

**'JUSTA NOTHER TEENAGE REBEL': SPACE, MEMORY AND CONFLICT IN AN
ORAL HISTORY OF THE BELFAST PUNK SCENE, 1977-1986**

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Well, what the fuck is it about? Like I said, I did it to stand up for Airdrie. I did it because of Memorial Device. I did it because, for a moment, everybody was doing everything, reading, listening, writing, creating, sticking up posters, taking notes, passing out, throwing up, rehearsing, rehearsing, rehearsing in dark windowless rooms at 2pm like the future was just up ahead and we better be ready for it. And now already it's the rotten past. That's why I did it, if you want to know the truth.

- David Keenan, *This is Memorial Device*

But lucky are we as well / sometimes there are oysters in sleech /

- Matt Regan (Little King), *Sleech*

To my parents.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an oral history of the punk scene in Belfast between 1977 and 1986. Interrogating the idea that punk was a non-sectarian subculture, it argues that the accounts of my interviewees suggest a more nuanced relationship between the punk scene and Northern Irish society. Through detailed analysis of four interviews, it describes the punk scene as a structure of feeling that allowed Protestant and Catholic teenagers and young people to intervene in the sectarianised space of Belfast in new ways, without transcending the influence of sectarianism entirely. It also suggests that considering the ways in which people remember the punk scene, via the interpretative oral history methodology first developed by Alessandro Portelli and Luisa Passerini, offers an insight into how memories of everyday life are shaped by Northern Irish memory cultures as well as by lived experiences of punk and of the Troubles.

The first part of the thesis provides a framework for this analysis. The first chapter argues that sectarianism needs to be understood as a doubly-articulated structure, dependent on the state, that percolates through institutions into individual attitudes and behaviours. It develops this idea through a history of the key institutions in this process, before situating punk within them. The second chapter develops this idea by historicising the sectarianisation of space in Belfast. It concludes with an account of the punk scene's intervention in this space. The third chapter outlines the method of the thesis and argues that oral history makes visible facets of the punk scene that are not accessible via the documentary record. This is particularly the case when considering how interviewees compose and express their memories of the period.

The second part of the thesis analyses four interviews to draw out specific facets of the punk scene as a structure of feeling and a spatial intervention, making an original contribution to knowledge about punk in Belfast and about young people's experiences of space and sectarianism during the Troubles. These specific facets are the possibility for transgressive movement offered by punk; the possibility for changing one's relationship both to place and to history; and the possibility for changing spaces themselves through political activism. The central argument here is that attending

carefully to how people narrate their historical experiences can illuminate our understanding of punk's intervention in everyday life in Northern Ireland.

Keywords: Punk, Northern Ireland, Oral History, Everyday Life, Henri Lefebvre, Memory, Raymond Williams

CONTENTS

Abstract -	3
Acknowledgements -	8
Author's Declaration -	9
Transcription and Notation -	10
Introduction -	11-23
Introduction -	11
Punk in Belfast - a history -	12
Research questions -	15
<i>Punk, culture and sectarianism -</i>	15
<i>Punk, space and the city -</i>	18
<i>Punk, oral history and memory -</i>	19
The structure -	20
Chapter One: Institutions, sectarianism and youth culture -	24-59
Introduction -	24
Raymond Williams and cultures of division -	25
<i>Sectarianism and culture -</i>	26
<i>Life in an Irish town? -</i>	30
School, university and forms of division -	33
Employment, segregation and sectarianism -	38
Churches and religious encounters -	41
Sport, youth clubs and managing the young -	44
<i>Young people, sociality and boundaries -</i>	47
<i>Young people and violence -</i>	49
What about the punk scene? -	51
The punk scene and Raymond Williams -	54
Conclusion -	59
Chapter Two: The production of space in Belfast -	60-96
Introduction-	60
The early development of the city -	63
The late 19 th and early 20 th centuries -	66
Partition and unionist hegemony in the Northern Irish state -	71
The politics of space after 1968 and the impact of direct rule -	77
<i>The violent demarcation of space -</i>	79
<i>Reshaping the 'defensive city' -</i>	81
The punk scene -	84
<i>"It's music we want to hear - not religion" - gigs and venues -</i>	85
<i>If they weren't here there'd be no trouble: everyday spatial experience</i>	87
Lefebvre and sectarianised space -	90
Conclusion -	95

Chapter Three: Interpretative oral history, memory studies and Northern Ireland

- 97-138

Introduction -	97
Cultural memory and oral history -	98
Good Vibrations and the cultural memory of punk in Belfast -	103
Memory and oral history in Northern Ireland -	106
<i>Punk, memory and alternative solidarities -</i>	107
<i>Oral history and 'dealing with the past' -</i>	110
Portelli, Passerini and interpretative oral history -	113
<i>Oral history and social worlds -</i>	117
<i>Narrative techniques and forms -</i>	118
<i>Intersubjectivity and co-construction -</i>	120
<i>Everyday life and everyday spaces -</i>	129
Methodology -	132
Conclusion -	137

Chapter Four: Alison Farrell - Epiphany and transgression in memories of the punk scene -

139-167

Introduction -	139
The epiphinal and the anecdotal -	140
"We weren't like punks..." - setting the scene -	142
Epiphany and transgression -	144
Sectarianism and respectability in Dungannon -	148
From the country to the city -	154
Mobility in and out of Belfast -	155
<i>A cottage in Blacklion -</i>	157
<i>Driving to Portrush -</i>	159
<i>Hitch-hiking to London -</i>	160
Punk as a structure of feeling in Alison's narrative -	161
Conclusion -	166

Chapter Five: Gareth Mullan - habitus and storytelling in memories of the punk scene -

168-203

Introduction -	168
Field, habitus and dispositions -	171
Community, place and school -	173
<i>Methody and feeling out of place -</i>	175
<i>Punk, sectarianism and habitus -</i>	178
The limits of habitus and historical reflection -	187
'I wanna see some history' - historical practice in Gareth's interview -	189
<i>Storytelling and local history -</i>	193
<i>Collecting and culture -</i>	198
Conclusion -	201

Chapter Six: Petesy Burns and Damien McCorry - punk, politics and the production of space -

204-239

Introduction –	204
Space, place and Lefebvre –	208
Remembering the places of punk in Belfast –	210
Petesy Burns –	213
<i>The Anarchy Centre</i> –	215
<i>The Warzone Collective</i> –	220
Damien McCorry –	227
<i>Violent spaces and vulnerability</i> –	231
<i>Punk and place in Damien’s narrative</i> –	235
Conclusion –	238
Conclusion –	241-255
Introduction –	241
Research questions and punk as structure of feeling –	241
Bringing the accounts together –	244
Memory culture, lifecourse and oral history –	246
Contribution to knowledge –	249
Further research –	252
Conclusion –	253
Bibliography –	256-279
Appendix A –	280-285
Appendix B –	286-289
Appendix C –	290-293

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained within 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.

Fearghus Brian Roulston, 1st March 2019

TRANSCRIPTION AND NOTATION

Wherever possible I have retained the original ordering and style of the speaker, which extends to an attempt to render informal language precisely (gonna for going to, for instance). An ellipsis in the transcript signifies a brief pause in the formulation of a sentence. An ellipsis in square brackets signifies an excision made by me after transcription, generally for reasons of clarity. Occasionally, square brackets will be used within transcripts to include non-verbal cues (such as laughter), contextual information, or clarifications. Occasionally, when my question or statement cuts across the continuation of a narrative while an interviewee is speaking, the question is included in square brackets within the text; in general, questions by me are signified by a paragraph break.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This thesis is an oral history of the punk scene in Belfast from 1977 to 1986. It draws on the cultural materialism of Raymond Williams as well as on critical work on memory, oral history and geography to describe the punk scene in the city as a spatialised structure of feeling within a wider culture of sectarian division in Northern Ireland. As with other punk and post-punk scenes around the world, the Belfast punk scene was essentially something around and within which groups of young people congregated. Because the method used here is oral history, I am interested in two things about these congregations.

Firstly, I am interested in what they were. Or, to put that slightly differently, I am interested in what the constellation of places, institutions (record labels, venues), bands, and quotidian practices that constituted the punk scene were in the specific context of Belfast, and in how this constellation was related to the wider social and cultural conditions of Northern Ireland after the outbreak of the violent conflict known as the Troubles in 1968. If one element of this conflict was sectarianism, or the divide between Northern Ireland's Protestant and Catholic populations, how did this affect the young people from both communities who took part in the scene? If sectarianism was manifested through the division and demarcation of space, and through a divided geography in which "a social narrative of territorial belonging and ownership explains and indeed justifies cultural and political identity", what kind of spaces were created by the constituent parts and practices of the punk scene?¹

Secondly, I am interested in how the congregations of the punk scene are remembered by former participants telling their stories in the present. Oral history, as Alessandro Portelli reminds us, "tells us less about events than about their meaning".² This suggests that when analysing oral sources we need to bear in mind that "what is really important

¹ Shirlow, Pete, 'Fear and Ethnic Division', *Peace Review* 13, no. 1 (1 March 2001), p67.

² Portelli, Alessandro, 'What Makes Oral History Different', p67, in Perks, Rob and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003).

is that memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings".³ How people create and narrate their memories can tell us something about the construction of subjectivity and about the residue of the past made visible in that construction. It can also tell us something about how social discourses about the past, or cultural memories, mediate and shape the formation and expression of individual memories. In addition to considering what the punk scene was, and analysing its relationship to space and culture in Northern Ireland during the conflict, the thesis will draw on the particular insights offered by oral history to connect individual memories of the punk scene to Northern Irish cultural memory. It will ask what it means to *have been* a punk – that is, how punk-ness unravels as a thread through the lifecourse of my interviewees, and how they relate their subjectivity in the present to their experiences in the past. Alongside this, it will consider how the shared memory of the punk scene is connected to contestations around wider memory culture in Northern Ireland, where (as Graham Dawson has noted) “memories of the war – concerning, for example, what is at stake in the conflict, the justification of organised violence, what has been perpetrated and suffered, and by whom – structure the identities of participants and underpin their broader political aspirations in respect of a settlement.”⁴

The remainder of the introduction has three parts. It begins with a brief history of the punk scene in the city. This is followed by an expansion of the research questions above, situated within the relevant literature. Finally, I outline the structure of the thesis.

Punk in Belfast – a history

Even suggesting a beginning for something as evanescent as a music culture means mobilising a particular understanding of what a music culture was. It also entails the imposition of the archive. The protests that followed the Clash’s cancelled gig at the Ulster Hall on 20th October 1977 – which we could call the moment where the nascent punk scene saw itself for the first time, as teenagers from across Northern Ireland gathered on

³ Ibid., p69.

⁴ Dawson, Graham, ‘Trauma, Place and the Politics of Memory: Bloody Sunday, Derry, 1972–2004’, *History Workshop Journal* 59, no. 1 (1 March 2005), p153.

Bedford Street in central Belfast and swapped rumours about what was going to happen – are a convenient starting point for a history of Belfast’s punk scene because newspaper records allow us to date them precisely. Local punk band Rudi wrote a single, *Cops*, in protest at the heavy-handed response of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) to the congregation of punks, some of whom were arrested.⁵ But the history of the punk scene in Belfast starts somewhere before this, with a handful of young people forming bands and buying records, avidly reading the music press to keep track of the scene’s development in London, listening to John Peel and watching *Top of the Pops* and *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. Bars like the Viking in Belfast and the Trident in Bangor were attracting a punk-y crowd by 1976, and by 1977 Rudi had started playing gigs at the Glenmachen Hotel in the north-east of the city. The Undertones, in Derry, were beginning to play gigs around the same time.⁶

In the same period in England, punk was entering a period of notoriety after the Sex Pistols’ famous appearance on Bill Grundy’s Today programme, on 1st December 1976. This incident (in which the band, goaded by Grundy, uttered a few obscenities on live, teatime television) had an impact in Northern Ireland, as did the media furore that surrounded it. Brian Young, the lead singer and founding member of Rudi, told me:

Once *God Save the Queen* came out sorta ‘77, people forget, the press, the Pistols were on that Bill Grundy show [...] the press hyped it up something rotten ... Punk had sort of ... once it got popular like that and it got popular very quick through late ‘76 right into ‘77 ... there were a lot of, it actually lost it, it became more of a – I mean it was still, don’t get me wrong, it was still brilliant, it was still really exciting, it was still the really early days over here – but it sort of in a way, in England certainly, it had lost its innocence.⁷

So just as punk was losing its innocence in England – becoming a media-driven spectacle rather than a do-it-yourself (DIY) movement, in Brian’s account – it was hitting its stride

⁵ Interview with Brian Young, 2016.

⁶ Rudi were a punk band from east Belfast, formed in 1975 and best-known for their 1978 single *Big Time*; the Undertones, also formed in 1975, were a punk band from Derry whose single *Teenage Kicks* became a synecdochal reference for punk in Northern Ireland. See Appendix B for a list of all the bands mentioned in the thesis, with brief biographical information and a link to a Spotify playlist.

⁷ BY, 2016.

in Northern Ireland. Terri Hooley, a former participant in the attenuated but persistent counter-cultural life of 1960s Belfast, opened the Good Vibrations record store in mid-1977, taking the lease on a derelict building on Great Victoria Street – along with other record stores like Caroline Music and Rocky Mongo’s, this became an important site for the Belfast punk scene, partly as somewhere to meet and hang out, and partly as somewhere to buy hard-to-find records from England and the USA. Just Books, an anarchist book store managed by Dave Hyndmann and a rotating cast of comrades, opened up shop above Good Vibrations and became another gathering-place, one that had a formative influence on the more politically-minded participants in the scene. New bands began to form. Again, Brian’s account of the early history of the scene is informative here. “I mean I was at [the] first Stiffs gig and the first Outcasts gig and they were within a week of each other in late ‘77 in Paddy Lamb’s in Ballyhackamore [a suburb of East Belfast]”, he told me.⁸ Stiff Little Fingers (the Stiffs) and the Outcasts were followed by a host of new bands in Belfast and in other town around the country, as detailed in the comprehensive 2004 encyclopedia of this period in Belfast, *It Makes You Want to Spit*.⁹ The Belfast punk fanzine *Alternative Ulster* also published its first issue in 1977.¹⁰

After the Clash’s famous almost-gig in October 1977 was cancelled – probably because of a problem with the venue’s insurance, although the reasons remain somewhat opaque and contested, with some punks at the time and afterwards alleging censorship on the part of the local council – they returned to play the McMordie Hall, a student venue associated with Queen’s University Belfast and now called the Mandela Hall, in December of the same year. Early in 1978 the Harp and the Pound both started putting on regular gigs with local punk bands – the Harp even formed a small organising committee to arrange its punk nights featuring, among others, Terri Hooley and Hector Heathwood.¹¹ In February, two Rudi tracks – *Big Time* and *No. 1* – were recorded at Hydepark Studios in Templepatrick for Hooley’s new record label, also called Good Vibrations; these went on sale in Terri’s shop in April 1978, making them the first punk records cut in Northern Ireland. 3,000 copies were re-pressed by EMI in Dublin and the BBC DJ John Peel played

⁸ BY, 2016.

⁹ O’Neill, Sean and Guy Trelford (eds.), *It Makes You Want to Spit: The Definitive Guide to Punk in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Reekus Music, 2003).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p18.

¹¹ Interview with Hector Heathwood, 2016.

the single on its release. In June, a Battle of the Bands concert was organised at the McMordie Hall featuring seven local punks bands, and in September the Ramones made their first of several visits to Belfast, a formative experience for many of the people I talked to about the scene. In the next six months or so Good Vibrations pressed several more records – *Justa Nother Teenage Rebel* by the Outcasts, *Teenage Kicks* by the Undertones, and other singles by Protex, the Xdreamysts, the Idiots and Spider. In 1979, John T Davis's *Shellshock Rock*, a documentary about punk in Belfast, premiered in Cork.¹²

Throughout the 1980s, the punk scene fragmented and shrunk, much as it did in England a couple of years earlier. Of most interest to this project is the small anarcho-punk scene that emerged in Belfast from the early 1980s. The first flashes of this came from the A Centre, a social centre organised by Dave Hyndmann and others, who had previously been involved in the Just Books Collective mentioned above. The A Centre opened on November 1981, remaining open for just six months or so before closing down following the end of its lease and some issues with the RUC. The anarcho-punk bands Crass, Poison Girls and Conflict all played there in this period, in a set of gigs that proved formative for another one of my interviewees, Petesy Burns.¹³ In 1986 Petesy, along with Rab Wallace and some others, opened the Warzone Collective in a building near the John Hewitt pub in what has become the Cathedral Quarter. This remained the most visible remainder from the ashes of the original punk scene throughout the 1980s, although many of the participants were different and the music and fashion had changed a great deal.¹⁴

Research questions

Punk, culture and sectarianism

This thesis will interrogate the relationship between punk and Northern Irish culture, with a particular emphasis on the question of sectarianism. The punk scene, as I suggested in the first section of the introduction, was popular with both young Catholics and young Protestants in Belfast. Tim Heron argues that “together with boxing,

¹² Interview with John T Davis, 2015.

¹³ Interview with Petesy Burns, 2016.

¹⁴ Ibid.

greyhound racing and the Belfast gay scene, punk was one of the few cultural phenomena which fostered amicable cross-community relationships” during the conflict.¹⁵ The suggestion here is that the punk scene was not only a space where young Protestants and young Catholics could meet during a period where workplace segregation, residential segregation, academic segregation and leisure segregation were the norm; it was also, as Martin McCloone suggests, characterised by an “opposition to the status quo” as well as to “those aggressive and violent opponents of the status quo who had reduced daily life to the abject” – that is, to the unionist state and to the British government, but also to the paramilitary opponents of those two states.¹⁶

My research will complicate this argument in two ways. It will do so firstly by thinking about the nature of sectarianism in Northern Ireland, and by drawing on the work of Desmond Bell, Bill Rolston, Robbie McVeigh and others who insist on the importance of understanding sectarianism as a structural product of the Northern Irish state after partition in 1921 rather than as a product of interpersonal relationships and disagreements.¹⁷ My suggestion here will be that understanding the doubly-articulated power of sectarianism, as a structure that creates material conditions and that is expressed at the level of everyday life, can usefully complicate the ways in which we see the punk scene as intervening in Northern Irish culture. The complex and intersecting networks of sectarianism, and the institutions that mediated this sectarianism, are apparent in the accounts of my interviewees; they do not see the punk scene as transcending these institutions but rather as allowing them to negotiate them in different ways.

¹⁵ Heron, Timothy, ‘Alternative Ulster: How Punk Took On the Troubles’, *Irish Times*, (2 December 2016), accessed online 9/2/18: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/alternative-ulster-how-punk-took-on-the-troubles-1.2890644>.

