable, opening up a critical disjunctive space between the oppositions of self and other, us and them. It is this space, visual and discursive that revealed the contradictory political construction of post Agreement which, while progressive in its cessation of armed conflict, encodes the identities Protestant and Catholic as socially and historically irreconcilable. The ‘event of photography’ by exposing the social conventions which underpin and give efficacy to the two community model called into question the demand for compliance without which its social and political function is rendered redundant.

On the one hand this questioning countered the essentialist logic of us and them by registering a sense of disorientation - ‘being at home while not at home’ (Long, *Spectrality and Urbanism*, 2013) - ‘I feel in a grey area between’ (Lavis, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013) - and on the other hand countered the essentialist logic by denaturalising identity as difference – ‘to understand this society you have to understand it as something that is a kind of staged performance of something that's meant to be real, meant to pass itself off as real’ (Graham, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013). These challenges generated in response to the images not only disrupted the continuity of history and naturalised understanding of social relations proposed by the two community model but revealed the two community model as a historical construction, through which the social and the psychic are made indistinguishable by the claim of Protestant loyalist and Catholic nationalist. The performative effect of this claim that calls for an embodiment of identity as difference was registered as a field of susceptibility, vulnerability and iteration. This condition of being affected nevertheless gave rise to a critical consideration of identity as something which is both embodied and performed, an attentiveness which not only denaturalised the differentiation between Catholic and Protestant but made apparent how the ideological division, Catholic and Protestant, works as an interdiction against political action establishing how the past is understood and how the future is imagined.

In uncovering how ‘ways of seeing’ are affected by the binary extremism of segregation that attempts to institute and secure historical, social and cultural distinction between the two communities, the ‘event of photography’ uncovered



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lived experience. The photographs as the context and content of each event not only provided ‘the channels through which collective passions’ were ‘given ways to express themselves over issues’ (Mouffe, 2009:103) but also situated negotiation over meaning as a precondition for a politics that moves beyond the Agreement’s claim of cultural incommensurability. By foregrounding meaning as active cultural and social production and as mode of public exchange the ‘event of photography’ staged how ‘images, especially the historical and contemporary meanings they carry and understandings they express, are aligned and realigned with broader discourses’ (Gray, 1995:132).

It is through this inter-subjective and inter-disciplinary investigation of images that the political agency of the viewer was affirmed both in the descriptions of an image’s affect and in the mediation of specific historical, cultural and social discourses. It is an affirmation which suggests a critical use of images as a visual and material resource in post conflict cultures – since staging the ‘event of photography’ provided not only for the contestation of meanings that might otherwise be repressed but equally made complex any claim that ‘there could confidently be this one truth that would be uncovered that would define what happened and the history of the Troubles’ (Seawright, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013). Furthermore it is a use of images, as a visual and material resource of agonism, which avoids the individuation of a ‘therapeutic system of meaning’ (Furedi, 2004:12) where the past is psychologised as a problem to be managed or overcome. Of course, in choosing the politics of the irreconcilable as a pathway into the analysis of images, rather than the politics of reconciliation is not suggest that reconciliation ceases to have significance, or that the therapeutic which gives meaning to experience through an ethos of healing and recovery is without critical psychological value. Instead the design of this curated research was an attempt to consider how the ‘untimely’ nature of photographs as past presents might provide the circumstance through which the political temporality of post Agreement and the meanings of post conflict could be opened to debate and disagreement. As such each staging of the ‘event of photography’ through the practice of six photographers - John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse; Mary McIntyre and David Farrell and Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert – and across the



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three themes - Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning – sought to critically consider the social and temporal construction of meaning as the intersection of the lived and imagined, past and present, self and other. It is through this analytical framework of cultural politics and social relations that the images offered the channel for the transformation of antagonism into agonism, where the sense of being ‘stranded in the present’ (Scott, 2014:14) is reconceived as a critical space from which new social and political imaginaries of the future might emerge. It is therefore this emphasis on the politics of the irreconcilable that provided the possibilities for an incisive critique of post Agreement, since the ‘event of photography’ as a critical method and site of assembly not only foregrounds how meaning is socially constructed but makes the social construction of meaning its central subject.

While this thesis has sought to analytically consider the ‘politics of signification’ (Hall, 1982:70) as the interrelation of experience and history, the separate publication *After the Agreement* is a transcription of the three events. As the curatorial outcome it avoids any summative account or analysis of what took place in order that the material might be read in a way which corresponds to the open ended process of the ‘event of photography’ – where each event in effect represents a point of origin for further response – since the ‘event of photography’ overthrows ‘the notion of an ending [...] thanks to the agency of the spectator’ (Azoulay, 2011:79). Consequently while it is hoped that further conversation and debate might emerge in response to the publication of the transcripts, the publication is intended as a shared account of the premise and practice of the ‘event of photography’ as a critical curatorial methodology and radical contextualisation, where questions of what is seen, thought and felt challenge and shape one another.

This theme of enquiry as contestation and disagreement was a systematic attempt to understand the interrelationship between history and experience in the production of a photograph’s meaning. While this enquiry into the politics of viewing did not lead to resolute answers it did enable an exploration of ‘ways of seeing’ mediated and negotiated through the dialogical framework of each event opening up a critical reflexive space of thinking and feeling, listening and

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speaking, self and other without foreclosing the meaning of the dialogues in the normative vocabularies of post conflict resolution and reconciliation. Moreover this emphasis on the politics of the irreconcilable provided the scope for the exploration of the two community model as a political project and social construction. An exploration which not only destabilised the ontologic essentialism of the Agreement but in so doing denied the causal relation of identity and identification, while acknowledging the ideological and material circumstance of lived experience as a complex of past and present, the real and the fictive.

As an enactment of 'ways of seeing' the three events explored how images are understood within structures of affect and the specific historical and social conditions that characterise post Agreement. But they also revealed how images generate broader debates on contemporary cultural politics reflected in the way the three events moved toward their own theoretical and political agendas which in turn located moments of political and theoretical disagreement, which both questioned the frame of post Agreement and the 'logic' it entails in determining and making distinct two communities.

In underscoring how a photograph is a form of address and exchange, of affect and sociability the three events revealed how images are constituted in the nexus of the private and the public, the lived and the imagined and are subject to and constitutive of a range of affective meanings that exceed the representational paradigm of what an image is of. It is this disruption of the representational discourse of what a photograph is of which revealed how meaning is produced through a complex interplay of seeing and speaking and how this interplay is a response to an image's 'excessive particularity' (Pinney, 2007:19). An excess activated by the embodied and relational act of interpretation of the 'event of photography' whereby the inherent instability of a photograph's meaning rather than an inherent 'truth' was made the subject and object of dispute and consideration.

In this formulation 'ways of seeing' as the subject of the 'event of photography' both affirmed and challenged Azoulay's 'civil contract of photography' (2012), insofar as it staged the social and relational effects of images but denied coherency

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to these effects as political action or epistemology which the ‘civil contract’ proposes. In contrast staging the ‘event of photography’ across the themes of Spectrality and Urbanism, Place as Archive and Between Memory and Mourning dramatised ‘ways of seeing’ as an affective practice where what was seen and not seen was translated and transmitted through a dynamic of meaning making which was simultaneously speculative, temporal, reflexive, political and social. By holding in productive tension the seen and the known and the not seen and the not known, it enabled an exploration of ‘ways of seeing’ as a negotiated bi-nationalism and in so doing demonstrated the limits - critical, social and political - of a univocal account. Moreover in opening a critical space to rethink Northern Ireland’s bi-nationalism as a form of relationality, Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist were reconceived as part of each other’s history and experience - of the simultaneously real and imagined sense of place, time and identity. It is in this spirit of rethinking the dynamic of self and other, us and them, that the three events attempted to delimit the positions Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist in order to comprehend the social and temporal construction of location and locatedness as a process through which identity is both affirmed and denied. A process which both speaks to the politics of place and the spatialized politics of identity and a process through which the multi-layered narrative of the Troubles is made proximate and distant in the actual present of the aftermath of war.

In consequence After the Agreement offers itself as part of this explorative negotiation of meaning. A negotiation which is legible in each of the events and cumulatively across the series which staged what it means to think and feel publicly in the complex conditions of post Agreement and in the relational transactions of the ‘event of photography’. In this way, the dialogues produced in response to the images follow a set of paths with no one outcome, and so move away from dogmatic conceptions of photographic meaning to register the disjunctive space of a photograph as a potent and affective site of negotiation, through which lived experience and the imaginary, feeling and thinking work in tandem in the process of making sense of images and the time and place of post Agreement.

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It is therefore a research process concerned with ‘meanings and values as they are actually lived and felt’ (Williams, 1977:132), where the autobiographic and the ideological contour the response to images. It is in this mix of history and experience that the past of the Troubles and the present of post Agreement were made the subject of the conversations moving between the private and public registers of recollection and critique.

Gerry Tubritt:            Though of course every child in Belfast has at some point in their primary school education in the last 10 years made a cardboard Titanic, I know mine have, but the Titanic is something that happened so long ago it's meaningless to them, they have to do this project and that's it. But in terms of employment opportunities, the skills level within the communities in East Belfast is probably so low now that they couldn't get any of the jobs within the Titanic Quarter as it currently stands. And it was the same with Laganside development 10, 15 years ago. For me looking at all the images of the Titanic the potential that you're representing is within the official neglect and abandonment of the spaces.