¹⁶ McCloone, Martin, ‘Punk Music in Northern Ireland: The Political Power of “What Might Have Been”’, *Irish Studies Review* 12, no. 1 (1 April 2004), p32. For more accounts of the relationship between punk and sectarianism see Stewart, Francis, “‘Alternative Ulster’: Punk Rock as a Means of Overcoming the Religious Divide in Northern Ireland”, pp76-90, in *Irish Religious Conflict in Comparative Perspective: Catholics, Protestants and Muslims*, Wolfe, John (ed.) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; Heron, Timothy, ‘Alternative Ulster: Punk and the Construction of Everyday Life in 1970s Northern Ireland’, *Popular Culture Today: Imaginaries*, 9 (2015), pp1–17; Bailie, Stuart, *Trouble Songs: Music and Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Stuart Bailie, 2018); Heron, Timothy, ‘Alternative Ulster’: le punk en Irlande de Nord (1976-1983), (unpublished Phd thesis, Ecole doctorale Sciences de l’homme et de la société, 2017).

¹⁷ Bell, Desmond, *Acts of Union: Youth Culture and Sectarianism in Northern Ireland* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990); McVeigh, Robbie and Bill Rolston, ‘From Good Friday to Good Relations: Sectarianism, Racism and the Northern Ireland State’, *Race & Class* 48, no. 4, 2007, pp1–23.

Secondly, I will complicate the narrative of the punk scene as non-sectarian by positioning the scene itself squarely within the field of everyday life. Throughout the thesis this term, the punk scene, will be used as a shorthand for venues, institutions and bands, but also for a range of spatialised, quotidian practices – buying and modifying clothes, going to gigs, gathering together in pubs and public spaces, listening to the radio and so on. I will suggest that both the venues, institutions and bands, and the everyday life that moved through them, constitute what Raymond Williams calls a structure of feeling that existed within the ordinary culture(s) of 1970s Northern Ireland.¹⁸ Here I will be drawing on recent work by David Wilkinson, Matthew Worley and John Street, who have called for historical research that locates punk, as a structure of feeling, “within its (shifting) cultural, socio-economic and political context”, and that utilises a “combination of empirical and archival research with a theoretical method that allows for the complexities, contradictions and contentious nature of punk's cultural practice to be embraced”.¹⁹ Of particular interest to me is the importance of locating punk within the cultural context of Northern Ireland, and of situating its participants as inhabitants of this culture who were of course not just punks, but also engaged in the social world of Northern Ireland in manifold other ways.

The method employed here means there are limits to the claim being made about sectarianism and the punk scene. Most notably, the relatively small number of interviews solicited and the focus on subjectivity and memory through granular analysis of these interviews does not allow for a straightforward empirical claim about the ethno-religious composition of the punk scene, or an argument about the number of Catholic and number of Protestant participants. An alternative way of complicating the narrative of the punk scene as non-sectarian would be to read it as either predominantly Protestant or predominantly Catholic.²⁰ The scale of the project undertaken here is not large enough to comprehensively debunk either of these narratives, and indeed the implicit argument that they both make – that the non or un-sectarian aspects of the scene have been

¹⁸ Williams, Raymond, *The Long Revolution* (London: Pelican, 1965).

¹⁹ Wilkinson, David, Matthew Worley, and John Street. 2017, “I Wanna See Some History”: Recent Writing on British Punk’, *Contemporary European History* 26, no. 2, p410.

²⁰ The former reading was expressed to me in informal conversation; the latter reading was expressed by Northern Irish playwright Gary Mitchell in an interview with Connal Parr. See Parr, Connal, *Inventing the Myth: Political Passions and the Ulster Protestant Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp185-219. No detailed empirical work exists on this subject, however.

somewhat overstated – is related to the argument made throughout this thesis that we need to view sectarianism as structural rather than as solely interpersonal. However, the accounts of my interviewees from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds suggest that at the very least young Protestants and young Catholics both participated in the Belfast punk scene, and that this entailed a degree of cross-community interaction that they were markedly unaccustomed to. Further research would be needed in order to fully corroborate any of these three possible histories.

Space and place

As indicated above, a key product of sectarianism as a structure was its role in the segregation of space in Belfast. Peter Shirlow and John Murtagh call this process the production of sectarianised space.²¹ Both by creating new spaces (like Good Vibrations or the Harp Bar) and by allowing people to behave in transgressive ways in existing spaces, the punk scene entailed an intervention in this sectarianised urban landscape. In this sense, it constituted a spatialised structure of feeling, in which people’s capacity for “feeling [their] own life in certain ways differently” was intimately related to the capacity to engage in resistant or transgressive spatial practices.²²

The thesis will analyse this spatialised structure of feeling in three ways. Firstly, through an historical account of the production of sectarianised space in Belfast, drawing on the work of the French Marxist geographer Henri Lefebvre.²³ Secondly, through a mobilisation of the more activist-oriented theories of Lefebvre, in which he proposes the necessity for a struggle over the right to the city.²⁴ This use of Lefebvre will consider the ways in which participants in the punk scene were attempting to articulate that claim through a desire to create new spaces of sociality and connection in the city, in contradistinction to the sectarian logics that have historically constituted and produced space in Belfast.

²¹ Shirlow, Peter and Brendan Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), p6.

²² Williams, *The Long Revolution*, p65.

²³ Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell, 1991).

²⁴ Lefebvre, Henri, *Writings on Cities*, translated and edited by Elizabeth Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); *The Right to the City: A Verso Report* (London: Verso, 2017).

Thirdly, through an engagement with geographical and sociological work that is more helpful than Lefebvre for thinking about the felt and the experiential, focusing on the construction of place and the way in which people make sense of their lived environment.²⁵ Not every engagement with space by the former punks I interviewed was an explicit or implicit attempt to demand a new kind of city, but being part of the punk scene did make all of my interviewees think differently about themselves and about the places they inhabited. Tim Cresswell's work on transgression and mobility, and Pierre Bourdieu's work on habitus, provide ways of thinking about this shift that do not rely on Lefebvre's explicitly revolutionary account of spatial contestation.²⁶

Memory and oral history

The final set of questions for the thesis are in part a product of the method of inquiry, which I am calling interpretative oral history. This is a form of oral history which, drawing on the pioneering work of Alessandro Portelli and Luisa Passerini, takes seriously the complex and multi-faceted insights of people's memories.²⁷ My argument here is that a form of oral history that is attentive to memory, ideology, symbolic structures and narrative devices as they emerge in the construction of interviews can produce insights into the meaning of the punk scene for its participants and the nature of the punk scene in Belfast as a structure of feeling and a cultural formation. This means, firstly, that I am working with a slightly expanded notion of structure of feeling – for Williams, this was the social relationships and attitudes that could be apprehended through texts such as novels and plays, and for Worley and Wilkinson, it is something that can be apprehended through the material ephemera of the punk scenes they study – fanzines, records and so on. My suggestion is that understanding people's memories as also being the lucid and creative products of a particular structure of feeling allows for the production of an

²⁵ Pierce, Joseph, and Deborah G. Martin, 'Placing Lefebvre', *Antipode* 47, no. 5 (9 October 2015).

²⁶ Cresswell, Tim, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London: Routledge, 2006); Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

²⁷ Portelli, Alessandro, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Passerini, Luisa, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. Lumley, Robert and Jude Bloomfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1984]).

historical narrative that is attentive to the ways in which individuals make sense of their own position in the social world.

Using an interpretative oral history method means, secondly, that I will be drawing on the work of the Popular Memory Group, Alistair Thomson and others in considering the ways in which memory is a site of contestation and struggle.²⁸ What people remember, how they express it within the co-produced text of the interview, what cultural scripts and narratives they draw on to do so, can all reveal the connection between the past and the present and the political ramifications of this connection.

In terms of the method of the study itself, I carried out 12 interviews in total, most of them between one and two hours long. For the analysis here I have chosen to concentrate in depth on four of the interviews, although some of the others have been used (as with Brian's above, for instance) either to adumbrate a particular historical narrative or to speak alongside one of the in-depth analyses. Taking this approach (detailed analysis of individual interviews rather than a bricolage or polyphonic technique) is an attempt to give the narratives of my interviewees an opportunity to speak in their specificity and full expressiveness; it is also an attempt to make sense of the different ways in which people experienced and remember punk as a structure of feeling and to analyse the reasons for these different-but-connected memories and emotions.

The structure

The remainder of the thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter develops an account of the doubly-articulated role of sectarianism in Northern Irish society, identifying the key institutional sites for the maintenance and propagation of sectarianism – education, work, the churches and leisure – as well as considering its expression at the level of everyday life. Drawing on the work of Raymond Williams, it then situates the punk scene as a structure of feeling within this wider culture of division and proposes that it must be

²⁸ Popular Memory Group, 'Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method', in Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998); Thomson, Alistair, *Anzac Memories: Living With the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

understood as fundamentally enmeshed within this culture at the same time as allowing young people to respond to it in new (or emergent) ways.

The second chapter grounds this account in the specific spaces of Belfast, beginning with a historical narrative of the production of space in the city and the relationship this has to sectarianism. This opens with the Victorian and Edwardian period in which the city took on a recognisable shape, moves on to the period between 1920 and 1968 in which the new Northern Irish state was developed in part through the control of space. The narrative concludes with a consideration of the emergence of the Troubles in Belfast and particularly on the way in which the direct rule government from 1972 undertook the management and securitisation of the city. Finally, the punk scene is positioned within this landscape.

Chapter three describes the interpretive oral history method I have used to connect the narratives of my interviewees to the issues of sectarianism and space described in the previous two chapters. It suggests that accessing the structure of feeling of the punk scene through oral history interviews makes possible an understanding of the temporal and remembered dimensions of the participants' experiences, and of the emotional afterlives and resonances of events as recalled some thirty years after they took place. In the context of Northern Ireland, oral history is also an important way of generating stories about the recent past that do not correspond exclusively to narratives of conflict and division. A detailed consideration of the creative ways in which my interviewees formulate their experiences in conversation with cultural memory discourses provides an insight into the relationship between past and present in Northern Ireland.

Chapters four, five and six move on to direct analysis of the narratives of my interviewees. Chapter four analyses an interview with Alison Farrell, a woman from Dungannon who became interested in the punk scene in the late 1970s and moved to Belfast shortly afterwards. Drawing on theoretical work on transgression and mobility, and in particular the work of Tim Cresswell on the way in which transgressive acts and differential capacities of mobility foreground how ideology is embedded in spatial logics, I connect the epiphanic role punk play's in Alison's narrative with the capacity it gives her to

transgress boundaries of sectarianism and respectability in Northern Ireland.²⁹ Three further anecdotes about mobility and movement told by Alison then suggest a way of thinking about punk as a structure of feeling and the relationship of this structure of feeling to fear and violence in the 1970s and 1980s.

Chapter five analyses an interview with Gareth Mullan, a man from south Belfast who was involved in the punk scene from the mid-'70s and who now collects records and occasionally writes for punk fanzines and webzines, often about the Stranglers. Punk is epiphanic for Gareth, as it is for Alison, but this chapter argues that the epiphanic memory of punk is expressed with a different inflection here. Rather than being about the possibility of movement, Gareth's account is about the possibility of changing himself that taking part in the punk scene offered. This aspect of the structure of feeling is understood here through reference to the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and his collaborator Loïc Wacquant, especially their work on habitus and the self.³⁰ Bourdieu's account of the habitus as embodied history is a helpful extension to Williams' work on culture, the chapter suggests, but drawing on oral history theory and accounts of local and community historical practice also allows us to challenge some elements of Bourdieu's framework in which history acts on individuals without their conscious awareness.

Chapter six analyses two interviews, one with Petesy Burns, a former member of Stalag 17 from the New Lodge area of Belfast, and another with Damien McCorry, from Andersonstown, who also played in punk bands in the 1970s and 1980s. Both Petesy and Damien conceptualise and narrate their experience of the punk scene as explicitly related to politics, Petesy through reference to the anarchist social centre Giro's, which he helped to launch, and Damien through reference to the anti-racist, leftist politics of the Clash and Rock Against Racism. Their memories are analysed through a return to the work of Lefebvre, particularly through his concept of the right to the city, as well as to recent work in oral history that connects the experience of place to the emergence of particular

²⁹ Cresswell, Tim, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

³⁰ Wacquant, Loïc, *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

structures of feeling. In the conclusion, the three analysis chapters are brought together to describe the connections and divergences between the four narratives, and a final argument about sectarianism, space and place and memory is made.

CHAPTER ONE – INSTITUTIONS, SECTARIANISM AND YOUTH CULTURE

Introduction

Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purpose, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact and discovery, writing themselves into the land.¹

The idea that this thesis tracks is that a consideration of memories of the punk scene in Belfast between 1977 and 1986 opens up a space in which we can see some of the larger issues of Northern Ireland's recent history as they intersect with the experience of my interviewees. In order to illuminate this space, this opening chapter positions the Belfast punk scene in its cultural context. For all of my interviewees, talking about taking part in the punk scene also entailed talking about being young in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s and about their formative encounters with the lineaments of Northern Irish society. Their stories did not tend to set up a straightforward dichotomy between punk as a culture and Northern Irish culture, for instance by constructing Northern Ireland as fully embroiled in sectarian animosity and punk as magically resolving these contradictions to produce a utopian non-sectarian community. Rather, Northern Irish culture functions as a mobile backdrop, a series of historical constructions of society produced by the interviewees against which their different narratives of the punk scene are presented and performed.

The key images of Northern Ireland's recent history my interviewees position the punk scene against are those of sectarianism, segregation and violence in the province. So the role of this first chapter is to define sectarianism in the context of Northern Ireland as an ordinary culture of division; to consider some of the institutions that formed and maintained this culture, and the ways in which segregation and state discrimination intersected with the everyday life of young people, especially in Belfast; and to propose

¹ Williams, Raymond, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London: Verso, 1989), p93.

an understanding of the punk scene in relation to the definition and mapping of sectarianism and segregation offered in the first two sections.

Raymond Williams and cultures of division

This reading of Northern Ireland's culture of division will be developed through the work of Marxist literary critic and theorist Raymond Williams. His assertion that "culture is ordinary, in every society and in every mind" is a useful starting point for the analysis of what punk in Belfast came out of and intervened in.² The 1958 essay in which this well-known formulation is expressed, *Culture is Ordinary*, begins with an elegiac description of Williams' childhood in south-east Wales, scattered with clues as to the argument he wants to make about the relationship between culture and everyday life. He describes the cathedral, the cinema, the Norman castles and the farming valleys, "the steel-rolling mill, the gasworks, the grey terraces, the pitheads".³ Religion, films and popular culture, work, landscape, history, education – these are some of the sites Williams names as arenas where the individual and the social meet and are formed in relationship to one another. Culture here is the shape, purpose and meaning of society, as expressed in institutions, arts, learning and the everyday moments in which people engage with one another.⁴

There are several things at stake for Williams in this definition of culture. He wants to insist on culture as lived, experienced and thus accessible to all; he wants to accept that culture "must be finally interpreted in relation to its underlying system of production", but not to move from this interpretation to an understanding of all working-class culture as solely the negative product of domination or alienation – "a dying culture, and ignorant masses, are not what I have known or see".⁵ Finally, rather than a dying culture and ignorant masses, Williams is lionising a "distinct working-class way of life", which he values for "its emphases of neighbourhood, mutual obligation and common betterment, as expressed in the great working-class political and industrial institutions".⁶

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p92.

⁴ Ibid., p93.

⁵ Ibid., pp95-96.

⁶ Ibid.

Translating this understanding into a Northern Irish context presents an immediate problem.⁷ The backdrop suggested by my interviewees is not one of a distinct working-class way of life that punk as a culture expresses or critiques. Rather, it is a segregated and sectarianised culture in which community and identities are formed against one another and through their differential and conflictual relationships with the state. To adopt Williams' understanding of culture as lived and experiential but also formed through encounters with institutional power and class struggle, it is necessary to account for sectarianism in Northern Ireland and its role in creating separate ways of life and separate social experiences. This entails thinking about sectarianism as doubly-articulated, at the level of institutions and at the level of everyday life.

Sectarianism and culture

John Whyte, in his 1990 survey of the voluminous literature produced about the Northern Irish Troubles, suggests that there are “almost as many interpretations of the community divide as there are authors”.⁸ The question of how to historicise, situate, contextualise and conceptualise the community divide is a central one because it determines how the conflict itself is understood. Broadly, there are three key positions in the literature on sectarianism and Northern Ireland. Firstly, there is one in which sectarianism is an epiphenomenal expression of a conflict that is really about, for instance, class struggle or a colonial settler-native divide; secondly, there is one in which sectarianism and thus religious identity is integral to the division between Protestants and Catholics; thirdly, there is a synthesis of these two positions in which “conflict is indeed waged between two communities whose members are religiously differentiated, but [who are] also divided by broader cultural differences, national allegiances, histories of antagonistic encounters, and marked differences in economic and political power”.⁹

⁷ There are analogies here with Williams' problematic elision of issues of race and colonialism in his understanding of community and nation. For the former see Gilroy, Paul, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1987); for the latter see Said, Edward W, *Culture & Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), especially the introduction.

⁸ Whyte, John, *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p103.

⁹ O'Leary, Brendan and John McGarry, *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images* (London, Athlone Press, 1996), p172; I have adapted this helpful taxonomy from Elliott, Laurence, 'Religion and Sectarianism in Ulster: Interpreting the Northern Ireland Troubles', *Religion Compass* 7, no. 3 (12 March 2013), pp93–101. For representative examples of the first and second positions see, respectively, Clayton, Pamela, *Enemies and Passing Friends: Settler Ideologies in Twentieth Century Ulster* (London: Pluto Press,

For this project, the key theoretical account of sectarianism will be Robbie McVeigh's, which fits into the third category of that taxonomy above but is striking for its emphasis on the structural elements of sectarianism. McVeigh's central point is that "sectarianism must be theorised as a *structure*", not as "an aggregate of the deeds of unpleasant or deviant 'sectarians'".¹⁰ From this position, he argues that "[this structure] is more than a set of ideologies or a category of practices or an amalgam of individual actions: sectarianism is the modality in which life is lived by everybody in the Six Counties".¹¹ Developing this idea alongside Bill Rolston in 2007, McVeigh insists that understanding sectarianism as a form of racism and thus as being more concerned with ethnicity than religion is central to making the case that sectarianism's "survival and replication [...] in its most fundamental and structural sense is entirely dependent on the state".¹² That is to say, it would be misguided to construct the punk scene as creating non-sectarian relationships and attitudes among young people, and from there to construct sectarianism in Northern Ireland as being primarily or fundamentally a skein of interpersonal animosities. Desmond Bell, in his 1990 ethnography of loyalist youth culture, makes a similar argument, noting that in much of the discourse about young people in Northern Ireland "the issue of sectarianism has been reduced to one of personal prejudice and aberrant cognitions", occluding the "penetration of sectarian modes of experience into the routinized practice of everyday life in Ulster".¹³ In this sense, then, the first level of articulation at which sectarianism operates is institutional and structural.

While accepting McVeigh's important argument that the state is the locus from which sectarianism is articulated, it is also important – as the four sections on institutions below will suggest – to acknowledge the role of non-state structures in the production and

1996); Bruce, Steve, *God Save Ulster! The Religion and Politics of Paisleyism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

¹⁰ McVeigh, Robbie, 'The Undertheorisation of Sectarianism', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 16, no.2 (December 1990), p121; see also McVeigh, Robbie, *Sectarianism in Northern Ireland: Towards a Definition in Law* (Belfast: Equality Coalition, 2014) and McVeigh, Robbie, 'Cherishing the Children of the Nation Unequally: Sectarianism in Ireland', pp620-652, in *Irish Society: Sociological Perspectives*, Clancy, Patrick, Sheelagh Drudy, Kathleen Lynch and Liam O'Dowd (eds.) (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1995).