Mark Hackett:            I was born in 67 and growing up in the 70s and 80s as a kid and then as a teenager there was always this feeling you might run into someone. While nothing happened in my area in Northern Ireland there was this persistent subtext that something could happen, an anxiety about who you might run into. There was very little criminal activity in the countryside during the Troubles because criminals going around up to no good were highly likely to be stopped [...] Back then every time I left Northern Ireland I would feel like a huge weight lifted from my shoulders but much of that weight was actually just this feeling that nobody was going to be watching you or potentially stopping you.

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Des O’Rawe: I suppose what I’m saying is that on some level the experience of growing up in the Troubles here does affect everyone who is from here profoundly, and that eye that you develop and that sensibility is something that travels with you.

In this movement between the registers of the private and the public what became apparent is how images tease out both the cultural discourses and personal experiences which inhibit and enable seeing. In this way, both what is seen and not seen in the images are made equally valid as political and social expressions of history and memory and the lived and the remembered.

This suspension of either a right way of looking at images or an assumed ‘truth’ of a photograph provided the critical and agonistic space through which photographic meaning was debated and in consequence the histories, experiences and expectations of living in the aftermath of the Troubles. Moreover this agonistic space by enabling the personal interrogation and verification of what it is to live in the circumstance of post Agreement moved beyond purely descriptive accounts of the images to speak of the complex process of remembering and forgetting, hesitancy and anticipation. It is a research methodology which is therefore fraught with the possibility for misunderstanding, not least that the co-researchers’ personal and shared responses are misunderstood as a concession to relativism, whereby the multi-vocality of collaborative enquiry covers over the authorisation of power that sanctions the making of definitions. It is an anxiety which is expressed by Neil Jarman in response to the discussion of the Disappeared: ‘it also raises the issue of the suspicion within the IRA of engaging with this process, that whole sense of this as an unresolved issue [...] the inequalities coming out of that, the fact that it’s something that is focused on dealing with paramilitary activities rather than with the state activities and the state’s violations’. Jarman’s consideration of the inequalities that arise in dealing with the violence of the past provocatively suggests the political limits of affect and therefore the ‘limits of empathy which make affect possible’ (Bharucha, 2014:62). It is an aspect which is discernible in the final event where the discussion of Craig Gilbert’s image *Memories of a Mortar Attack* (Fig 4.11) leads to the insistence on a shared

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victimhood: 'We all walked about like that in Belfast, whether you were a combatant in the RUC or a combatant in the IRA' (Breandán Clarke, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013). It is an insistence which both marks the limits of empathy and proposes its expansion in the detail of description of the RUC and the IRA as combatants. What therefore arises in this focus on an image's affect is how this affect is embedded in a political comprehension of the Troubles and is, in part, shaped by the social dynamic of the conversations that places history and experience at the centre of response.

It is an aspect which also forces into view the public nature of the events given what is said is a moment of public record and therefore differs from the 'conversation you have with people you're comfortable with over a pint' since 'the conversation you're going to present to the public..is always bounded by the politics of here, the politics of place and the possible consequences' (Breandán Clarke, *Between Memory and Mourning*, 2013). In addition to this suggestion of self-censorship that the public nature of conversation inheres in the form of what is not said, amongst the co-researchers there was also the awareness that what was said was addressed to future audiences and readers. An awareness which arguably can be tracked across the three events in the uses of described experience and the uses of history that not only lay claim to a way of contextualising the images but do so as a mode of public address that sets out to correct misinformation:

Andrew Finlay: It's also that the Titanic is the high point of a certain kind of modernist hubris about progress and technology that is punctured. It's just such a flawed image in that sense, yet there's this endeavour to make it work for regeneration. But also the history of the shipyard in Belfast is problematic. In the period after the Titanic sank in 1912, the shipyard workforce was huge, and around 1918 there was serious industrial unrest with a mass strike for a 44 hour working week. The workforce had been quite mixed during the war but after the industrial action, in a strategy of divide and rule there were mass expulsions of Catholic workers

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literally driven into the docks and not just Catholic workers but Protestant socialist, militant trade unionists were also expelled and never got their jobs back. I don't know, the figures vary, 8,000 to 12,000 workers expelled, never got their jobs back, and subsequently the shipyard became a byword for a certain kind of politics.

Colm Campbell: But if you look at non-State actors in some of the headline conflicts around the time this was happening, with SWAPO in Namibia and the ANC in apartheid South Africa, they were doing similar things. In SWAPO's case between 300 and 2000 people were disappeared by their own security department in a population of 1.5 million. In the case of the ANC at least 34 people were shot for mutinous offences and the families weren't informed [...] In Namibia the issue is so sensitive that there's been a complete closing down of discussion. They are referred to as the Disappeared by some of the relatives but not in official discourse. But it's not a term that came from nowhere it's tied to particular security practices that groups adopted as they developed state like institutions.