¹¹ *Ibid*, p122.

¹² McVeigh, Robbie and Bill Rolston, 'From Good Friday to Good Relations: Sectarianism, Racism and the Northern Ireland State', *Race & Class* 48, no. 4 (1 April 2007), p5.

¹³ Bell, Desmond, *Acts of Union: Youth Culture and Sectarianism in Northern Ireland* (London: Macmillan Education, 1990), p48.

maintenance of sectarian identities. Both the Catholic and the Protestant church systems, for instance, are connected to but not reducible to the state.

Additionally, insisting upon this structural understanding of sectarianism must not elide the fact that “sectarianism is the modality in which life is lived by everybody in the Six Counties”, as McVeigh argues – structures form identities and experiences, they are felt and embodied, and this everyday and subjective level of articulation is important for my analysis of the culture of division apparent in my interviewees accounts of life in the province. The second level of articulation of sectarianism is described by Sugden and Bairner as “a symbolic labelling process through which community divisions are defined and maintained, [providing] an ideological justification for discrimination, community conflict and political violence”.¹⁴ Frank Burton, in his anthropological study of ‘Anro’ or the Ardoyne area of Belfast, gives a good example of one of the manifestations of this process, which he calls telling. Telling – ascertaining whether an interlocutor is Protestant or Catholic based on verbal and non-verbal cues – “furnishes an insight into the nature and depth of a riven society by illuminating the centrality of difference as a typical mode of thought”.¹⁵ The use made of these “semiological clues” does not mean that the differences they rely on are based in fact, but that a series of historical and material conditions have marked the social constructions of self and other with what Burton calls, in a nice phrase, “the sediment of history”.¹⁶ This is an articulation that recalls what David Cairns has described as “the mundane everyday reality of sectarianism within the two rival communities”, one that he situates for the Protestant community as existing in the fields of Orangeism, sport and popular culture.¹⁷ This is sectarianism as “a lived relationship defined by inequalities of power”, to recontextualise Selina Todd’s description of the relationship between class and experience in Britain.¹⁸

¹⁴ Sugden, John and Alan Bairner, *Sport, Sectarianism and Society in a Divided Ireland* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993).

¹⁵ Burton, Frank, *The Politics of Legitimacy: Struggles in a Belfast Community* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p37.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p49.

¹⁷ Cairns, David, ‘The Object of Sectarianism: The Material Reality of Sectarianism in Ulster Loyalism’, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, no. 3 (2000), pp437–452; see also Brewer, John D, and Gareth I Higgins, ‘Understanding Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland’, *Sociology* 33, no. 2 (1 May 1999), pp235–55, for an account of anti-Catholicism as a discursive formation.

¹⁸ Todd, Selina, ‘Class, Experience and Britain’s Twentieth Century’. *Social History* 39, no. 4 (2 October 2014), p501.

To reiterate, sectarianism will be understood here as a doubly-articulated process in Northern Irish culture that generates a sense of difference between Protestants and Catholics. The picture is not one of a “simple immutable Catholic-Protestant dichotomy”.¹⁹ But it is one in which the structure of institutions and the structure of society work together to generate a set of material and symbolic conditions that separate the two communities, conditions that are then expressed and engaged with on the level of everyday life.

These two functions of sectarianism are doubly-articulated: they are a set of processes that work together to generate the social conditions of life in Northern Ireland.²⁰ This allows us, hopefully, to stay with Cairns’ useful suggestion that sectarianism can be understood as a discursive formation that shapes the “dichotomised social relations of two religiously labelled communities”, while still holding on to the critical insight of Rolston and McVeigh in situating the institutions of the state as formative of sectarianism, and avoiding an account of sectarianism as something equally dispersed between both communities.²¹ An example of how this process works can be seen in Eamonn McCann’s classic account of the start of the conflict in Northern Ireland, *War and an Irish Town*, first published in 1974.

Life in an Irish town?

Drawing on McCann’s text may seem like a wrong turn, given that it is concerned with the social and cultural world of Catholic Derry rather than Belfast, but it is significant due to the striking affinity between the opening pages of this text and the first two paragraphs of Williams’ essay. Like Williams, McCann describes the structuring institutions of his childhood in the Bogside, a working-class, Catholic community.²² He identifies education,

¹⁹ Darby, John, *Intimidation and the Control of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1986), p26.

²⁰ For an account of double articulation as a way of understanding social processes see DeLanda, Manuel, *Deleuze: History and Science* (New York: Atropos Press, 2010), especially pp29-51; the original usage is from Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guatarri, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 [1980]).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p439.

²² McCann, Eamonn, *War and an Irish Town* (London: Pluto Press, 1993). Here, as throughout, I am using Catholic (and Protestant) to refer to the communities in general; if referring to a specific political position

leisure (Gaelic lessons, hurling), the state (mainly encountered via the Royal Ulster Constabulary or RUC in his account), formal political participation, the family, the church and the media as formative institutions. He also suggests some other important sites less easily-encapsulated under one institutional umbrella – the symbolic practices of commemoration that mark out space in Northern Ireland, such as parades, and Catholic consciousness of the Protestant community as privileged in terms of access to social housing and employment. How do these institutions work to produce a sectarianised way of life in McCann’s brief account?

First, there is his all-Catholic education, in which he learned “that Christ died for the human race and Patrick Pearse for the Irish section of it” – this initiation into the politics of romantic nationalism and Catholicism occurred both in the family and the school, McCann suggests.²³ Secondly, there are Gaelic lessons and hurling classes, both of which were interrupted in 1957 during the Irish Republican Army’s (IRA’s) border campaign when the local man running them was arrested without trial for seven months – gesturing to an important third institution in the formation of identity in Northern Ireland, the police, who in this narrative represent a state structure that systematically discriminated against its minority Catholic population through the 1922 Special Powers Act that made internment without trial possible.²⁴ The fourth institution named by McCann is that of formal politics, an arena in which the Nationalist Party was inextricably bound up with the Catholic Church – he notes wryly that “the fear that it was quite possibly sinful to vote against the Nationalist Party was quite real”, foreshadowing his enthusiastic apostasy against political norms in the province.²⁵

The fifth institution is the church itself, which for him is particularly manifest in the role it plays in determining the curriculum at his school, St Columbs. Sixth, there is the local Catholic paper, the *Derry Journal* (as opposed to the local Protestant paper, the *Londonderry Sentinel*). His experience of all of these formative institutions is tied up in other, more diffuse awarenesses and interactions – seeing Protestants march every year

I will use either unionist, loyalist, nationalist or republican, with the gradations in position and praxis those terms imply.

²³ *Ibid.*, p65. Patrick or Padraig Pearse is a republican icon who was executed for his role in the Easter 1916 rising, which has a particular mythic resonance for Irish republican collective memory.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p67; for a more detailed account of the Special Powers Act, see chapter two.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p68.

on the 12th of August to commemorate the Siege of Derry;²⁶ noticing the high rates of unemployment in the Bogside, as compared to the relatively prosperous, Protestant parts of the city; living in cramped, dangerous slum housing.²⁷ Summing up, McCann says: “Ours was a teeming, crumbling area of ugly, tiny, terrace houses, mean streets where men stood in sullen groups at the corner while their wives went out to work and children skipped to songs of sullen hatred.”²⁸

McCann’s account of his experiences as a child and young person in the Bogside are not necessarily being held up as representative here. For one thing, Derry was very different from Belfast; for another, as alluded to above, the narrative he is producing entails a particular teleology in terms of his own political career, one which is predicated on his description of the stifling influence of Catholicism in ensuring that “no revolutionary ferment” arose in the area before 1968.²⁹ And, clearly, he is describing a Catholic childhood rather than a Protestant one, and a working-class one rather than a middle-class one. Finally, this is a young man’s childhood rather than a young woman’s. But we can perceive the outlines of a framework of identity formation here, of culture as a way of life that is formed discursively and materially by encountering a series of structures and institutions, some more easily-described than others.

That is, as well as a taxonomy of institutions, this account offers a way of thinking about the process of double articulation in relation to sectarianised culture in Northern Ireland. At the level of the state and of structural sectarianism, McCann describes the discrimination of the RUC against the minority Catholic population, and the uneven patterns of unemployment and access to housing that characterised life in Derry; at the level of everyday life and subjectivity he describes how this is formative of a particular set of behaviours, attitudes and identifications within the culture of his community. This is not to make a deterministic or essentialist point about the relationship between culture

²⁶ The Siege of Derry, a 1689 engagement in the Williamite Wars in Ireland, has a mythic resonance for Northern Irish unionist and loyalist culture, and its annual commemoration has been the catalyst for many riots in the city. See Bardon, Jonathan, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1992), p157; on the politics of commemoration in Northern Ireland see Jarman, Neil, *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Berg, 1997).

²⁷ McCann, *War*, p81.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*; see Prince, Simon, ‘The Global Revolt of 1968 and Northern Ireland’, *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (2006), pp851-875.

and identity. After all, McCann's own career as a Marxist writer and activist and somewhat heterodox republican is testament to the manifold ways in which individuals can make sense of their social and cultural world in forming a self. As Williams points out in *Culture is Ordinary*, culture is not straight-forwardly didactic – racist newspapers do not necessarily make racist readers, for instance.³⁰

But what is clear from this brief passage is, firstly, the spatial segregation of Northern Irish society, both in terms of residential geographies and the separation of Protestants and Catholics in education and work; secondly, the different and uneven relationship with the state felt and experienced by Protestants and Catholics; thirdly, the role this plays in creating an ordinary culture of division in which identity is formed.³¹ The question of spatial segregation is crucial here; this chapter will focus mainly on the segregation of institutions rather than the segregation of space as such, which will be dealt with in the following chapter. But in moving to Belfast rather than the Bogside of Derry, it is important to note that in the period I am most concerned with (the mid-1970s to mid-1980s) the city was spatially divided along ethno-sectarian lines; so in 1972, for instance, 71 per cent of Protestant households in Belfast were in streets that were almost exclusively Protestant, and 66 per cent of Catholic households aligned to the same pattern.³² The history and the causes of this segregation will be detailed in chapter two. For now it is simply important to bear in mind that institutions are not free-floating sites that individuals dissolve into and emerge from, but geographical spaces that are interconnected with other networks and infrastructures and thus implicated in the “[patterns of] sectarianised immobility and the repetitive geography of territorial disputation” that characterised urban Belfast.³³ To take an extreme example from recent Northern Irish history, the Holy Cross dispute in 2001 in which Catholic schoolchildren in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast were forced to cross an aggressive loyalist blockade at the gates of the institution in order to go to class is indicative of how institutions and

³⁰ Williams, *Resources of Hope*, p99.

³¹ For an interesting account of how Williams' text can be used to understand racialized culture in Britain, see Lewis, Gail, 'Racialising Culture is Ordinary', *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 6 (1 November 2007), pp866–886.

³² Boal, Fred, 'Ethnic Residential Segregation, Ethnic Mixing and Resource Conflict: A Study in Belfast, Northern Ireland', in Peach, Ceri, Vaughan Robinson and Susan Smith (eds.), *Ethnic Segregation in Cities* (London: Croom Helm, 1981).

³³ Shirlow, Peter and Brendan Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), p10.

experiences of institutions are intimately connected to questions of segregation and space as well as to questions of sectarianism.³⁴

The following four sections will consider the roles of sites of identity formation in Belfast, concentrating particularly on education, work, religion and leisure. This account will also delineate the “co-existence of normality and abnormality in such a small space” that John Darby identified as one of the characteristics of the conflict in Northern Ireland, an interplay that is unavoidable when describing the conditions of everyday life for young people during the 1970s and 1980s.³⁵ Darby’s point has ramifications for this introduction to institutions and sectarianism. In giving this schematic account it is important to bear in mind that young people’s experiences of the conflict in Northern Ireland exist across a wide spectrum, with each pole representing radically different encounters with violence, sectarianism and the state. Presenting a social history of institutions (rather than a history of experiences) means the needle will gravitate towards the middle of this spectrum throughout this initial chapter, although young people’s experiences of violence during the conflict will be discussed below.

School, university and forms of division

The post-war social contract had a major impact on Northern Ireland in the form of the Education (NI) Act in 1947, which reshaped the educational landscape and made secondary and tertiary schooling accessible to those from poorer communities – often meaning Catholics.³⁶ But the structuring and management of Northern Irish education remained a contentious issue. The debate on education had two sides. Firstly, that of selection. Unlike in England, where compulsory academic selection ended in 1965, Northern Ireland retained a national process of academic selection whereby students were assessed at the age of eleven and then placed into either a grammar school or a non-

³⁴ Ashe, Fidelma, ‘Gendering Ethno-Nationalist Conflict in Northern Ireland: A Comparative Analysis of Nationalist Women’s Political Protests’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 5 (1 September 2007), pp766–786.

³⁵ Darby, *Intimidation*, p1

³⁶ Farren, Sean, ‘A Lost Opportunity: Education and Community in Northern Ireland 1947-1960’, *History of Education* 21, no. 1 (1 March 1992), pp71–82.

grammar school, depending on their performance in the exam.³⁷ Secondly, that of segregation. Until 1981, when Lagan College opened, all schooling in Northern Ireland was semi-officially segregated along religious lines;³⁸ Lagan's opening marked the apotheosis of an anti-segregation campaign that began in the mid-70s with the All Children Together (ACT) campaign for integration in secondary education.³⁹ State schools, while officially non-denominational, were dominated by Protestants in terms of students and staff; Catholic schools, "which enjoyed an extremely close relationship with the Church", were where the vast majority of young Catholics were educated.⁴⁰ Prior to the attempts at reform that began in the early 1970s, the separation of Catholic schools from the state education system was pronounced – Terence O'Neill, prime minister of Northern Ireland from 1963 to 1969, boasts in his autobiography of being the first holder of that office to publicly visit a Catholic school, in 1964.⁴¹

In terms of the way in which young people's social and cultural identities were formed via these institutions, the physical separation of Catholics and Protestants is important; however, we also need to be attentive to issues of class, which often cut across the sectarian divide in that quality and manner of education were determined through class position more so than through ethno-sectarian position.⁴² Some grammar schools extracted fees from the family of students, and others did not, creating an obvious class split; a less obvious but more widespread issue comes with the nature of selection itself,

³⁷ Manning, Alan and Jörn-Steffen Pischke, *Comprehensive Versus Selective Schooling in England and Wales: What Do We Know?* (London: London School of Economics, 2006), p1; the localisation of education policy in England means that the comprehensive system was never integrated universally across the country, meaning selection was (and indeed is) retained in some areas.

³⁸ The Belfast punk band Ruefrefx, known for their political sloganeering and especially for the 1985 single *Wild Colonial Boy*, a caustic attack on Irish-American support for republican violence, played a benefit gig for Lagan College in the mid-80s as part of their wider attempt to address issues of sectarianism. See Campbell, Sean and Gerry Smyth, 'From Shellshock Rock to Ceasefire Sounds: Popular Music', in Coulter, Colin and Michael Murray (eds.), *Northern Ireland After the Troubles: A Society in Transition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p243.

³⁹ Bardon, Jonathan, *The Struggle for Shared Schools in Northern Ireland: The History of All Children Together* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2009).

⁴⁰ Simpson, Kirk, and Peter Daly, 'Politics and Education in Northern Ireland—an Analytical History', *Irish Studies Review* 12, no. 2 (1 August 2004), pp163–174.

⁴¹ O'Neill, Terence, *The Autobiography of Terence O'Neill: Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, 1963-1969* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1972), p59. O'Neill also bemoans the fact that a canny press photographer used a telescopic lens to produce an image in which the crucifix above the school, in Ballymoney, loomed ominously over his head.

⁴² This point is made well by Seamus Dunn. See Dunn, Seamus, 'The Role of Education in the Northern Ireland Conflict', *Oxford Review of Education* 12, no. 3 (1986), pp233–242.

which tended to reinforce privilege across the spectrums of class and religion.⁴³ The role of class within the education system will be particularly apparent in Gareth's interview in chapter five.

As McCann jocularly suggests in naming Christ and Patrick Pearse as the totemic figures of his educational curriculum, schools also had a wide remit in what they taught and how they taught it, at least up until further reforms to the system in 1989.⁴⁴ In terms of history lessons, for example, the key dates and overall narratives of Northern Irish, Irish and British history differed a great deal from school to school – an important point given the “emotionally charged uses of history in Northern Ireland”.⁴⁵ Returning to Williams' notion of culture as a lived and communal experience, it seems apparent that this early introduction to the historical parameters of the culture in which young people were living already reflected the division between Protestants and Catholics.⁴⁶ Alison Farrell's interview in chapter four will develop the way in which this division functioned in her early experiences of education in Dungannon.

Here, then, we have a system of education fragmented along lines of class, religion and gender from the age of eleven onwards.⁴⁷ In a 1993 pamphlet on the continued problems of education in Northern Ireland as they relate to social division, the pro-integration campaigner and teacher Seamus Dunn argues that “it is suspected that the range of forms of separation [in Northern Ireland] by religion, by sex and by ability – that is social class

⁴³ Leitch, Ruth, Joanne Hughes, Stephanie Burns, Erik Cownie, Cathal McManus, Michael Levers and Ian Shuttleworth, *Investigating Links in Achievement and Deprivation* (Belfast: The Centre for Shared Education, Queen's University Belfast, 2017).

⁴⁴ Greer, John E, 'Education Reform in Northern Ireland: The Place of Religious Education and Worship in Schools', *British Journal of Religious Education* 13, no. 3 (1 June 1991), pp190–198.

⁴⁵ Barton, Keith C., and Alan W. McCully, 'History, Identity, and the School Curriculum in Northern Ireland: An Empirical Study of Secondary Students' Ideas and Perspectives', *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 37, no. 1 (1 January 2005), pp85–116; see also Brocklehurst, Helen, *Who's Afraid of Children? Children, Conflict and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁶ Aretxaga, Begoña, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁴⁷ Primary schools were also segregated along religious lines, but given the focus on adolescence here my account will concentrate on secondary schooling and university. However, some research has suggested that the formation of sectarian identities is visible among primary school-aged children. See Cairns, Ed, Dale Hunter, and Linda Herring, 'Young Children's Awareness of Violence in Northern Ireland: The Influence of Northern Irish Television in Scotland and Northern Ireland', *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19, no. 1 (February 1980), pp3–6; Connolly, Paul, Alan Smith and Berni Kelly, *Too Young to Notice? The Cultural and Political Awareness of 3-6 Year Olds in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Community Relations Council, 2002).