Eamonn McCann: For a number of years I was the news editor for the Sunday World in Dublin so I spent a lot of my time with photographers going over pictures and choosing images that would better illustrate the story and so on. And so I am interested in the edits that you make, what you leave out as it were. It brings to mind the widely known and widely circulated photograph made by David Cairns of Father Alex Reid with the body of Corporal David Howes. Now the photograph that is widely used contains a distortion. This is only a minor distortion but it is a distortion, a political distortion. If you look at that photograph as it appeared you

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will see over at the right hand side of the photograph a sort of black thing, which is the overcoat, the long coat being worn by the Observer journalist, Maggie Holland. I know all about this because she was my partner at the time and she was standing there and she's looking down at the body, she had been down and she had stood up, she's looking down at the body, Father Reid is kneeling and he's looking out. The thing is if you keep this picture with Maggie in it, it is not so nicely balanced and what is more, it would compromise the point being made by the picture which has to do with the role of the Catholic Church out caring for the community and as a part of the community. If there were anyone else in the picture other than the dead Corporal and Father Reid, particularly somebody that is looking directly at the Corporal on the ground and looking down into his eyes while Father Reid looks out, it changes the picture; it changes the focus and changes the meaning of the picture in an important way.

These examples not only introduce specific social and political histories, but suggest how the marginalisation of these histories actively assist the construction of the two communities model, the exceptionalism of Northern Ireland's Disappeared as an act of political terror and the role of the Catholic Church during the Troubles. Interventions which therefore not only disrupt the Manichaeism of the two communities model, but also lead to a consideration of how conflict is framed, visualised, narrated and remembered. These tropes which shaped and directed the flow of conversations across the events also allude to photography as a process of framing, visualisation, narration and remembrance whereby the past is made sensate in the present as affect.

This affiliation between critical questions of history and photography opened up the possibility of rethinking what is seen and not seen without dictating which possibilities ought to be realised. As such by drawing attention to an image's



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affect as an analytic approach to feeling and thinking, history and experience, the public and the private, staging the ‘event of photography’ sought to understand what kind of discourse can be arrived at through a dialogical process of interweaving different perspectives, disciplines and lived experience. It is therefore a research design that sought to understand what arises when taken for granted truths are called into question, when the assumed essentialism of Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and loyalist lose their centrality in governing and regulating sight and speech and when the intelligibility of the proposition of ‘our continuing and equally legitimate political aspirations’ is disrupted as a reading of the past and future expectation. As such this research sought to stage looking at images as a process that opened up the possibility of thinking and feeling to counter and dissipate the violence of identitarian politics as a collective task.

The critical impetus behind this research, the question where are the people?, explored as a complex construction of promise and deferral is never fully answered. This denial of definitive closure staged by the research is an effort to think through how the historical and contingent phenomena of identity and belonging are constructed without minimising the historical meaning and impact of the categories Protestant and Catholic, loyalist and nationalist. As an open ended conversational praxis it therefore staged the hesitancies that attend the loss of certainty in an authoritative account that would make sense of the past and the present. This sense of uncertainty as a critical and agonistic space of listening and speaking, knowing and not knowing made apparent both the realpolitik of the ‘two communities model’ as a form of governance and how its discursive and visual construction denies other forms of being and coalition. In this way the images of the six photographers as the generative source of the conversations as ‘channels through which collective passions will be given ways to express themselves over issues’ (Mouffe, 2009: 103), both established and deconstructed the ways in which identity politics are articulated and made foundational to the social and political life of Northern Ireland. As an exploration of the embodied experience of looking at images the three events moved between the experiential time of the ‘event of photography’, the photographs, personal memory and the imaginary, where what was seen and spoken produced a verbal-visual montage, neither ‘fixed or ready-

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made' but arising from the social relational dynamic of looking at images, of the 'mind and emotions of the spectator' (Eisenstein, 1939:34). A process whereby what was seen and not seen, said and not said, described the difficulties of dealing with the past and its effects in the present where the living complexity of post Agreement doubles as aftermath and anticipation.

It is this disjunctive political temporality of post Agreement, of being both after and before which this thesis has sought to contextualise and examine through an agonistic recuperation of disagreement that is responsive to the lived experience of conflict and its reverberations in the present. As an analytical approach which staged the interdependency and historical connectedness of self and other through the act of looking at images, the three events posed implicitly, and at times explicitly, the question of reimagining the social and political life of Northern Ireland as the basis from which a new configuration of politics might be elaborated. While it is a question without an immediate answer, it is a question which nevertheless circulated across the series as a shared task of thinking and feeling, listening and speaking predicated on the unfinished nature of the 'event of photography'.

Appendix 1

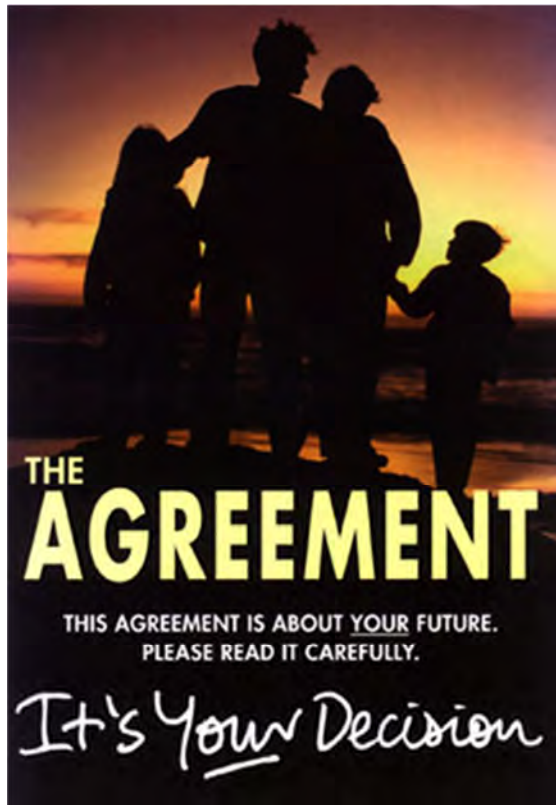
Images:



(Fig 1.1)

Photograph: David Farrell

Image: *The Swallowing Tree*, Colghalstown Wood, Wilkinstown, 1993



(Fig 1.2)

Photograph: Roger Ellis

Image: *Family standing on rock on beach at sunset, rear view, silhouette, Cape Town, South Africa, 1996.*



(Fig 2.1)

Photograph: John Duncan

Image: Red Paint Marks, *Fast Friend Les Dawson*, Belfast, 1995



(Fig 2.2)

Photograph: John Duncan

Image: *Fast Friend Les Dawson*, Belfast, 1995



(Fig 2.3)

Photograph: John Duncan

Image: *Trees From Germany*, South Studios, Tates Avenue, Belfast, 2003



(Fig 2.4)

Photograph: John Duncan

Image: *Boom Town*, Belfast, 2002





(Fig 2.5)

Photograph: John Duncan

Image: *Bonfires*, Highpark, Springmartin, Belfast, 2004



(Fig 2.6)

Photograph: John Duncan

Image: *Bonfires*, Newtownards Road, Belfast, 2004



(Fig 2.7)

Photograph: John Duncan

Image: *Film Sets*, Closing the Ring, Belfast, 2006



(Fig 2.8)

Photograph: John Duncan

Image: *We Were Here*, Girdwood Barracks, Belfast, 2006



(Fig 2.9)

Photograph: Kai Olaf Hesse

Image: *Topography of the Titanic*, Drawing Office, Queens Island, Belfast, 2001



(Fig 2.10)

Photograph: Kai Olaf Hesse

Image: *Topography of the Titanic*, Underpass off Corporation Street, Belfast, 2001



(Fig 3.1)

Photograph: Mary McIntyre

Image: *Aura of Crisis*, 1998



(Fig 3.2)

Photograph: Mary McIntyre

Image: *A Complex Variety of Greens (From Emerald to Viridian)*, 2011





(Fig 3.3)

Photograph: Mary McIntyre

Image: *The Underpass*, 2003



(Fig 3.4)

Photograph: Mary McIntyre

Image: *The Dream 1*, 2009



(Fig 3.5)

Photograph: Mary McIntyre

Image: *Interior Landscape 1*, 2000



(Fig 3.6)

Photograph: Mary McIntyre

Image: *Untitled (after Caspar David Friedrich) 1*, 2002



(Fig 3.7)

Photograph: Mary McIntyre

Image: *The Mound 1*, 2009



(Fig 3.8)

Photograph: David Farrell

Image: *Innocent Landscapes*, Colgagh, 1999



(Fig 3.9)

Photograph: David Farrell

Image: *Innocent Landscapes*, Oristown (graffiti), 2000



(Fig 3.10)

Photograph: David Farrell

Image: *The Swallowing Tree*, Colgaghstown Wood, Wilkinstown, 2000





(Fig 3.11)

Photograph: David Farrell

Image: *Small Acts of Memory*, Colgaghstown Wood, Wilkinstown, 2010

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Saturday 9th June 1973

'A Sixty year old man was found shot three times in the head in Ballysillan Playground. The area showed signs of a struggle.'