– might have something to do with the fact that this society is patriarchal, hierarchical, conservative and male-dominated”.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the structure of the education system and its associated legislation only gives us a somewhat skeletal understanding of the experience of being educated in that system. As anthropological work on Belfast children’s play during and outside of school suggests, the processes of identity formation at work in these environments were the product of a complex range of forces, brought together by the propinquity of the young people themselves, and suggestive of the ways in which their interactions shaped their sense of the social and cultural world around them.⁴⁹ Going to and from school could entail the negotiation of sectarian boundaries and potential encounters with violence, especially for children living in areas where Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods intersected; Anthony Bailey’s 1974 *New Yorker* article about schoolchildren on the Oldpark Road posits that “a good proportion of the children are already at home in the midst of violence, illness and cruelty”.⁵⁰

The Education (NI) Act in 1947 also shaped university education, and it has become commonplace to note that many of the central republican, nationalist and socialist figures in the post-1968 conflict were beneficiaries of the new system.⁵¹ There were two universities in Northern Ireland by the 1970s, Queen’s University Belfast and the New University of Ulster in Coleraine, which opened in 1968. From 1970 to 1980 there were roughly 8,000 students in higher education in Northern Ireland each year, with around two-thirds of these studying at Queen’s, and the remainder at the University of Ulster.⁵² The former is more important in terms of the punk scene, providing a space for gigs at the McMordie Hall; the latter is interesting in terms of the sectarian structuring of the state. In 1963, the Lockwood committee decided that a new university was essential to

⁴⁸ Dunn, Seamus, *The Common School* (Coleraine: University of Ulster, 1993), accessed online 25/1/18 [here](#).

⁴⁹ Lanchlos, Donna M, *At Play in Belfast: Children’s Folklore and Identities in Northern Ireland* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003); for a somewhat less critical rendering of a similar theme that attracted some controversy at the time of its publication see Fields, Rona M, *A Society on the Run: A Psychology of Northern Ireland* (London: Penguin Education, 1973).

⁵⁰ Bailey, Anthony, *Acts of Union* (London: Faber, 1980), p23.

⁵¹ Prince, Simon, ‘The Global Revolt of 1968...’, 2006, p852. This was also the conclusion of the *Cameron Report* on the disturbances of 1969; however, some commentators have noted that while this might identify the immediate source of civil rights agitation, it hardly explains its “irreversible momentum among the Catholic population at large”. See Bew, Paul, Henry Patterson and Peter Gibbon, *The State in Northern Ireland 1921-1971: Political Forces and Social Classes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979), p166.

⁵² *The Chilver Report: A New University of Ulster Comments* (London: HMSO, 1982); the University of Ulster merged with Ulster Polytechnic in 1984.

meet demand in Northern Ireland, and proposed four possible locations – Armagh City, Coleraine, Derry and the new town of Craigavon, near Portadown.⁵³ When Coleraine was chosen as the site, a cavalcade of protestors marched from Derry to Belfast to object to what they regarded as the discriminatory decision to place the new university in the majority-Protestant town of Coleraine rather than in Derry, the second-largest city in the province and home to a sizeable Catholic population. While Gerard O’Brien’s forensic 1999 account of the controversy makes a convincing case that the decision was in line with standard British decisions on university placement (rather than the product of a deliberate or conspiratorial unionist decision to exclude the north-west), the protests are further evidence that the education of young people was a site of considerable struggle throughout the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁴

Moving to Queen’s, which was to host a number of major punk gigs, notably the Clash in 1977, it is possible to get a sense of the uneven and complicated ways in which sectarianism percolated through institutions and dissolved into social experience. The number of Catholic students at the university increased from around 20 per cent in the immediate post-war years to around 50 per cent by the end of the 1980s.⁵⁵ In the late 1960s, it became an organisational hub for the nascent civil rights movement and its offshoot, People’s Democracy, although Bernadette Devlin – one of the central figures in the latter organisation – retained mixed feelings about the middle-class radicalism she encountered while studying there.⁵⁶ And while segregation was not an institutional feature of university life as it was at secondary school, first-hand accounts suggest that the social world of Queen’s was largely shaped along the familiar contours of Northern Irish society, with Protestants socialising mainly with Protestants and vice versa, and the hegemonic symbolic and educational culture a unionist one.⁵⁷

⁵³ O’Brien, Gerard, “‘Our Magee Problem’: Stormont and the Second University’, in O’Brien, Gerard, (ed.), *Derry and Londonderry: History and Society* (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1999).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Clarkson, LA, *A University in Troubled Times: Queen’s Belfast, 1945-2000* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), p132.

⁵⁶ Many of the students gave Devlin the impression that “they didn’t really care what went on outside the university, so long as they had something to talk about”. Devlin, Bernadette, *The Price of My Soul* (London: Pan Books, 1969), p76.

⁵⁷ See for instance Jentry, Corey, *The trouble with studying the Troubles: how and why an epistemic community emerges*, unpublished PhD thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), 2017; Goldring, Maurice, *Belfast: From Loyalty to Rebellion* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1991), especially pp148-149; for a highly technical account of ‘hidden prejudice’ or more accurately of the division of the student body into broad Protestant and Catholic groupings in Queen’s, see Niens, Ulrike, Ed

Employment, segregation and sectarianism

For many young people and especially those from working-class backgrounds, leaving secondary education led to either work or unemployment, rather than university. By 1979, for every ten unemployed men there was one school leaver (meaning someone who had left school in 1979) also without a job; in their 1983 survey of discrimination and employment in Belfast, Cormack and Osborne conclude that:

For these boys, predominately from working-class homes, and regardless of religion, the opportunities available to them were diminishing. Their 'life chances', in the sociological sense of a working career and associated opportunities stretching out in front of them, were perhaps even worse than those of their fathers; and in Northern Ireland, such prospects would have to be thought of as dismal.⁵⁸

As in the rest of the UK, economic depression, the absence of jobs and the concomitant social effects of these conditions need to be understood as part of the backdrop of the punk scene; in Northern Ireland, constraints on mobility and the impact of sedimented patterns of disadvantage and segregation – rather than active sectarian discrimination, although this was also an occasional factor – had a further effect on the way in which young people encountered work or its absence.⁵⁹ As Aunger's analysis of 1971 census data shows, women made up only a third of those in employment in this period, although more Catholic women worked than their Protestant counterparts; there was a small increase in these figures by 1981, but young women leaving school remained less likely to go into work than their male compatriots.⁶⁰ It is worth noting, finally, that for many working-class young people, part-time jobs – many of which are invisible to census

Cairns, and Suzanne Bishop, 'Prejudiced or Not? Hidden Sectarianism Among Students in Northern Ireland', *The Journal of Social Psychology* 144, no. 2 (1 April 2004), pp163–180.

⁵⁸ Cormack, RJ and RD Osborne, 'The Belfast Study: Into Work in Belfast', in Cormack, RJ (ed.), *Religion, Education and Employment* (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1983), p149.

⁵⁹Ibid., Cormack, RJ and RD Osborne, 'Conclusion', p229.

⁶⁰ Aunger, EA, 'Religion and occupational class in Northern Ireland', *Economic and Social Review*, 7 (1), (1975), pp1-18.

records – took on a central role in their lives prior to the official school leaving age of 16.⁶¹ As Madeline Leonard has shown, an over-reliance on official data also tends to elide the role of women in informal economies of labour.⁶²

Young people’s sense of Northern Ireland as a divided culture was also related to the employment of their parents, as McCann’s account above suggests; for Williams too, “the steel-rolling mill, the gasworks ... the pitheads” are key images in his landscape of working-class life on the Welsh borders, and the gap between his father’s working life and his was a life-long source of anxiety.⁶³ Belfast in the 1970s and 1980s had experienced a sharp post-war industrial decline; at the beginning of the 1950s, linen and shipbuilding contributed one-third of all manufacturing jobs between them, but industrial employment declined sharply through the 1960s and into the 1970s, offset by an increase in jobs in the service industry. Between 1973 and 1991, the number of workers in manufacturing dropped from 67,000 to 18,000, and major employers such as Harland & Wolff, Mackie’s and Shorts Brothers had become reliant on British subsidies to survive; all of these employers traditionally employed the Protestant rather than Catholic working-class.⁶⁴ The service industry expanded from the 1970s onwards, although it is difficult to map occupational change over time with any degree of accuracy because employment categories change from census to census; Shorts remained the largest non-government employer in 1988 with a workforce of 7,800.⁶⁵

From 1972 onwards under direct rule from Westminster, a huge expansion in public sector employment partially alleviated some of these job losses, although Borooah suggests this largely benefited the middle rather than working-classes of both communities; between 1970 and 1974, public sector employment rose by 40 per cent.⁶⁶

⁶¹ McManus, Cathal, “‘Bound in Darkness and Idolatry’? Protestant Working-Class Underachievement and Unionist Hegemony”, *Irish Studies Review* 23, no. 1 (2 January 2015), pp48–67.

⁶² Leonard, Madeline, ‘Women and Informal Economic Activity in Belfast’, pp235-250, in *Irish Society: Sociological Perspectives*, Clancy, Patrick, Sheelagh Drudy, Kathleen Lynch and Liam O’Dowd (eds.) (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1995)

⁶³ Williams, *Resources of Hope*, p93.

⁶⁴ Plöger, Jörg, *Belfast City Report* (London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, 2007), pp9-10.

⁶⁵ Gregory, Ian N., Niall A. Cunningham, CD Lloyd, Ian G. Shuttleworth and Paul S. Ell, *Troubled Geographies: A Spatial History of Religion and Society in Ireland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), p211; Goldring, *Belfast*, p43.

⁶⁶ Borooah, Vani K., ‘Growth and Political Violence in Northern Ireland, 1920-96’, in Borner, Silvio and Paldam, Martin (eds.), *The Political Dimension of Economic Growth* (London: Macmillan, 1998)

Unemployment in Belfast peaked at 17 per cent in 1987, but was unevenly distributed across the city – for instance, in parts of west Belfast almost 40 per cent of the working population was unemployed in this period.⁶⁷

In terms of segregation and sectarianism, a raft of mid-70s legislation aimed at reducing discrimination in unemployment had little effect, with Catholic male unemployment remaining at 35 per cent (nationally) in 1987 – two-and-a-half times that of their Protestant counterparts.⁶⁸ According to Osborne and Cormack, indirect discrimination – so, for instance, advertising for workers in newspapers read near-exclusively by Protestants – remained an issue well into the 1980s, despite the launch in 1976 of the Fair Employment Agency aimed at dealing with workplace discrimination.⁶⁹ In this sense, young people’s encounters with the sectarianised structure of everyday life were conditioned through their encounters with the post-industrial employment landscape of Belfast, either by trying to get a job themselves or through the employment status of their parents. This aspect of youth experience will be considered in more depth in the sixth chapter’s account of the Thatcherite policies (slightly blunted in the context of Northern Ireland’s reliance on public sector employment) applied to the city in the 1980s and the impact these had on Petesy Burns’ attempts to run an anarchist social centre in what is now the Cathedral Quarter. Matt Worley’s efforts to historicise Oi!, a subset of punk music that emerged in the early 1980s, as “both a reflection of and response to” structural changes in the British economy, are helpful here – “class and locality, rather than formal politics or ideology, served as the prism through which the prevailing concerns of Oi! were viewed and understood,” he argues.⁷⁰

A consideration of the broad economic conditions of Belfast in the 1970s and 1980s is informative because it allows us to think about the punk scene as embedded in and responding to these structures, which are formative of sectarian culture and division but also the product of global economic shifts and changes in the British political landscape

⁶⁷ Plöger, *Belfast City Report*, 2007, p11.

⁶⁸ McCrudden, Christopher, ‘The Northern Ireland Fair Employment White Paper: A Critical Assessment’. *Industrial Law Journal* 17, no. 1 (1 January 1988), pp162–181.

⁶⁹ Cormack, RJ and RD Osborne, ‘Unemployment and Religion in Northern Ireland’, *The Economic and Social Review*, Vol 17, no.3 (April 1986), pp215-225.

⁷⁰ Worley, Matthew, ‘Oi! Oi! Oi!: Class, Locality, and British Punk’, *Twentieth Century British History* 24, no. 4 (1 December 2013), pp606–36.

such as the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979. As the following section will suggest, a similarly wide lens is helpful in thinking about the role of religion as an institutional site.

Churches and religious encounters

Richard Rose's 1968 *Loyalty Study*, surveying 757 Protestants and 534 Catholics, found that 99 per cent of respondents identified themselves as religious, with the Protestants split into various sects – Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Free Presbyterian, and a minority of more esoteric Protestant sub-categories.⁷¹ This reflects a society in which, whatever the meaning encapsulated by religious identification entails in a subjective or philosophical sense, choice of church was a socially meaningful label with material consequences.⁷² This section will consider the ways in which young people would have encountered religious institutions in their everyday lives, both as social spaces and as putative moral arbiters. Writing recently about Ireland in the 1970s, Carole Holohan has posited that “anxieties about societal change surfaced in debates about young people” in this period, driven by “fears that traditional moral values would be undermined by a youth culture that had urban and international roots”.⁷³ While the picture in Northern Ireland is more complex given the differently adversarial role of religious identity in the province, one facet of the structure of feeling within the punk scene can be understood as a rejection of traditionalism as well as, or even instead of, a rejection of sectarianism as such. The role of the churches as traditional institutions is therefore worth considering here.

As already discussed, the church had a major role in the shaping of education in the province; it also provided a number of youth clubs and organisations, discussed below.⁷⁴ In terms of formal church attendance, Northern Ireland has consistently ranked higher

⁷¹ Rose, Richard, *Governing Without Consensus: An Irish Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971)

⁷² See Bell, John, *For God, Ulster, or Ireland? Religion, Identity and Security in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Institute for Conflict Research, 2013), pp17-35, for a useful overview of the literature on religious identification in Northern Ireland.

⁷³ Holohan, Carole, ‘Challenges to social order and Irish identity? Youth culture in the sixties’, *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. 38, no. 151 (2013) pp389-405.

⁷⁴ See Elliott, Marianne, *The Catholics of Ulster: A History* (London: Penguin, 2000) for a comprehensive account of the role of the Catholic church in Ulster both before and after partition.

than other regions of the United Kingdom, and Catholics in Northern Ireland attended mass more frequently than their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland. This is in some ways a rather crude metric, not least because religion as a form of cultural knowledge can leave a heavy residue on societies and individuals even as its tangible accoutrements disappear or are discarded.⁷⁵ Perhaps this dispersal of residual cultural knowledge is the most prominent role played by both Protestant and Catholic churches in young people's lives in the 1970s and 1980s. This also brings another key institutional site, that of the family, into focus.

In John Bell's 2013 ethnography of religious practices in Northern Ireland, his interviewees recall a familial desire to ground them in their different religious backgrounds, even within families that were not ostentatiously or notably religious. They describe being sent to Sunday school, the Boys' Brigade, and the Girl's Friendly Society (Protestant organisations) and Mass or the Novena (for Catholic respondents), even if their families were not regular church attendees.⁷⁶ Strikingly, though, for working-class Belfast Protestants something of a divide opened up in the 1970s between them and mainstream Protestant churches; a similar dynamic does not exist for working-class Catholics and their church, although a parallel could be drawn with the critical attitude of self-identified republicans towards institutional Catholicism.⁷⁷ This critical attitude was also shared by those who felt the church's position during the conflict was either hypocritical or excessively ecumenical in its attitude towards the Catholic working-class.⁷⁸

If we allow for the moment an artificial separation between the churches' diffuse spheres of influence (youth clubs, education) and their direct sphere of influence, they are relevant to the everyday culture of young people in two ways. Firstly, in Claire Mitchell's suggestive formulation, religion formed "a kind of cultural reservoir from which categorizations of self and other [were] derived".⁷⁹ That is, they were generative of a

⁷⁵ Mitchell, Claire, *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁷⁶ Bell, *For God*, pp40-42.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp64-71.

⁷⁸ See, for instance, Falls Think Tank, *Ourselves Alone? Voices from Belfast's Nationalist Working-Class* (Newtownabbey: Island Pamphlets, 1996), pp12-13.

⁷⁹ Mitchell, *Religion, Identity and Politics*, 2017, p15.

cultural imaginary of Protestantism or Catholicism which inculcated an awareness of sectarian difference, even when – as was the case throughout the conflict – they urged church attendees to forego the violent politics of sectarian difference. The epiphanic moment of identification with the punk scene entailed some kind of movement within this cultural imaginary, as will be discussed below.

This takes us to the second way in which the churches are relevant. If religion as dispersed through the influence of the church created a cultural reservoir, this encouraged young people to draw not only on sectarian difference, but also on tradition, understood as a kind of institutional anchor within everyday life “used to make sense of, and cope with, political and structural conditions”.⁸⁰ As in Holohan’s account of the tension between youth culture and the Catholic church in the Republic of Ireland, there is a manifest tension between punk’s self-professed commitment to the demolishing of tradition and this anchoring tendency.⁸¹ Frances Stewart has argued that the punk scene in Northern Ireland should be understood under the rubric of “the spontaneous or organic approaches to peace-building that take place within and between the Protestant and Catholic communities”; while I have some reservations about this approach, which tends to construct punk as somehow existing outside of the material and social conditions in which it was formed, her account does have the useful effect of placing punk as a cultural form squarely within the religious dimensions of the conflict in Northern Ireland.⁸² Punk’s rejection of tradition was also a way for young people to come to terms with the aspects of religion that did not directly relate to the relationship between Protestants and Catholics, but entailed more general prohibitions on sexuality, respectability and lifestyle; this will be considered in more detail in the analysis of interviews, below.⁸³ It is striking, for instance, that in a 1991 attitudinal survey of church-

⁸⁰ Ibid, p139.

⁸¹ Robinson, Lucy, ‘Exhibition Review Punk’s 40th Anniversary—An Itchy Sort of Heritage’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 7 September 2017.

⁸² Stewart, Francis, “‘Alternative Ulster’: Punk Rock as a Means of Overcoming the Religious Divide in Northern Ireland”, pp76-90, in *Irish Religious Conflict in Comparative Perspective: Catholics, Protestants and Muslims*, Wolfe, John (ed.) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); see also Stewart, Francis, *Punk Rock is My Religion: Straight Edge Punk and ‘Religious’ Identity* (London: Routledge, 2017).

⁸³ For an account of the relationship of the church to queer sexualities in Northern Ireland see Duggan, Marie, *Queering Conflict: Examining Lesbian and Gay Experiences of Homophobia in Northern Ireland* (London: Routledge, 2016).

goers in Belfast, both Protestants and Catholics were found to inhabit “a broadly similar moral universe” in terms their repudiation of both pre-marital sex and homosexuality.⁸⁴

Sport, youth clubs and managing the young

What young people did outside of the closely-connected institutions of the education system and the churches is, because of its variousness and transience, both of particular interest to this account and rather more difficult to turn into history. Some immediate routes are visible. Sport in Northern Ireland was entangled in the politics of communal division and sectarianism, both at a national and a grassroots level.⁸⁵ Involvement in the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), despite the organisation’s officially apolitical stance, entailed an engagement with the politics of nationalism; given the tendency of the police and the army to treat GAA members with suspicion and sometimes violence, it could also entail a blunt reminder of the sectarian management of space in the province.⁸⁶ While sports such as hockey and cricket may not have entailed the explicit signification of identity that marked out hurling and camogie players as Catholic, for historical and social reasons they tended to attract mostly Protestant youths; rugby, while ostensibly offering a rare example of an unsegregated social space for young people, was near-exclusively the preserve of the middle-classes and those who felt comfortable with the mores of British culture. As John Darby suggests in an overview of the anthropological literature on Northern Ireland, “social mixing across the religious divide was almost entirely confined to middle-class settings – golf and tennis clubs, formal dances – where a superordinate goal or interest cut across religious barriers”.⁸⁷ Rugby and rugby clubs would fit into this category.

⁸⁴ Boal W., Frederick, Margaret C. Keane and David N. Livingstone, *Them and Us? Attitudinal Variation Among Churchgoers in Belfast* (Belfast: The Institute of Irish Studies, 1997), p150.

⁸⁵ Sugden, John and Alan Bairner, *Sport, Sectarianism and Society in a Divided Ireland*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993); see also Bairner, Alan, ‘Soccer, Masculinity, and Violence in Northern Ireland: Between Hooliganism and Terrorism’, *Men and Masculinities* 1, no. 3 (1 January 1999), pp284–301.

⁸⁶ On the nationalist politics of the GAA, see Cronin, Michael, ‘Defenders of the Nation? The Gaelic Athletic Association and Irish Nationalist Identity’, *Irish Political Studies* 11, no. 1 (1 January 1996), pp1–19.

⁸⁷ Darby, *Intimidation*, p29. There were exceptions to this pattern, of course. As Shirlow and Murtagh suggest, in Belfast pastimes such as pigeon-racing, boxing and card-playing were popular with both Catholics and Protestants; in rural Northern Ireland, cooperation and neighbourliness between both communities coexisted with sectarianism and conflict. On this, see Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast*; Donnan, Hastings, and Graham McFarlane, ‘Social Life in Rural Northern Ireland’, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 74, no. 295 (1985), pp281–298; Cashman, Ray, ‘Critical Nostalgia and Material Culture in Northern Ireland’, *The Journal of American Folklore* 119, no. 472 (2006), pp137–160. And even a sport as indelibly

Football, played and watched by both Protestants and Catholics, was an interesting site of contestation. Gareth Mulvenna's recent work has highlighted the connection between football fandom, hooliganism and violence for young loyalist men in Belfast; this follows similar research by Alan Bairner.⁸⁸ The symbolic content of football fandom and its mobilisation of large numbers of people certainly makes it a site where sectarian division was especially visibly articulated, despite the efforts made at a grassroots level to create teams comprised of Catholics and Protestants, and despite the fact that many of the Northern Irish national team's most prominent players were Catholic. Football fandom was, additionally, one part of the relationship between young people and sectarian territoriality – as in Britain, association with particular clubs was generally linked to affiliation with particular urban locations, although in Belfast this association had a sectarian inflection.

Sport, then, was part of the network of institutions passed through by many young people in Belfast in the 1970s and 1980s; it was often directly linked to education, as for instance in Catholic Schools directed by the Christian Brothers, which tended to have strong links with the GAA. The Scouts, the Boys Brigade, the various youth outcroppings of the Orange Order, the various youth outcroppings of the republican movement, were all part of this constellation;⁸⁹ so too were youth clubs, which were heavily-funded by the state from the late '60s onwards as part of a more-or-less explicit drive to keep young people occupied and off the streets as communal violence and protests became features of urban life in Northern Ireland.⁹⁰ The director of the Northern Ireland Association for Youth Clubs warned in 1976 that “unless there was a positive plan for youth development [in

associated with Britishness as cricket has consistently had some Catholic participants, particularly in rural Northern Ireland – see Carter, Thomas, 'In the Spirit of the Game? Cricket & Changing Notions of Being British in Northern Ireland', *Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe* 3, no. 1 (1 March 2003), pp14–26.

⁸⁸ Mulvenna, Gareth, *Tartan Gangs and Paramilitaries: The Loyalist Backlash* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016); Bairner, 'Soccer, Masculinity and Violence', 1999.

⁸⁹ McCready, Sam and Richard Loudon, *Investing in Lives: The History of the Youth Service in Northern Ireland (1844-1973)* (Belfast: Youth Council Northern Ireland, 2015), especially pp111-149; see also Bell, *Acts of Union*, which makes the interesting point that young women are consistently less likely to join these kinds of organisations than young men.

⁹⁰ McNeilly, Norman, *Exactly 50 Years: The Belfast Education Authority and its Work (1923-1973)* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1973), p188; see chapter six for an account of how the Cosmos youth club in west Belfast provided a community space for young people aimed at keeping them out of the way of sectarian violence.

Northern Ireland] the ‘scarring’ of youth that had taken place in Northern Ireland would erupt in continuing sectarianism and violence in a future generation”.⁹¹

Similarly, it is striking that by the early 1980s Belfast had the most leisure facilities per capita of any city in the UK, as the British government poured money into the production of sports halls, swimming pools and gyms. Between 1973 and 1975 central government capital expenditure on leisure increased more than threefold, and between 1977 and 1984 14 leisure complexes were built in Belfast.⁹² Again, this can be positioned as part of a moral panic about the capacity and willingness of young people to take part in public protest or to join the paramilitaries. Sugden and Bairner suggest that “those involved in the planning of Belfast’s leisure services understood that the money was made available by central government first and foremost in the hopes that the provision of leisure services in some way might offset the tendency towards civil disorder”.⁹³ Notably, while these statistics might cast some doubt on the rhetorical claim to boredom beloved of punk songs and fanzines in Belfast as in the rest of the world, it proved nearly impossible to produce leisure facilities that would be used by both Protestants and Catholics; again, this is related to sectarianised space in the city, which positioned even ostensibly ‘neutral’ or cross-community sites within a geography of fear and possible violence.⁹⁴ As one of Richard Jenkins’ interviewees in a working-class Protestant estate in Belfast told him in the late 1970s: “In the leisure centre there are sports ... but you can’t really relax in there because Catholics go. As you know, Protestants and Catholics don’t mix, so you get dirty looks if a Protestant is seen talking to a Catholic.”⁹⁵

State spending on leisure, then, emerged from a discursive construction of young people as a discrete entity to be worried about, and to be worked upon by state policy. This concern entailed the mobilisation of what Desmond Bell calls a “correctional stance”

⁹¹ Bell, *Acts of Union*, p43.

⁹² Sugden and Bairner, *Sport, Sectarianism and Society*, p112.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p115.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p117; on the use of boredom as a concept in punk music see Worley, Matthew, *No Future: Punk, Politics and Youth Culture, 1976-1984* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp.111-139. It goes without saying that leisure centres can be very boring.

⁹⁵ Jenkins, Richard, *Hightown Rules: Growing Up on a Belfast Housing Estate* (Leicester: National Youth Bureau, 1982), p21; see also Bairner, Alan, and Peter Shirlow, ‘When Leisure Turns to Fear: Fear, Mobility, and Ethno-Sectarianism in Belfast’, *Leisure Studies* 22, no. 3 (1 January 2003), pp203–221.

mobilising “a panoply of psychological and educational expertise”.⁹⁶ In that sense, this is a history of state practices of observation, control and power as well as a social history of youth cultures.⁹⁷ The punk scene should be understood in this context as well as the context of sectarianism.

Young people, sociality and the demarcation of boundaries

Across the interconnected areas of education, work, organised religion and leisure, there is a sense of the ordinary culture of division that shaped the way young people lived, and shaped their understanding of the world. This is a culture that retained a tendency to disadvantage Catholics in matters of employment and representation. It is also one in which a network of institutions are criss-crossed by discourses of correction and concerns about the behaviour of young people, their vulnerability to conflict and violence, but also their potential to become threatening or violent themselves. And as Williams shows, the formation of cultural identity is not solely a material process – it is also a discursive one that functions in the realm of the symbolic and the imaginary. The role of young people in the symbolic creation of difference and the demarcation of boundaries between Protestant and Catholic is the final area to be considered here.

For young Protestant men, the parading tradition and the 12th of July bonfires celebrating William of Orange’s victory at the Battle of the Boyne served as routes into a specifically loyalist culture. Following the intense violence of 1968 and 1969 in Belfast, and the concomitant population shifts described in chapter two, these territorial engagements took on a specific freight. “The fusion of the historical and the spatial by new levels of symbolic investment” – the particular contemporary resonance of loyalist triumphalism during the conflict – was one that teenagers, especially teenagers in interface areas in Belfast, played a role in.⁹⁸ While the Orange Order was primarily the reserve of older (and often more ‘respectable’) members of the community, ‘Blood and Thunder’ parading

⁹⁶ Bell, *Acts of Union*, pp43-45

⁹⁷ Dick Hebdige’s argument that “in our society, youth is present only when its presence is a problem, or is regarded as a problem”, is relevant here. In Hebdige, Dick, *Hiding in the Light* (London: Routledge, 1988), p17.

⁹⁸ Feldman, Allen, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p35.

bands often attracted younger Protestants;⁹⁹ young people were also intimately involved in the setting up of the bonfires lit the night before the July parade.¹⁰⁰ Both of these activities entail a direct engagement with the politics of sectarianism, both in terms of a positive community identification and a negative identification of the constructed other. While none of my interviewees discuss any direct involvement in these practices or institutions, Gareth does refer several times to the Tartan Gangs, another manifestation of loyalist youth culture, as a counterpoint to his own experiences as a punk.¹⁰¹

The Catholic experience of this symbolic territorial sectarianism in Belfast is different. Frank Burton's anthropological study of 'Arno' (his pseudonymic rendering of the Ardoyne area of West Belfast) suggests how sociability was generative of sectarian difference, albeit without the state-sanctioned visibility of loyalist territorialism. Burton argues that the culture of the Ardoyne is given cohesion through differentiation, and that the narrowing of spatial parameters within a conflict situation intensifies this process.

As in most war situations, a foreshortening and intensifying of temporal experience appears. So too in Anro [Burton's pseudonym for the Ardoyne, used throughout the text], where it takes the form of the search for 'crack' ... The effect of concentrating the majority of individuals' leisure pursuits – gossiping, dancing, singing, drinking, sexual encounters, playing music – moments from their home – is to tighten the mesh of sociability among the residents.¹⁰²

This mesh of sociability, in Burton's felicitous phrase, encircled young people and especially teenagers as it did adults. While the striking but ideologically-driven claim by Malachi O'Doherty that "our neighbourhood [in west Belfast] was being taken through a rapid induction into republican culture with cheap drink and musical propaganda"

⁹⁹ Jarman, Neil, 'For God and Ulster: Blood and Thunder Bands and Loyalist Political Culture', in *The Irish Parading Tradition: Following the Drum*, pp158-172, T. G. Fraser (ed.) (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2000); see also Bryan, Dominic, *Orange Parades: The Politics of Ritual, Tradition and Control* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), especially chapter ten.

¹⁰⁰ Healy, Julie, 'Locality Matters: Ethnic Segregation and Community Conflict—the Experience of Protestant Girls in Belfast', *Children & Society* 20, no. 2 (1 April 2006), pp105–115; see also Schalliol, David, 'Bonfires of Belfast', *Contexts* 15, no. 3 (1 August 2016), pp50–59.

¹⁰¹ See Mulvenna, *Tartan Gangs*.

¹⁰² Burton, *The Politics of Legitimacy*, p35.

should be treated with some caution, it is reasonable to suggest that social life in majority-Catholic enclaves entailed some engagement with the politics of republicanism, and violent republicanism, for young people.¹⁰³ The suggestion from both interviewees in chapter six that punk offered them an alternative understanding of their situation in Northern Ireland would seem to bear this out. However, it is also important to note (as is apparent in terms of contemporary Northern Ireland from the Institute for Conflict Research's *Segregated Lives* report, for instance) that these experiences are widely different across different locations, and even within Belfast itself – growing up as a young Catholic in rural Fermanagh entailed a markedly different set of experiences than doing so in a majority-Protestant urban enclave, for example.¹⁰⁴

Young people and violence

Between 1969 and March 1998, 1,108 young people between the ages of 12 and 23 were killed in Northern Ireland because of the conflict, accounting for almost 30 per cent of the total number of deaths. Shooting was the most common cause of death, followed by bombs and explosions. Young men were more at risk than young women; the majority of these deaths took place in urban areas, with 58 per cent of all deaths for those under the age of 18 occurring across five Belfast postcodes.¹⁰⁵ Particularly for Catholic young people in working-class areas, harassment from the police and the army became part of the fabric of everyday life; young Catholics and young Protestants joined paramilitary organisations as well as taking part in the more informal acts of territorial marking and protest described above. This violent context is important to bear in mind as something that cuts across the institutional and quotidian spaces described below and above, although it is not the main focus of the chapter.

For my interviewees, encounters with the state mainly took the form of the police and the army. The former, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), were throughout the 1970s and

¹⁰³ O'Doherty, Malachi, *The Telling Year: Belfast in 1972* (London: Gill and Macmillan, 2007), p42. Of course all claims are ideological – what is being highlighted here is that the thrust of O'Doherty's text is driven by his rejection of the moral claim of violent-force republicanism.

¹⁰⁴ Institute for Conflict Research, *Segregated Lives: Social Division, Sectarianism and Everyday Life in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Institute for Conflict Research, 2008)

¹⁰⁵ Smyth, Marie, Mike Morrissey, and Marie Therese Fay, *Mapping Troubles-Related Deaths in Northern Ireland 1969-1998* (Derry: INCORE, 1998).

1980s a near-exclusively Protestant force; the latter arrived in Belfast in 1969 during the sectarian rioting that will be discussed in the following chapter. The Patten Report suggests that around 70 per cent of Protestants thought that the RUC treated both communities fairly, with between one quarter and one third of Catholics in agreement. Interestingly for this account, around 45 per cent of those aged below 35 felt that young people (from both communities) were discriminated against by the police.¹⁰⁶ Robbie McVeigh's comprehensive survey in 1994 asserted bluntly that "the research suggests that there is a very serious and widespread problem of harassment from the security forces [that is, both the army and the police] in Northern Ireland", a problem felt especially sharply by the young.¹⁰⁷ The most damning indictment of the tactics of the state in policing young people is that of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, which found in 1992 that "harassment of children under 18 is endemic, is directed against children of both traditions – nationalist and unionist – and is in violation of international agreements and standards".¹⁰⁸

In the context of the punk scene, large groups of young people congregating, drinking and taking up space in the city inevitably encountered the police. Rudi's single *Cops* – which incorporates the chant 'SS RUC' in its chorus – offers an indication of the relationship these encounters entailed, although Rudi's singer Brian Young was at pains to stress to me that the song has been unmoored from its original intention, which was to be a critique of the police's heavy-handed treatment of the crowd after the cancelled Clash gig in 1977 rather than expressing a critique of the police as such.¹⁰⁹ But it is clear that the encounters my interviewees describe with the police and the army are mostly negatively-connoted, which is in line with the reports summarized above. If, schematically, we accept

¹⁰⁶ *A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland – The Report of the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland, 1999)

¹⁰⁷ McVeigh, Robbie, *It's Part of Life Here: The Security Forces and Harassment in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Committee on the Administration of Justice, 1994), p198;

¹⁰⁸ *Children in Northern Ireland: Abused by Security Forces and Paramilitaries* (New York: Human Rights Watch / Helsinki, 1992).

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Brian Young, 2016. The formulation 'SS RUC' – connecting the Northern Irish police force with the Schutzstaffel or SS, a paramilitary organization notorious as enforcers of the German National Socialist regime – was used in both republican and loyalist discourses critical of the role of the RUC. See, for instance, Pritchard, Tim, 'The RUC are not so bad', *The Guardian*, 31/5/200, accessed online here: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/may/31/northernireland.comment1>, 22/6/18. Kristin Ross points out that the *Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité*, or CRS, France's reserve police force, were subjected to chants of 'SS CRS' by students and workers in 1968. Ross, Kristin, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p107.

that an element in Catholic identity-formation and culture in the 1970s entailed a mistrust of the mechanisms of the state – and conversely that Protestant culture entailed a more positive identification with these mechanisms – then it is striking that young people from both communities experienced harassment in their everyday lives, although again it is important to note that these experiences of harassment would have entailed numerous localised variations and patterns.

Finally, as Helen Brocklehurst and Ed Cairns have shown, some young people took part in paramilitary violence either with the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) or with the various loyalist paramilitary organisations that proliferated after 1968.¹¹⁰ A full consideration of this dynamic of militarisation and its relationship to sectarian cultures is beyond the scope of this study, but – as noted above – both of the interviews with Catholic punks are marked by the shadow of the gunman, in that they understand their involvement in the scene as having buttressed them against involvement in paramilitary activity. Gareth's contrast between his experience of youth culture and that of the Tartan gangs – who initially functioned as a kind of hypermasculine subculture with sectarian overtones, but later became more directly involved in paramilitary violence – is also notable here.¹¹¹

What about the punk scene?

In this context, what does it mean to call the punk scene in Belfast non or un-sectarian? There are reflections on the punk scene contained in autobiographies,¹¹² films and documentaries,¹¹³ and an extensive listing of bands and records alongside autobiographical texts in the community history text *It Makes You Want to Spit*.¹¹⁴ This last text has evolved into a website, *Spit Records*, maintained by Sean O'Neill, which

¹¹⁰ Brocklehurst, *Who's Afraid of Children*; Cairns, Ed, *Caught in Crossfire: Children and the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1987).

¹¹¹ Mulvenna, *Tartan Gangs*.

¹¹² Sullivan, Richard and Terri Hooley, *Hooleygan: Music, Mayhem, Good Vibrations* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2010); McDonald, Henry, *Colours: Ireland from Bombs to Boom* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2004).

¹¹³ D'sa, Lisa Barros and Glen Leyburn, *Good Vibrations* (London: The Works, 2013); Davis, John T, *Shellshock Rock* (Belfast, 1979).

¹¹⁴ Trelford, Guy and Sean O'Neill (eds.), *It Makes You Want to Spit: An Alternative Ulster 1977-1982* (Dublin: Reekus Music, 2003).

contains a wealth of ephemera and archival material, including gig posters, ticket stubs, fanzines, badges, information on venues and information on record shops.¹¹⁵ Martin McCloone has written about the scene as part of his work on Irish music cultures, and more recent analyses of Northern Irish punk specifically have come from Francis Stewart and Tim Heron.¹¹⁶ A central component of all of these texts, expressed with different inflections and subtleties, is the contention that as Heron puts it, “non-sectarianism within the subculture was the norm, not the exception, at a time when amicable cross-community interaction, especially between young people coming from working-class neighbourhoods, was a rarity”.¹¹⁷

The nature of this claim about the punk scene, and how it relates to the memories and narratives of former participants, is considered throughout this thesis. Desmond Bell, in his critique of state practices of correction and control in 1970s Belfast, describes their motivation as the quashing or ameliorating of sectarianism between young people. Sectarianism, within this rubric, was understood as “a structure of personal prejudice”.¹¹⁸ This is clearly inadequate, as the account above suggests and Robbie McVeigh’s account of sectarianism as a structure that exists outside of interpersonal relationships makes clear. Segregated schools, segregated residential communities, unemployment patterns and experiences of state violence are the material preconditions for sectarianism as it is embodied and expressed at the level of youth culture. In this sense, to call the punk scene non-sectarian is to give it both too much and too little credit. On the one hand, it is to think of its participants as primarily engaged in a liberal politics of recognition and contact, as a sub-committee to what Bell calls “the caring agencies and committed professionals of the British welfare state”, and to undersell its desire for the creation of different rhythms and different relations.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, it is to think of it as

¹¹⁵ O'Neill, Sean. (2018), *Spit Records – Punk Rock from Northern Ireland (1977-1982)*. [online] Spitrecords.co.uk. Available at: <http://www.spitrecords.co.uk/> [Accessed 9 Feb. 2018].