(Fig 4.1)

Photograph: Paul Seawright

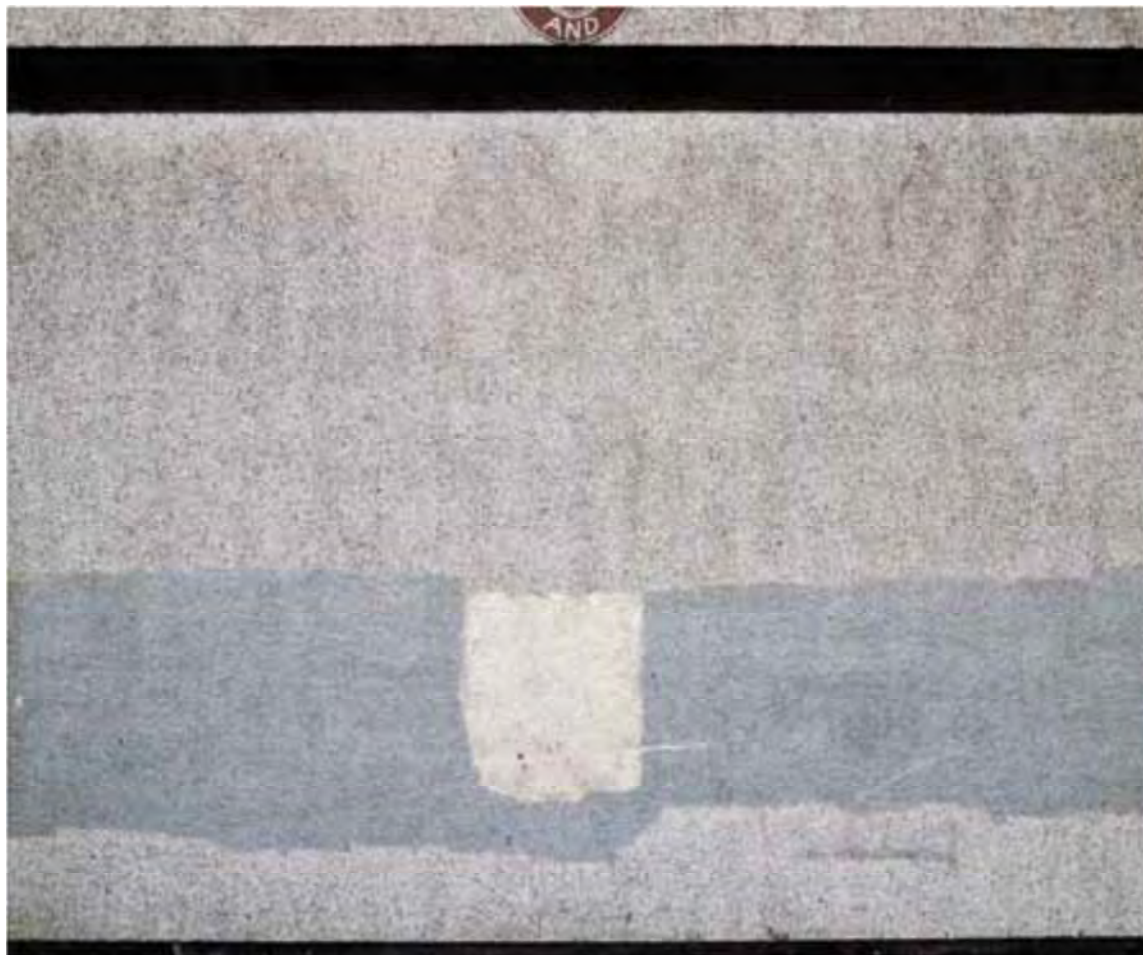
Image: Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June, 1973 from *Sectarian Murder*, Belfast, 1988



(Fig 4.2)

Photograph: Paul Seawright

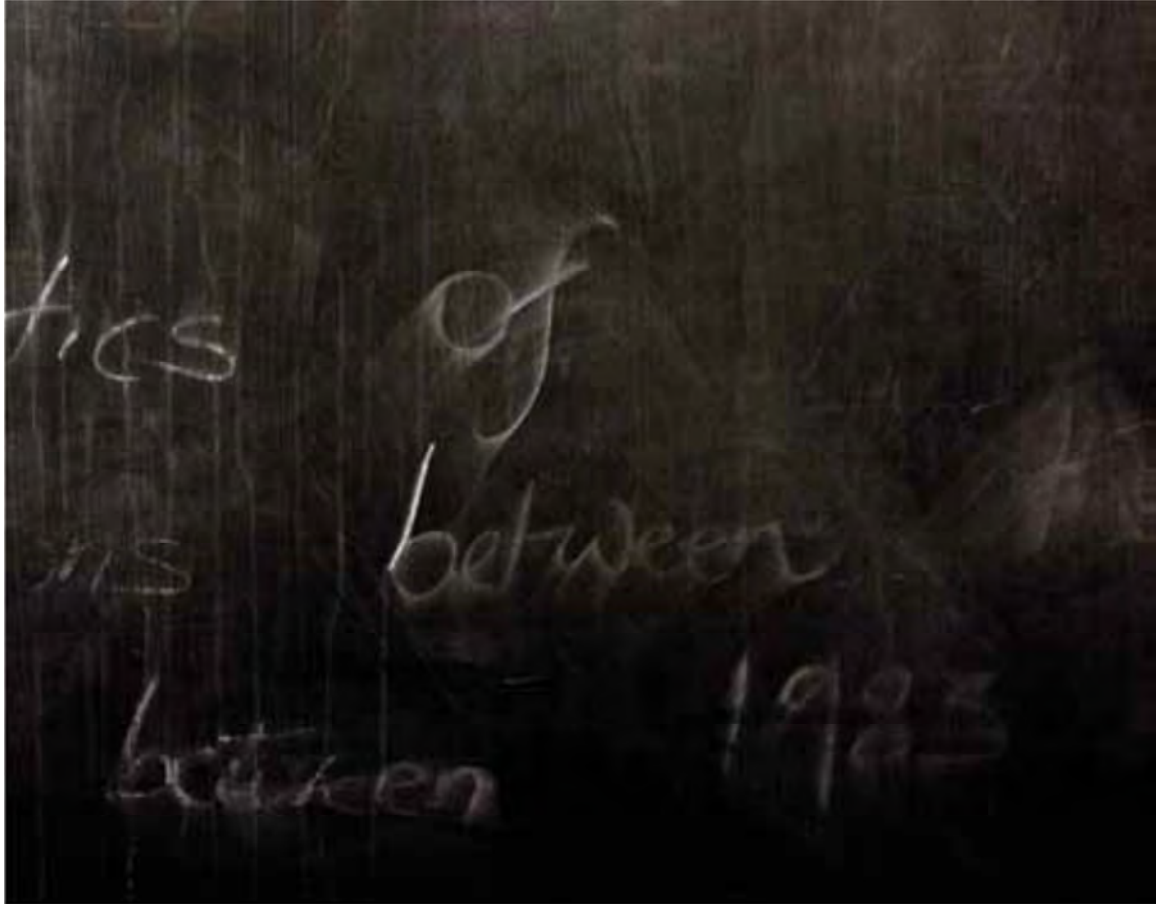
Image: *Martyrs* from *Conflicting Account*, Belfast, 2009



(Fig 4.3)

Photograph: Paul Seawright

Image: *And* from *Conflicting Account*, Belfast, 2009



(Fig 4.4)

Photograph: Paul Seawright

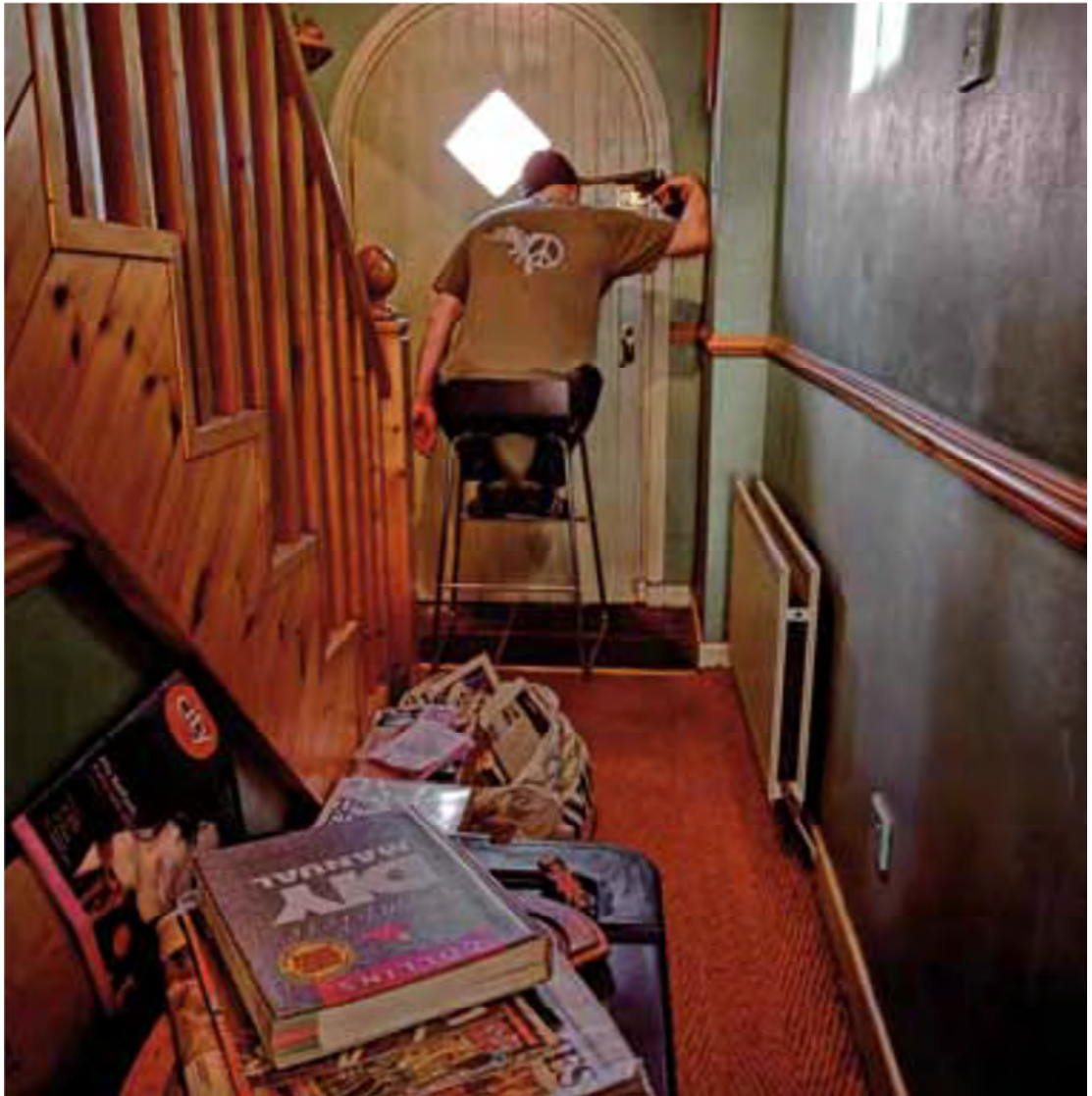
Image: *Between* from *Conflicting Account*, Belfast, 2009