¹¹⁶ Stewart, Francis, 'Alternative Ulster', 2014; McLoone, Martin, 'Punk Music in Northern Ireland: The Political Power of “What Might Have Been”', *Irish Studies Review* 12, no. 1 (1 April 2004), pp29–38; , Heron, Timothy, 'Alternative Ulster: Punk and the Construction of Everyday Life in 1970s Northern Ireland', *Popular Culture Today: Imaginaries*, 9 (2015), pp1–17; see also Bailie, Stuart, *Trouble Songs: Music and Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Stuart Bailie, 2018).

¹¹⁷ Heron, Timothy, 'Alternative Ulster: How Punk Took On the Troubles', *Irish Times*, (2 December 2016), accessed online 9/2/18: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/alternative-ulster-how-punk-took-on-the-troubles-1.2890644>

¹¹⁸ Bell, Desmond, *Acts of Union*, p44.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p47.

capable of somehow transcending or existing outside of the formidable structures of spatialised segregation and institutionalised disadvantage that constitute and reproduce sectarianism.

So how should we understand the punk scene in Belfast, if not as uncomplicatedly non-sectarian? Firstly, with a definition of what ‘the punk scene’, used fairly freely above, actually means. Throughout the thesis this term will be used as shorthand for venues, institutions (record labels, record shops) and bands, and also for the constellation of spatialised, quotidian practices that make up the everyday life of its participants – buying and modifying clothes, going to gigs, gathering together in pubs and public spaces, listening to the radio and so on. These together constitute what Raymond Williams calls a structure of feeling that existed within the ordinary culture(s) of 1970s Northern Ireland, and can still be apprehended – in a sedimentary form – in the oral accounts of former participants. That is to say, reading the punk scene as a structure of feeling makes it possible to tease out its complicated relationship with Northern Irish culture (and with sectarianism), to recognise its capacity to generate relational moments in which my interviewees encountered aspects of their everyday lives differently, and to apprehend its affective dimensions and political possibilities without extricating these hopes and feelings from the conditions out of which they emerged.

Scene is preferred here to alternative terms such as subculture for several reasons. As Richard A Peterson and Andy Bennett argue, the concept is useful for its emphasis on fluidity, both in terms of the experiences of those who make up the scene and in terms of the scene itself.¹²⁰ Firstly, it avoids the totalising implications of subculture as a way of thinking about groups of people congregating around a set of venues, gigs, practices, shops and so on – some people immerse themselves in scenes more deeply than others, and it is possible to be a punk at the same time as forming many other relations and

¹²⁰ Bennett, Andy and Richard A Peterson (eds), *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004); see also Bennett, Andy, ‘Consolidating the Music Scenes Perspective’, *Music in Society: The Sociological Agenda* 32, no. 3 (1 June 2004), pp223–234; for an interesting empirical study mobilising some of these concepts see Green, Katie Victoria, ‘Trying to have fun in ‘No Fun City’: Legal and illegal strategies for creating punk spaces in Vancouver, British Columbia’, *Punk & Post Punk*, 7, no. 1 (March 2018), pp75–92. Alan O’Connor makes the important point that an emphasis on fluidity and hybridity should not occlude the importance of local and material conditions, or the labour that creating and maintaining a scene’s infrastructure entails – see O’Connor, Alan, ‘Local Scenes and Dangerous Crossroads: Punk and Theories of Cultural Hybridity’, *Popular Music* 21, no. 2 (2002), pp225–236.

identifications within the world, a possibility that will be important in considering my interviewees' relationship to wider cultures in Northern Ireland. Secondly, the notion of scene as mobilised by Bennett is helpfully attentive to the geographical messiness of these kinds of assemblages, the fact that they do not neatly correspond to a particular network of streets or venues even if these streets or venues are where the scene is expressed most vividly. While much of the work in this area has focused on 'virtual scenes' – "newly emergent formation[s] in which people scattered across great physical spaces create the sense of scene via fanzines and, increasingly, through the internet" – the emphasis here will be on 'translocal' scenes, or "widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music or lifestyle".¹²¹ This allows for a sustained awareness of the connections between punk in England and punk in Belfast (so the role of the Clash's cancelled gig at the Ulster Hall in 1977 in galvanising the local scene, for instance); it also allows for a sustained awareness of the way in which punk existed outside of the environs of Belfast, in smaller towns across the province. A further consideration of this dynamic will form part of chapter four in relation to Alison Farrell's memories of being a punk in both Dungannon and in the capital city.

The punk scene and Raymond Williams

A structure of feeling, in Raymond Williams' work, is a way of describing attitudes, behaviours and emotions in their historical context. In *The Long Revolution*, written in 1961, he suggests that the phrase is intended to capture "a particular sense of life, a particular community of experience hardly needing expression" – something that we might be aware of when listening to conversations between people of different generations, for example, who idiomatically "never quite talk 'the same language'".¹²² If the way of life described above is a pattern – a set of institutions, ideologies, cultural engagements, and relationships, that can be understood as representative for a certain subject in a certain period and space – the structure of feeling is the impression left on people by this pattern. "It is as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in

¹²¹ Ibid., p4.

¹²² Williams, Raymond, *The Long Revolution* (London: Pelican, 1965), p64; a later formulation comes in Williams, Raymond, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp128-136.

the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity”, Williams explains.¹²³ The two concepts together – that of structure, which retains an awareness of limits and institutions as formative of experience, and that of feeling, which allows us to attend to the (remembered, narrated) subjective qualities of that experience – are a useful way of thinking about the punk scene as a space for the shared encounters, actions, affects and emotions that constitute sociality.

In this space, Williams says:

Most distinctly, the changing organisation is enacted in the organism [society], the new generation responds in its own ways to the unique world it is inheriting, taking up many continuities, that can be traced, and reproducing many aspects of the organisation, which can be separately described, yet feeling its own life in certain ways differently, and shaping its creative response into a new structure of feeling.¹²⁴

This slightly clumsy yet infinitely suggestive phrase – “feeling its own life in certain ways differently” – seems to me to be a good account of how the punk scene affected its participants and relates to sectarianism.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the caution of this description helps avoid sweeping claims about the scene’s relationship to the doubly-articulated sectarianism described above. The punk scene was a response to Northern Irish society in which participants could both reproduce sectarian patterns (polite avoidance of any potentially divisive political topics, for instance, which was a feature of golf clubs and dinner parties as much as of punk gigs) and challenge them (by the opposite of avoidance, for instance, and the creation of what Sarah Tuck calls an agonistic attitude towards identity).¹²⁶ In this sense it is a structure of feeling containing emergent practices – showing young people attempting to create “new meanings and values” – that are by

¹²³ Williams, *The Long Revolution*.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p65.

¹²⁵ See Miura, Reiichi, ‘What Kind of Revolution Do You Want? Punk, the Contemporary Left and Singularity’, *Mediations* 25.1 (2010), pp61-80, for an account of the punk scene that describes its politics in a similar way but is sharply critical of its desire to change the punk subject without changing their external conditions.

¹²⁶ Tuck, Sarah, *After the Agreement: Contemporary Photography in Northern Ireland*, unpublished PhD thesis, the University of Brighton, 2015.

turns alternative and oppositional. Williams clarifies this distinction between alternative and oppositional as one “between someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone with it, and someone who finds a different way to live and wishes to change the society in its light”.¹²⁷ In addition to being either alternative or oppositional, of course, they can also reproduce dominant cultural narratives and values – sexism, or sectarianism, for instance.

In adopting this approach – that is, interrogating the nature of punk as a structure of feeling in the cultures of 1970s Northern Ireland – my analysis will draw on recent historical work on the British punk scene by David Wilkinson and Matt Worley, who both mobilise the concept of structure of feeling to think about punk scenes in Manchester and in Britain respectively.¹²⁸ Both Wilkinson and Worley want to historicise punk, place it in a social and political context, and take it seriously as a cultural response to that context. In a 2017 review article with John Street, they call for a historical practice informed by Williams’ cultural materialism that entails “the combination of empirical and archival research with a theoretical method that allows for the complexities, contradictions and contentious nature of punk’s cultural practice to be embraced”.¹²⁹ While broadly sympathetic to this approach, I would add that an oral history methodology suggests some further complexities. How was the punk scene experienced as an everyday as well as an exceptional set of practices? How does the meaning ascribed to punk-ness change when described by someone who was a punk for a few years as a teenager, thirty years ago? What does this shifting semiotic and subjective content tell us about political and social changes in that thirty year period?

In posing these questions, my approach will differ somewhat from that of Worley, Wilkinson and Street, given their focus on the archival and documentary record of the punk scene. I share Worley’s sense that “not only did punk engender creativity, it also

¹²⁷ Williams, Raymond, ‘Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory’, in *Culture and Materialism* (London: Verso, 2005), p47.

¹²⁸ Wilkinson, David, *Post-Punk, Politics and Pleasure in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Worley, *No Future*.

¹²⁹ Wilkinson, David, Matthew Worley, and John Street, “I Wanna See Some History”: Recent Writing on British Punk’, *Contemporary European History* 26, no. 2 (2017), p410; see also Street, John, Matthew Worley, and David Wilkinson, “Does It Threaten the Status Quo?” Elite Responses to British Punk, 1976–1978’, *Popular Music* 37, no. 2 (2018), pp.271–89.

forged cultures that challenged prevailing social (and socioeconomic) norms in irreverent and provocative ways”, and agree with his suggestion that it “both reflected lives being lived and uncovered portals to other worlds and ideas”.¹³⁰ But what I want to argue for is a slightly broadened sense of the structure of feeling, one that is not simply applied to what we can trace through the residue of the past (zines, records, newspaper interviews and so on) but also to people’s memories of the past; memories that are formed relationally within and against these cultural representations, but not reducible to them in their full expressiveness and complexity. My intention here is to consider the way in which memories of the punk scene are marked by the institutional conditions and discourses circulating at the time as well as by the conditions of the contemporary moment, but not to argue that these memories are exclusively expressions of domination, institutional power or sectarianism. This approach follows the argument of the Popular Memory Group that “memories of the past are, like all common-sense forms, strangely composite constructions, resembling a kind of geology, the selective sedimentation of past traces”; these are traces of sectarian structures but also traces of disputation and discomfort within those structures, in this context.¹³¹

Williams, in his 1971 lecture in memory of the French philosopher Lucien Goldmann, takes another stab at defining the structure of feeling as it occurs in literature – here, it is “a fiction, in which the constituting elements, of real social life and beliefs, were simultaneously actualised and in an important way differently experienced, the difference residing in the imaginative act, the imaginative method, the specific and genuinely unprecedented imaginative organisation”.¹³² This seems to me to be very close to what Worley suggests we can access via a reading of the remainders of punk as an imaginative act. Considering the form and style of this imaginative act (as Williams considers the form and style of the 19th century novel, for instance) gives the historian access to the punk scene as a structure of feeling, as a social experience in solution. My addendum to this approach is simply to follow Alessandro Portelli’s lead in understanding people’s narratives of the past as creative texts produced both through the experience of the events being narrated and the pressures of memory, discourse and

¹³⁰ Worley, *No Future*, p254.

¹³¹ Popular Memory Group, ‘Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method’, in Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), p78.

¹³² Williams, Raymond, ‘Literature and Sociology’, in *Culture and Materialism* (London: Verso, 2005), p25.

language. In this sense, I want to suggest that we can access the structure of feeling of the punk scene in Belfast through the memories of participants, and not only through the documentary ephemera it has left behind.¹³³

Attending to the punk scene as a site for a group of young people “feeling [their] own life in certain ways differently” and adopting an oral history methodology means the analysis will be more engaged in accounts of experience than in semiotic analysis. It could be productive to consider the different semiotic inflections of Belfast punks to their counterparts in London or Manchester by thinking about, for instance, how the playful appropriation of nationalist symbols like the Union Jack or the Queen’s portrait take on a different set of significations in the Northern Irish context.¹³⁴ Indeed, in the interview analysed in chapter five Gareth outlines this problem. But this aspect of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS’) analysis of youth subcultures is secondary to an account that will be focused more on the way people remember and narrate their experience of being involved in the punk scene than it is on the material culture of the scene itself. More foundational for this project is “the basic premise of youth culture harbouring implicit and explicit political meaning”, a basic premise that this project shares with the work done by Stuart Hall, Angela McRobbie, Stan Cohen and others in the 1970s.¹³⁵

David Wilkinson – whose conceptualisation of the post-punk scene in Manchester I am indebted to – argues that “freedom and pleasure are surely among the most deeply, personally ‘felt’ experiences within an encompassing hegemonic process. They are irreducible to purely abstract and conceptual understandings if their varied expressions – dominant, alternative, or oppositional – are to have any genuine hold”.¹³⁶ This emphasis on felt experience as “the means by which people encountered and remade the world around them, often in relation with others” will be echoed in my interview analysis in the

¹³³ Portelli, Alessandro, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York: SUNY Press, 1991). The methodological implications of this will be considered in chapter three.

¹³⁴ Hebdige, Dick, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Penguin, 1979).

¹³⁵ Worley, ‘Oi! Oi! Oi!’, p609; Hall, Stuart and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (London: Routledge, 1989).

¹³⁶ Wilkinson, *Post-Punk*, p21.

final three chapters.¹³⁷ Apprehending the structure of feeling of the punk scene in Belfast through oral histories both makes it possible to ask different questions about these felt experiences and to access different bits of them; so the felt experiences of those whose band never left their friends' garage, or whose zine never progressed beyond a doodle on a school jotter, or whose position or subjectivity leads them to think that their narrative exists on the margins of the scene and so outside of its historicisation. In this sense, the ambit of the structure of feeling is widened in the analysis that follows.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that young people's everyday lives in Northern Ireland were shaped by various institutions that mediated their relationships with society. It followed this claim with an historical account of some of the most significant of these institutions – schools, jobs, leisure activities, churches and the various organisations and activities associated with Protestant and Catholic communities – as they would have intersected with the lives of young men and women in the 1970s. On this basis, a doubly articulated understanding of sectarianism has been proposed, one that bears in mind the structural violence of the state but also attends to sectarianism as part of lived experience.

With this understanding in mind, the status of the punk scene as non-sectarian was considered. Rather than thinking of the scene as non-sectarian, the suggestion is that we think of it as a constellation of practices and institutions forming what Raymond Williams calls a particular structure of feeling – one that can create moments that interact with this doubly-articulated sectarianism in different ways at different times and spaces but that is nonetheless a product of the conditions generated by the structural sectarianism of the post-partition state. The following chapter will pick up on the final clause of this sentence and consider punk in Belfast as a set of spatial interventions. This entails grounding sectarianism as a structure that politicised space and people's engagement with space, especially through segregation and segregation's subjective and material effects.

¹³⁷ Todd, 'Class, Experience and Britain's Twentieth Century', p508.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE IN BELFAST

Introduction

The previous chapter began the process of thinking about the punk scene as a structure of feeling within the sectarian and violent context of Belfast in the 1970s, but only alluded to an important aspect of sectarianism and violence – their relationship with space and place, and specifically with the construction of sectarianised space in the city. This relationship is central to my thesis because “the construction and understanding of place-bounded identities” is a powerful framework for understanding how sectarianism is maintained and produced, and how violence is enacted upon people. It is also important because the structure of feeling we can apprehend in memories of punk in Belfast is going to be understood here as related to my interviewees’ engagements in space and relationships with place.¹ With this in mind, the chapter will begin with an historical account of Belfast as a divided city, and particularly of the production of uneven or asymmetrical space, drawing on the theoretical work of the French Marxist geographer Henri Lefebvre. It will follow the roots of this division into the mid-1970s, when the punk scene emerged, and conclude this section with an account of the sites that became important for those taking part in this scene. This historical account is also important in making the distinction between the centre of Belfast (where the majority of the venues, record shops and gathering-places that were important for the punk scene existed) and the surrounding areas, where many of my interviewees actually lived, and where the relationship between space, place and identity I am describing was necessarily different than the same articulation in the centre of town.

To think about this relationship, a historical grounding in the specific conditions of spatial segregation in Belfast is necessary, even if this will initially take us rather far from the punk scene. Punk-ness, as argued in the previous chapter, was not a fixed identity – it was a shifting one that could be inflected differently in different fields, and read differently in

¹ Shirlow, Peter and Brendan Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), p6.

different places. Because of this it is important to have a sense of the trajectories my interviewees describe across the city as a whole and the spatial history that these trajectories relate to, not just of their memories of gigs and sociality in the centre of town. The following sections will lay out that spatial history; because this chapter entails a movement back into the 19th century, accounts by my interviewees will be used sparingly here until we reach the section on the emergence of the punk scene's particular geography in Belfast, although what is being set up remains essential to the analysis of their narratives in the remainder of the thesis. In the final sections, given the relative lack of secondary literature on the geography of the punk scene in Belfast (compared to the extensive secondary literature on, for instance, education that is drawn on above) the interviews will be used fairly extensively.

Bearing in mind the argument in the previous chapter that we need to understand sectarianism as doubly-articulated (as a function of the state and as part of lived experience in Northern Ireland), this section will suggest that segregation and the division of Belfast into Catholic and Protestant residential enclaves has a multi-layered history. This does not entail an attempt to return to an originary moment that will provide the key to Northern Ireland's past; nor does it entail an attempt to read this history teleologically to suggest that the roots of the conflict from 1969 lie inexorably in, for instance, the Elizabethan or Stuart settlements of the 16th and 17th centuries. Rather, I will argue that there are three periods in which facets of the pattern of segregation that my interviewees describe are made possible, and which can illuminate and contextualise my account of the punk scene as an intervention in Belfast's landscape.

These are the Victorian and Edwardian eras, during which Belfast was in its industrial heyday, roughly from 1850 to 1920; the period of Unionist government from 1920 until 1968, and particularly partition and the conflict following partition; and the initial stages of the conflict from 1968 and 1969 through to the mid-'70s, in which, as recently declassified material shows, the security forces took a proactive role in shaping planning decisions such as the planning and building of the Belfast Urban Motorway, and

paramilitary groups, the army and the police started to play an especially important role in the demarcation of territory through fear and violence.²

These layers of spatial history are the context in which we need to understand the intervention of the punks in the late 1970s and their attempt to negotiate with division or to create new understandings of place not predicated on the logic of othering, violence and division. They also help to set up the complicated production of space in Belfast, in which material conditions (housing, employment), social practices (parades, for example), violence and the fear of violence, and the accretion of layers of collective memory engendered by these other three factors all play an important role.³ There is no attempt here to provide a comprehensive history of Belfast from the 19th century through to the 1970s, which would be a project beyond the scope of the chapter. Instead, the choice of three periods is intended to illuminate specific aspects of the spatial production of Belfast which are particularly relevant for the analysis of the punk scene and of the interviews below.

The Victorian and Edwardian eras have been chosen because they are the period when segregation becomes fully embedded in the city, both in terms of its residential, leisure and workplace geography and in terms of the violence used to enforce and maintain it; the post-partition era has been chosen as the period where the state's interventions in terms of sectarianizing and segregating space become critical; and the post-1968 period has been chosen both as the direct context for the emergence of the punk scene and as the period in which various specific elements of my interviewees' experiences of Belfast are set. Each of these critical junctures in the spatial history of Belfast will also be described to provide an insight into the symbolic weighting of space in the city, and into the ways in which violence and the fear of violence maintain division in the city; while it should be apparent that symbolism and violence do not work in the same way across the periods discussed here and into the period of punk's emergence, they continue to be important factors in understanding how space functions in Belfast, and the partial examples provided here are intended to show both some of the preconditions for their

² Cunningham, Tim, 'Changing Direction: Defensive Planning in a Post-Conflict City', *City* 18, no. 4-5 (3 September 2014), pp455-62.

³ Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast*, 2006.

importance to the punk scene and some of the ways in which they have been mobilised historically.

Following and extending the suggestive and influential 1974 account of spatial production by Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, we might see these processes as entailing the production of an asymmetrical or uneven sectarianised space.⁴ For Lefebvre, social space is socially produced, although it is also the ground on which social relations are formed and contested. This takes place through the inter-relation of lived, conceived and perceived space; space as it is acted in and upon, space as it is represented, planned and managed, and space as it is thought, dreamed and imagined. Every society produces its own space through this inter-relation.⁵ In Belfast, this production is inextricable from the history of sectarianism and the state's role in the maintenance of sectarianism, which is why the space that is produced is described here as asymmetrical, or as unevenly shared between Protestants and Catholics; the hegemonically unionist signifiers affixed to the City Hall, for example, are the products of a sectarianised symbolic infrastructure within what Lefebvre calls representational or monumental space.

The narrative below will draw on this idea of the production of space to show how industrialisation and the expansion of the city in the 19th century, the formation of the Northern Irish state, and the interactions of various actors after 1968, produced Belfast as a space in which sectarian logics determined issues such as the segregation of housing, violence and the right to public assembly. The final section will conclude by returning to Lefebvre's theory in the light of this historical account, reiterating its usefulness for an understanding of the production of sectarianised space, and suggesting an important sense in which his method needs to be augmented in order to work with my account of the punk scene in Belfast's relationship to the city. Essentially, then, the argument is that sectarianism (not just the demands of capital, as in Lefebvre's work) produces space in Belfast; the historical work done here should be understood as functioning within that argument.

The early development of the city

⁴ Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space* (Malden: Blackwell, 1991).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p31.

Belfast was a relatively minor settlement during the early colonial period in Ireland.⁶ It was officially incorporated as a town in 1613 by King James I.⁷ Emerging patterns of segregation, occasional violence and community entrenchment were a feature of the 18th and especially the 19th century, following the rapid growth in Belfast's population from 1757 onwards. This population growth – from 8,000 in 1757 to 20,000 in 1800 – was initially made possible by the increasing success of the textile industries, particularly cotton and linen.⁸ This process of urban expansion was also marked by both the increasing influence of the Protestant Orange Order (despite various attempts to prohibit its organisation after its foundation in 1795) and the Catholic Ribbonmen, although the roots of both organisations were in agrarian rather than urban disputes. In 1813, Belfast experienced its first major religious riot, on Hercules Street, which is now a central artery of the city and known as Royal Avenue, when an Orange Order procession attempted to march down the street which had by this time become “the first identifiable Catholic neighbourhood in the town”; in the same year, the first public meeting of Belfast Catholics to petition for emancipation took place. Throughout the 19th century, sporadic and sometimes intense inter-community violence became a norm in the city, and residential communities were becoming more segregated in defensive enclaves.⁹ At the same time, Belfast was becoming a major industrial city.

The expansion of the linen industry, which became fully mechanized between 1852 and 1862, and the success of Harland and Wolff's shipyards, were the lynchpins of this growth; a host of ancillary industries sprung up in their wake. These developments created the conditions for Belfast to grow from a relatively minor settlement to an industrial, bustling city, albeit one in which the prosperity generated by these trades rested in the hands of a small tranche of Presbyterian and Anglican businessmen and in

⁶ Benn, George, *A History of the Town of Belfast from the Earliest Times to the Close of the 18th Century, with Maps and Illustrations* (Belfast: Royal Ulster Works, 1877), p50.

⁷ Hepburn, AC, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the Era of Joe Devlin, 1871-1934* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p8.

⁸ Budge, Ian and Cornelius O'Leary, *Belfast: Approach to Crisis – A Study of Belfast Politics, 1613-1970* (London: Macmillan, 1973, p8; Monaghan, John J., 'The Rise and Fall of the Belfast Cotton Industry', *Irish Historical Studies* 3, no. 9 (1942), pp1-17.

⁹ *Ibid.*; see also Hepburn, AC, *A Past Apart: Studies in the History of Catholic Belfast, 1850-1950* (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1996); Bardon, Jonathan, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992), especially chapter nine.

which poverty and dangerous living conditions were a feature of life for the majority of the city's working-class population, both Protestant and Catholic.¹⁰ This is also the period in which Belfast's links with the British imperial project are fastened – in which the city becomes “welded to the Empire”, as the Belfast Chamber of Commerce put it in 1893.¹¹ The city's population expanded from 87,062 in the 1851 census to 174,412 in the 1871 census.¹² From 1841 to 1901, Belfast was the fastest-growing major city in the United Kingdom; it was granted official city status in 1888 and its population outstripped the relatively under-industrialised Dublin's in 1891.¹³ From 1834 until the end of the 20th century, Catholics comprised around a third of Belfast's inhabitants.¹⁴

AC Hepburn, describing the the sectarian rioting that marked the city in the first half of the 19th century, says:

The Catholic and Protestant migrant populations that came together to create the industrial population of Belfast brought with them the unfinished business of colonial settlement and native resistance that had characterised the previous two centuries. This business had both a socio-economic dimension and a somewhat inchoate but related political one.¹⁵

The riots in the second half of the 19th century are notable in the context of my research because they are often fundamentally concerned with territory and space.¹⁶ The newly-arrived industrial population tended to live in mainly-Catholic or mainly-Protestant communities, the latter in the east and the former in the west, a tendency that was

¹⁰ Budge and O'Leary, *Belfast*, p75; see Johnson, Alice, 'The Civic Elite of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Belfast', *Irish Economic and Social History* 43, no. 1 (15 September 2016), pp62-84, for an analysis of the composition of this class.

¹¹ Ollerenshaw, Philip, 'Businessmen in Northern Ireland and the imperial connection, 1886-1939', in *'An Irish Empire?': Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire*, Jeffrey, Keith (ed) (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p193.

¹² Budge and O'Leary, *Belfast*, 1973, p75.

¹³ Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, p8; Brett, CEB, 'The Edwardian City: Belfast about 1900' in Beckett, JC and RE Glasscock (eds.), *Belfast: The Origin and Growth of an Industrial City* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1967), p120.

¹⁴ Doyle, Mark, *Fighting Like the Devil for the Sake of God: Protestants, Catholics and the Origins of Violence in Victorian Belfast* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p4.

¹⁵ Hepburn, *A Past Apart*, 1996, p135. By 1901, only 39 per cent of Belfast's population had been born in the city.

¹⁶ Hirst, Catherine, *Religion, Politics and Violence in 19th Century Belfast: The Pound and Sandy Row* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002; Boyd, Andrew, *Holy War in Belfast* (Kerry: Anvil Books, 1969).

accentuated by rioting and violence. In the city, where “the relatively stable and familial relationships of the countryside which to some extent could regulate sectarianism were absent”, segregation took on a different and less equivocal dimension in comparison to its rural counterpart.¹⁷ Hepburn describes this newly-sharpened urban segregation as emerging, in part, because of the tendency for social groups to cluster around the amenities they use regularly, like churches; in part because employment was also segregated, and the majority of working-class people lived near their place of work; but as “above all a defensive procedure which people adopted to mitigate the effects of ethnic conflict”.¹⁸ The expulsion of Catholics from Protestant neighbourhoods, and the way in which the violence of the major riots of the 1850s and 1860s entered into cultural memory, made “violence a permanent feature of the city’s landscape, continually present even when the streets themselves were quiet”.¹⁹

The majority-Protestant Sandy Row and the majority-Catholic Pound areas of the city, as Catherine Hirst has shown, shared to some extent a common working-class culture – cockfighting, drinking and parties, folk belief in fairies and the holding of wakes and the Easter Monday celebration on Cave Hill are components of this culture that cut across the sectarian divide.²⁰ But at moments of political tension (such as the debate around Catholic emancipation or Daniel O’Connell’s attempts to repeal the 1800 Act of Union, but from the 1850s onwards particularly around Home Rule debates), sectarian violence was a feature of the early 19th century as much as of the early 20th century.²¹ According to Hirst’s analysis, the increasing influence from the 1840s of Irish nationalism on the one hand and Presbyterian evangelicalism on the other helped to codify and politicise existing division between the two communities.²²

¹⁷ Hirst, *Religion*, p25.

¹⁸ Hepburn, *A Past Apart*, p123.

¹⁹ Doyle, *Fighting*, p229.

²⁰ Hirst, *Religion*, p39; see also Gray, John ‘Popular Entertainment’, pp99-110, in *Belfast: The Making of the City*, (Beckett, JC, WA Maguire and Emily Boyle (eds.) (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1983).

²¹ For an overview of the career of the lawyer and politician Daniel O’Connell and his attempts to improve the position of Ireland’s Catholic community see Bew, Paul, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity, 1789-2006* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp87-175.

²² Hirst, *Religion*, 2002, p67. Hirst also makes the important point that there are different kinds of riots, with different political motivations on the part of the participants, citing election riots (which are often in part mobilised by external agitation) and economic riots (related to unemployment and high food prices, and similar to the mid-18th century English riots described in Thompson, EP, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century’, *Past & Present*, no. 50 (1971), pp76–136. In the later part of the 19th century most of the riots that take place centre around the issue of Home Rule for Ireland, discussed below.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries

Belfast in the Victorian and later the Edwardian period displayed a duality between prosperity and poverty. The serene confidence in progress and industry that could describe a city impelled “by its own inherent energy and determined purpose, exalting itself to industrial eminence and social importance with a speed almost unparalleled” existed alongside extreme poverty for the Catholic and Protestant working-class, inadequate sanitation and housing, and sporadic outbreaks of religious violence, as well as the formation of enclave communities and microsegregation within those communities.²³ Such confidence was linked to the wider British imperial project of this period, a connection that is still tangible in the street names around the ‘Holy Lands’ near Queen’s University – Delhi Street, Burmah Street, Elgin Street – and in west Belfast – Odessa Street, Crimea Street, Sevastopol Street.²⁴ Mark Doyle, in his 2009 study of rioting in the city between 1850 and 1865, makes the important point that “imperial structures and mindsets helped to shape the lives of ordinary people” in Belfast, as well as determining the role of the state in shaping communal division.²⁵ This imperial legacy will take on an important function in the post-partition state, as discussed below.

The codification of space with names redolent of British colonial campaigns in the Crimea and India, Doyle suggests, show that “Belfast’s local rivalries did not develop in isolation from the wider world”.²⁶ In this sense, the irruptions of protest and violence during the 40 years of border creation in Northern Ireland encompassing the first home rule crisis of 1885 and 1856 on to subsequent crises in 1892 to 1912, and the establishment of the border line in 1920, can be read as part of the history of British high imperialism and the concomitant nationalist resistances to global imperialist projects that characterise this period.²⁷ This section will concentrate firstly on the way in which the cityscape of Belfast

²³Lord Thomas O’Hagan, quoted in Hepburn, AC, ‘Work, Class and Religion in Belfast, 1871–1911’, *Irish Economic and Social History* 10, no. 1 (1 June 1983), p33.

²⁴ Doyle, Mark, ‘The Sepoys of the Pound and Sandy Row: Empire and Identity in Mid-Victorian Belfast’, *Journal of Urban History* 36, no. 6 (19 July 2010), pp849–867.

²⁵ Doyle, *Fighting*, p12.

²⁶ Doyle, ‘The Sepoys’, p862.

²⁷ The question of the relationship between Ireland and imperialism is a vexed and contentious one, and beyond the scope of this chapter to address in any depth; it is relevant here mainly as a way of thinking about the development of representational space and symbolic spatial practices in Belfast in the late 19th

was shaped by this political context; secondly on the way in which this space was produced through symbolic acts, especially unionist and loyalist parading culture; and finally on resistance to and support for Home Rule and how the various crises related to this political tension reinforced segregation in the city. This final moment of spatial contestation will then lead into a consideration of the 1920s and the formation of the Northern Irish state, a critical moment in terms of the production of space both in Belfast and in the province as a whole.

Firstly, then, this was the period during which Belfast began to take on a recognisable shape, and many of the most prominent buildings in the centre of the town were developed. The Ulster Hall – later to be an important site for the punk scene, as will be discussed below – and the City Hall were built in 1859 and 1898 respectively. In terms of the production of space, then, late Victorian and Edwardian Belfast gives us a sense of how – as Lefebvre suggests – social practice, symbolism and representations or images of the city created segregated residential zones and a central area which, while ostensibly neutral, is better-understood as a site for the maintenance of the conjoined forces of the British state and commercial enterprise. John Nagle describes sites like the City Hall as places where social authority was inscribed – “for instance, a statue of Queen Victoria ‘guards’ the entrance to the City Hall and on the façade of the pediment above the entrance is a ‘classical’ relief which celebrates the city’s mercantilist heritage”.²⁸ The Union flag, for example, had a critical synecdochal status as a symbol of the connection between Belfast, Unionism and Britain and from 1801 the Act of Union was used to symbolise this connection. Through the mobilisation of Unionist symbols, civic space in the centre of the city was constructed through processes of exclusion and inclusion, a dynamic that would become especially pronounced following partition, discussed below.

Secondly, commemorative parades and processions were a feature of the urban landscape, after the repeal of the Party Processions Act in 1872 made both Unionist and

and early 20th centuries. See Howe, Stephen, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), especially pp7-21, for a useful taxonomy of the mobilisation of concepts of imperialism and colonialism in Irish history-writing; see Cleary, Joe, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2007), especially chapter one, for an account that argues for the coloniality of Irish history.

²⁸ Nagle, John, ‘The Right to Belfast City Centre: From Ethnocracy to Liberal Multiculturalism?’, *Political Geography* 28, no. 2 (1 February 2009), p135.

Nationalist parades a helpful vehicle for expressions of identity and for political sloganeering. Neil Jarman says:

This growing culture of parading also served both to build more connections between people and places of similar faith, and at the same time to intensify the social distance from those of the other faith. Commemorative parades thereby helped to consolidate the sense of difference and distinctiveness between Protestants and Catholics.²⁹

Parades, murals and triumphal arches were both ways of marking out territory as belonging to one or the other community. It is clear that in Belfast as in other areas with a predominantly Protestant population, unionist parading was tolerated while Nationalist parading was not. An example of this was the riot attending the 1872 St Patrick's Day parades in Belfast in support of the Home Rule, directly following the re-legalisation of processions earlier in the year. "One clear aim of the violent protests from the Protestant community was to demonstrate that they would not tolerate nationalist parades in the heart of their city," argue Jarman and Bryan; four people died and over 800 Catholic families were forced to leave their homes in the aftermath of this fighting, again largely concentrated between Sandy Row and the Pound.³⁰ No further nationalist demonstrations of any import took place in Belfast until the 1890s, again suggesting the hegemony of Unionist and British signifiers in the city even in the period prior to partition. Parenthetically, however, it is important not to elide Unionism and Britishness unproblematically in this period; as James Loughlin suggests, the British administration of the late 19th century had a somewhat fraught relationship with Orangeism and parading, characterised by "reluctant alliance followed by rapid disengagement".³¹

²⁹ Jarman, Neil, *Material Conflicts: Parades and Visual Displays in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), p57.

³⁰ Jarman, Neil and Dominic Bryan, *From Rights to Riots: Nationalist Parades in the North of Ireland* (Coleraine: Centre for the Study of Conflict, 1997); see also Radford, Mark, 'Cobbles And Confetti', *Irish Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (1 May 2007), pp199–217.

³¹ Loughlin, James, 'Parades and Politics: Liberal Governments and the Orange Order, 1880–86', p27, in TG Fraser (ed.), *The Irish Parading Tradition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); see also Wright, Frank, *Two Lands on One Soil: Ulster Politics Before Home Rule* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1996).

In the late 19th century, the context for the reluctant alliances between Orangeism and the state noted by Loughlin was the emergence of the demand for Home Rule. The Irish Home Rule movement was an attempt to establish self-government for Ireland within the United Kingdom; successive bills were introduced unsuccessfully in 1886 and 1893; the Third Home Rule Bill was introduced in 1912, leading to the Home Rule crisis, the Ulster Covenant against Home Rule and the foundation of the Ulster Volunteers. Of primary interest for this section is the engagement with urban space in responses to the bills, especially the successful one of 1912. Following the Home Rule Bill of 1886, 31 people were killed and over 400 arrests were made as Protestants clashed with Catholics in attacks largely instigated by Protestants on the Shankill Road; notably, battles between the Royal Irish Constabulary and Protestants were a major feature of these riots.³² What is important for us here is the imbrication of the global in the local and vice versa. Territoriality and the formation of enclaves occurred on the microcosmic level through acts of violence and fear of acts of violence; the state's role in prohibiting nationalist symbols and promoting unionist symbols produced the city centre as a space of commerce and Britishness; moments of political crisis for the state such as the first Home Rule Bill in 1886 saw global political concerns enacted on local ground. "As the history of Belfast's mid-Victorian riots shows, communal conflict often took the form of disagreements over each group's place – literally and imaginatively – in the city," argues Sean Farrell.³³

This interconnection between the local and the global was also apparent in the period between 1912 and 1919, following the Home Rule crisis. As in 1886, the unrest that emerges here connects local issues of segregation and violence with national issues of exclusion, inclusion and the nature of the imagined community. Two incidents in 1912 illustrate the nature of the politics of space in this period. Firstly, in July, some 2,400 Catholics and a few hundred Protestant trade unionists were expelled from their workplaces by unionist protestors. In the case of the expulsion of Catholics, this represents a proto-example of the way in which Catholicism became synonymous with 'disloyalty' in the post-partition state. The Protestant workers were expelled for refusing to join the Ulster Clubs, associations set up to agitate against Home Rule that would later

³² Radford, 'Cobbles', p206; Farrell, *Rituals and Riots*, p244.

³³ Farrell, *Rituals and Riots*, p228.

become the bedrock for the paramilitary Ulster Volunteers. Speaking in the British parliament on 31st July 1912, the nationalist politician and trade unionist Joe Devlin described the streets paraded with “Orange mobs”, and thousands of workers “who are compulsorily disemployed owing to the reign of terror which exists [in Belfast]”.³⁴ Devlin’s language, while informed by his political remit, is suggestive of the way in which violence was employed to enforce both territorial claims and police proper or improper behavior and attitudes; these twinned concerns, about the ownership of space or territory and about the way in which a range of possible behaviors are permissible or impermissible in specific space, are important to the understandings of space in Belfast apparent in my interviews.