(Fig 4.5)

Photograph: Paul Seawright

Image: *Memory* from *Conflicting Account*, Belfast, 2009



(Fig 4.6)

Photograph: Malcolm Craig Gilbert

Image: *To Stifle Paranoia* from *Post Traumatic Exorcisms*, Belfast, 2008



(Fig 4.7)

Photograph: Malcolm Craig Gilbert

Image: Remembrance Day from *Post Traumatic Exorcisms*, Belfast, 2010





(Fig 4.8)

Photograph: Malcolm Craig Gilbert

Image: *Generations 1* from *Post Traumatic Exorcisms*, Belfast, 2008



(Fig 4.9)

Photograph: Malcolm Craig Gilbert

Image: *(IV) A Report of a Man Approaching Children in an Alleyway* from *Flashbacks: Irrational Fears of the Ordinary*, Belfast, 2013



(Fig 4.10)

Photograph: Malcolm Craig Gilbert

Image: *A Report of Youths trying to break into a Garage* from *Flashbacks: Irrational Fears of the Ordinary*, Belfast, 2013



(Fig 4.11)

Photograph: Malcolm Craig Gilbert

Image: *Memories of a Mortar Attack* from *Flashbacks: Irrational Fears of the Ordinary*, Belfast, 2013



(Fig 4.12)

Photograph: Malcolm Craig Gilbert

Image: *The Patsy* from *Post Traumatic Exorcisms*, Belfast, 2008

## **Appendix 2**

### **Invite:**

The project proposed is an exploration and critical analysis of contemporary photography in Belfast post the Good Friday Agreement (1998).

The proposed civic conversations will be generated through a series of practitioner led talks by photographers John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse (*Spectrality and Urbanism*) Mary McIntyre and David Farrell (*Place as Archive*) and Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert (*Between Memory and Mourning*) which will be programmed in 2013.

1. The first event, *Spectrality and Urbanism* is intended as a prompt to thinking about the photography of John Duncan and Kai Olaf Hesse in the context of the city of Belfast, its urban development and the peace process.
2. The second event, *Place as Archive* with Mary McIntyre and David Farrell is intended as an exploration of photographic approaches to the landscape of Ireland and the unfolding political process of post Agreement.
3. The final event *Between Memory and Mourning* with Paul Seawright and Malcolm Craig Gilbert will consider post Agreement as a critical and emotional distance from the Troubles.

The design of the series is intended as a conversational process that is part academy, part community activism and part cultural practice to enable an exploration of contemporary photography in analytical proximity to what is going on currently across a range of disciplines: urbanism and the regeneration of the city, curatorial practices, the arts academy, community activism and photographic practice.

Through placing contemporary photography in dialogue with other disciplines and the contested histories of the city, the series will explore the centrality and

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complexity of meaning as an intersection of the social, political and aesthetic. Rather than develop a theorised vision of contemporary photography post the Good Friday Agreement that might simply reproduce an abstract discourse on photography the talk series will look to activate photography as civic exchange.

The three events will be audio recorded. The transcripts from the three events will be published by Black Dog Publications and will include the reproduction of a selection of photographs agreed with and subject to the permission of the practitioners participating in the series.

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