In terms of the symbolic production of space, in Lefebvrian terms, a second key moment of this period was ‘Ulster Day’ on 28th September 1912, when thousands of unionist men queued at Belfast City Hall to sign the Solemn League and Covenant against the proposed bill for the self-government of Ireland; along with the separate Women’s Declaration against the bill, this moment represented “the single largest public demonstration for a political campaign in any part of the United Kingdom, before or since”.³⁵ The demonstration marked the apogee of the unionist appropriation of public space in the period before partition, although – as with the question of Orange parading – it should not be read as an uncomplicatedly hegemonic moment, given the support of prominent political figures from the Protestant milieu such as William James Pirrie, a director of the Harland & Wolff shipyards, for Home Rule.³⁶ Nonetheless, the mass mobilisation of the Covenanters marks an important precursor to the post-partition production of space, in which the city centre would again be a site where an exclusionary form of national identity would be staged and performed.

Partition and unionist hegemony in the Northern Irish state

³⁴ HC Deb 31 July 1912 vol. 41 cc2088-149.

³⁵ McGaughey, Jane G.V, ‘No Surrender? The Legacy of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant’, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 11, no. 2 (1 June 2013), pp213–30.

³⁶ Morrissey, Conor, “‘Rotten Protestants’: Protestant Home Rulers and the Ulster Liberal Association, 1906–1918’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 61 (3), 2017, p216.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 deferred the political crisis inspired by the third Home Rule bill. For the purposes of this chapter, the next important period is 1920 until 1922, encompassing the Irish War of Independence of 1919 to 1921, the Government of Ireland Act in 1920 and the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, which formalised the partition of six counties in the north as a British dominion and independence for the rest of Ireland.³⁷ Rather than attempting a general history of this period, this section will concentrate on three areas relevant to the question of segregation and sectarianism in Belfast. These are, firstly, the partition itself; secondly, the further instances of violence in the city between 1920 and 1922, and again in 1935; and thirdly, the extensive state apparatus that emerged as a legislative tool for the suppression of nationalist and republican politics in the period immediately following partition, and particularly its role in the management of space and the embedding of what Joe Painter calls the prosaic geographies of stateness into everyday life in Northern Ireland.³⁸

Joe Cleary helpfully defines partition as “an attempt to engineer, usually in an extremely compressed period, nation-states with clear and decisive ethnic majorities”.³⁹ This process entails “a reorganisation of political space”, but one in which the legacies of the previous state structure are central; so in the Northern Irish case, Protestants are constructed as ‘loyal’ citizens of the new state and Catholics as ‘disloyal’ by definition, whether their political sympathies were republican, nationalist or apathetic.⁴⁰ The main thrust of Cleary’s argument is that it is not the innate strength of ethnic or sectarian animosity that produces partition but rather a confluence of colonial or imperial institutions and structures, transnational and global concerns, and political expediency. Because partition takes “virulent ethno-national conflict as an absolute given”, it “is designed to restructure political space to accommodate such conflict rather than to tackle or transform the wider conditions that generated it in the first instance”.⁴¹

³⁷ Anderson, James, and Liam O’Dowd, ‘Imperialism and Nationalism: The Home Rule Struggle and Border Creation in Ireland, 1885–1925’, *Partition and the Reconfiguration of the Irish Border* 26, no. 8 (1 November 2007), pp934–50; for an excellent recent account of the way in which residents on either side of the border negotiated the new terrain after partition see Leary, Peter, *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border, 1922-1972* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

³⁸ Painter, Joe, ‘Prosaic Geographies of Stateness’, *Political Geography* 25, no. 7 (1 September 2006), pp 752–774.

³⁹ Cleary, Joe, *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2004), p21.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p29.

In Lefebvre's terms, the border is a representation of space – a line on a map – that both produces and is produced by spatial practices. In this sense, we need to understand segregation, sectarianism and violence between Protestants and Catholics, both in the 1920s and the post-1968 period, as the product of a set of historical conditions – including but not limited to partition – rather than of atavistic or innate animosities. Anderson and O'Dowd highlight the importance of this understanding to historical work on Northern Ireland: "The Irish case is one of many which highlights the continuing legacies of imperialism, and also the malign effects of ignoring it – not least in elite, official or self-serving narratives which simplistically assign all the blame for partition and territorial conflicts to nationalist 'passions' and 'hatreds'."⁴² Any understanding of the punk scene as non or un-sectarian must necessarily bear in mind this historical context, in line with the previous chapter's stress on the role of the state in the double-articulation of sectarianism.

Moving from the border to Belfast, the years between 1920 and 1922 were violent, characterised by loyalist attacks on the minority Catholic population and by the response of the Irish Republican Army. Alan Parkinson estimates the death toll at 498, with 2,000 people injured; in 1920 over 20,000 Catholics, a quarter of the city's Catholic residents, were expelled from their homes, and Catholic workers as well as some Protestant trade unionists were expelled from the shipyards.⁴³ 500 Catholic businesses were also destroyed in this period. Jim McDermott suggests that "the shipyard expulsions and the manner in which they happened divided Belfast even more permanently on religious grounds".⁴⁴ The Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Republican Army were both active in this conflict, while the newly-formed Royal Ulster Constabulary and especially their auxiliary force the 'B' Specials played a prominent role in violence against Catholic communities.

⁴² Anderson and O'Dowd, 'Imperialism and Nationalism'.

⁴³ Parkinson, Alan F, *Belfast's Unholy War: The Troubles of the 1920s* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), p41; Jackson, Alvin, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p248.

⁴⁴ McDermott, Jim, *Northern Divisions: The Old IRA and the Belfast Pogroms 1920-22* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 2001), p34.

Again, space and place are crucial here. Writing in 2013, Niall Cunningham argues that the patterns of violence evident in the period between 1920 and 1922 can only be understood through a consideration of micro-segregation in the city – that is to say, the way in which parts of neighbourhoods or even parts of streets could be coded and read as either Protestant or Catholic.⁴⁵ So, for instance, deaths were concentrated on the inner-north of the city, where different pockets of space were dominated by one community and intersected on an open plane or without a physical barrier; in west Belfast, where the industrial geography of the city kept Protestant and Catholic areas apart, deaths were less frequent. Cunningham says: “Rather than being an inert zone for historical action, space took on a sort of agency in dictating patterns of inter-communal violence”.⁴⁶ So demographic tensions, heightened in the wake of the economic downturn after World War One, are important, as is the immediate context of the political crisis in Ireland. But “economic segregation and stratification were [inseparable] from wider issues of residential polarisation and political difference at the everyday level”.⁴⁷

While the violence of the period between 1920 and 1922 provided an impetus and a justification for the Local Government (Emergency Powers) Act of 1921, the 1922 Criminal Procedure Act and the 1922 Civil Authority (Special Powers) Act, their powers were then exercised well beyond these initial incidents.⁴⁸ Of particular interest here is the Special Powers Act or SPA, which in its initial usage between 1922 and 1943 incorporated “powers of detention and internment, special courts, extensive powers of entry, search and seizure, and the imposition of limits on freedom of movement,” as well as restrictions on expressions of nationalist sentiment prohibiting meetings and processions, flying the Irish flag, and the printing of pamphlets.⁴⁹ Laura K Donohue, in her comprehensive history of these measures and their later adoption (in altered form) by the British state during direct rule, makes the important point that while ostensibly neutral (that is, applying to unionist or loyalist activity as well as nationalist or republican) they were applied exclusively to the latter two groups. She says: “This

⁴⁵ Cunningham, Niall, “‘The Doctrine of Vicarious Punishment’: Space, Religion and the Belfast Troubles of 1920–22’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 40 (1 April 2013), pp52–66.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p58.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p62.

⁴⁸ Donohue, Laura K, *Counter-terrorist law and emergency powers in the UK, 1922-2000* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2001).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp40-41.

legislation became a blunt weapon, exercised on behalf of and by one community in the North, and levied almost exclusively against the Catholic population.”⁵⁰

A contemporary journalistic account under the pseudonym of Ultach, published in 1943, is suggestive of the affective spatial impressions created by this legislation. He describes the experience of being interned and questioned for arbitrary reasons as “direct intimidation, discrimination and provocation by the authorities,” made possible by the fact that Northern Ireland following partition was effectively if not literally a one-party state.⁵¹ The critical part of this narrative for my analysis here comes at the beginning of the piece, where the author is describing his everyday life as a member of the minority Catholic population. He says

I know the people who vote for, support and benefit to a certain extent from the continuance of the regime. About these people I must say I am conscious of no feelings of hatred towards them. I must take them as I find them, and I find them, on the whole, good neighbours, good friends when you make friends with them, and in the casual relations of day-to-day life agreeable and obliging.⁵²

This takes us back to the argument made in chapter one about the necessity of understanding sectarianism as doubly-articulated, at the level of the state and at the level of everyday life; while Ultach’s disavowal of the latter articulation here may be in part rhetorical, his emphasis on the structural conditions of sectarianism and their maintenance by legislation such as the SPA is critical for thinking about punk’s relationship to everyday life and to space.

Joe Painter suggests that “it makes sense to define ‘the state’ as an imagined collective actor in whose name individuals are interpellated (implicitly or explicitly) as citizens or subjects, aliens or foreigners, and which is imagined as the source of central political authority for a national territory”; while this process depends on a social imaginary, the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p39.

⁵¹ Ultach, *Orange Terror: The Partition of Ireland* (Dublin: The Capuchin Annual, 1943), p4.

⁵² Ibid., p1.

mechanisms it uses and its capacity to enforce those mechanisms through technologies of power are material.⁵³ In Painter's terms, the post-partition Northern Irish state is marked by the proliferation of legislation that works to produce a hegemonic spatial politics, working alongside the violent enforcement of residential segregation and workplace expulsions to marginalize the minority Catholic community and embed sectarianism into the everyday geography of the city.

Beyond the 1920s, the 1930s were marked by economic depression and further discrimination against the Catholic minority population within the new Northern Irish state. Between 1931 and 1939, 27 per cent of the workforce was unemployed, leading to major riots in Belfast in 1932.⁵⁴ The key industries described above were all heavily affected by the global economic depression, putting pressure on the Unionist government from its grassroots support and encouraging support for exclusivist and sectarian politics among some (though not all) politicians.⁵⁵ Inadequate sanitation and poverty meant the city suffered more than its English equivalents from infectious diseases – whooping cough, influenza and measles killed around three times as many people in the city as in equivalently-sized cities across the Irish Sea.⁵⁶ Further riots between the Protestant and Catholic communities took place in 1935, concentrated on the area around York Road and Sailortown; anxiety about the relationship between Ulster, Ireland and England was displaced, however, by the emergence of the Second World War.⁵⁷ Air raids on Belfast in 1942 killed 942 people, damaged 56,000 houses and destroyed 3,200, creating the impetus for post-war redevelopment plans in the city.⁵⁸ It has been suggested that communal tensions in the city were somewhat lessened by the war, and that outside of the most-segregated areas increased mixing between the two communities was apparent.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, the 1922 SPA was augmented with the Public Order Act of 1951 and the Flags and Emblems Act of 1954 as a further means of delimiting nationalist

⁵³ Painter, 'Prosaic Geographies', p758.

⁵⁴ Bardon, *A History of Ulster*, pp527-528.

⁵⁵ Norton, Christopher, 'Creating Jobs, Manufacturing Unity: Ulster Unionism and Mass Unemployment 1922-34', *Contemporary British History* 15, no. 2 (1 June 2001), pp1-14.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p532.

⁵⁷ Hepburn, AC, 'The Belfast Riots of 1935', *Social History* 15, no. 1 (1990), pp75-96.

⁵⁸ Doherty, Paul and Michael A Poole, *Ethnic Residential Segregation in Belfast* (Coleraine: Centre for the Study of Conflict, University of Ulster, 1995), p33; see also CEB Brett, *Housing a Divided Community* (Dublin: The Institute of Public Administration, 1986), p64.

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Woodward, Guy, *Culture, Northern Ireland and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Brett, *Housing*, p64; Doherty and Poole, *Ethnic Residential Segregation*, p35.

political expression. The hegemonic symbolic landscape of the Northern Irish state was British and Protestant, encompassing “the union flag; royal toasts; the British national anthem played on formal occasions”.⁶⁰

Spatially, we can draw three points out of this summary. Firstly, that partition created a space that gave a new component to pre-existing identities; secondly, that the violence of the 1920s and 1930s heightened the process of what Hepburn calls ‘defensive’ segregation, especially among working-class Catholic communities;⁶¹ thirdly, that the legislative framework of the new state and especially the SPA created the conditions for the production of hegemonic unionist spaces in sites of social centrality such as the centre of the city. These are the crucial points to bear in mind in terms of the production of space after 1968 and the outbreak of the Troubles. Following McVeigh and Rolston, the critical point here is that “the newly formed state lent a new and radically different specificity to sectarianism” and thus to the sectarianisation of space.⁶²

The politics of space after 1968 and the impact of direct rule

Segregation, and the maintenance of segregation by violence and the fear of violence, continued to be a pronounced feature of Belfast’s geography from the late 1960s onwards.

From 1969, Belfast was occupied by British troops. From 1972, the country as a whole was placed under direct rule from Westminster, with parliament at Stormont suspended up until devolution in 1999. The arrival of troops was a response to the August 1969 riots described at the time by the *Irish News* as “the first major clashes between Protestants and Catholics ... since 1935” and considered by the British government to be clear evidence that the Northern Irish executive had lost control of the febrile situation in the province.⁶³ Although the events of the 14th and 15th of August mainly took place in the

⁶⁰ Hennessey, Thomas, *Northern Ireland: The Origins of the Troubles* (London: Gill & Macmillan, 2005), p378.

⁶¹ Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, p8.

⁶² McVeigh, Robbie and Bill Rolston, ‘From Good Friday to Good Relations: Sectarianism, Racism and the Northern Ireland State’. *Race & Class* 48, no. 4 (1 April 2007), p5.

⁶³ Warner, Geoffrey and Simon Prince, *Belfast and Derry in Revolt: A New History of the Start of the Troubles* (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2012), p149.

(majority Catholic) areas of the Falls and the Ardoyne, they are doubly significant to this narrative because of the foundational status they have in the emergence of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) as well as the impetus for the arrival of the British Army on Belfast's streets. Further riots in June 1970, on the Springfield Road and the Short Strand, allowed the PIRA to strengthen their position within Belfast and marked a turning point in the polarisation of the two communities.⁶⁴ Some 2,000 families were intimidated from their homes in August 1971, and an immediate but long-lasting effect of this outbreak of violence was the fillip it gave to segregation in the city, which intensified in the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁵ Between August 1969 and February 1973 some 60,000 people, 12 per cent of the population of the city, left their homes because of direct intimidation or the risk of violence; the majority of these were Catholic families living in majority-Protestant areas, as well as some Protestants living in majority-Catholic areas.⁶⁶ This further embedded segregation into Belfast's residential network. Shirlow and Murtagh say: "With the onset of extreme violence in the late 1960s, new versions of dangerous places and moral panics were intertwined with established suspicions regarding the threat posed by the 'other' community."⁶⁷ Internment without trial, introduced in August 1971 under the aegis of Operation Demetrius, was a further turning-point in this increasing entrenchment and strengthened the sentiment of nationalist communities against the state.⁶⁸ As with the various aspects of the SPA mobilised during the post-partition period, internment without trial was ostensibly neutral but used exclusively against Catholic communities in this period and led to numerous allegations of misconduct against the British army.⁶⁹

This sentiment was expressed to some extent through the increasing prevalence of armed resistance to the state. In addition to the PIRA's resurgence in the early 1970s, other paramilitary groups emerged in the wake of the rioting that marked the start of the

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp233-255.

⁶⁵ Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast*, 2006, p22; see also Darby, John, *Intimidation and the Control of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986) and Boal, Frederick W., 'Territoriality on the Shankill-Falls Divide, Belfast', *Irish Geography* 41, no. 3 (1 November 2008), pp349-66. .

⁶⁶ *More Than Bricks: 40 Years of the Housing Executive* (Belfast: Northern Ireland Housing Executive, 2011).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ McCleery, Martin J, 'Debunking the Myths of Operation Demetrius: The Introduction of Internment in Northern Ireland in 1971', *Irish Political Studies* 27, no. 3 (1 September 2012), pp411-30.

⁶⁹ Bennett, Huw, "'Smoke Without Fire'? Allegations Against the British Army in Northern Ireland, 1972-5', *Twentieth Century British History* 24, no. 2 (29 February 2012), pp275-304.

decade. The Official IRA retained a presence in the city throughout this period, and from 1975 the Irish National Liberation Army also took part in acts of violence in Belfast. In terms of loyalist violence, the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association were the most significant organisations for Belfast in the 1970s, with the Red Hand Commandos also formed in around 1972.⁷⁰ Along with the increased segregation described above, and the violence and intimidation of the state forces, these organisations played an important role in generating and maintaining spatial divisions between Catholic and Protestant communities in the city.

This generated a spatial framework within the city whereby working-class areas became almost exclusively Catholic or Protestant, following the pattern laid out in the 19th century but to a more extreme degree; it also led to the creation of militarised boundaries between segregated spaces, in what are now known as ‘interface areas’, where a great deal of the violence in Belfast was enacted throughout the years of the conflict.⁷¹ Allen Feldman, an American cultural anthropologist whose 1991 book *Formations of Violence* is an early attempt to theorise the relationship of these spatial frameworks to politics and everyday life, describes how vigilante groups, paramilitaries and later the military policed these boundaries to maintain their integrity – “communities became hostages to their barricades and their ossified boundaries”, he argues.⁷² This is the spatial context for the ‘othering’ of everyday sectarianism, in which the community becomes a refuge or sanctuary from the violence (both imagined and actual) invoked by the image of those on the other side of the wall. Shirlow and Murtagh describe this, helpfully, as a discursive process in which sectarianism is embedded in space through the construction of “physical, visual and political definitions of the boundary between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’

⁷⁰ See Bardon, Jonathan, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992), Chapter 15; Cavanaugh, Kathleen A, ‘Interpretations of Political Violence in Ethnically Divided Societies’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9, no. 3 (1 September 1997), pp33–54.

⁷¹ In an important corrective to this narrative, Cunningham and Gregory have recently drawn on “census data at a high spatial resolution” to show that “death rates were actually lower in immediate proximity to peacelines than they were deeper within Catholic and Protestant enclaves”. See Cunningham, Niall, and Ian Gregory, ‘Hard to Miss, Easy to Blame? Peacelines, Interfaces and Political Deaths in Belfast during the Troubles’, *Political Geography* 40 (1 May 2014), pp64–78.

⁷² Feldman, Allen, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p31. Interface areas and the so-called peace walls that separate them have been the subject of a great deal of research in the years following the Good Friday Agreement; see for instance Leonard, Madeleine and Martina McKnight, ‘Bringing down the Walls: Young People’s Perspectives on Peace-walls in Belfast’, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 31, no. 9/10 (6 September 2011), pp569–582.

community".⁷³ When my interviewees describe their shock at meeting Protestants (or Catholics) for the first time through a shared interest in the punk scene they are delineating this spatial boundary-mark, as well as the social atomisation described in the previous chapter.

The violent demarcation of space

How did violence demarcate space? 1,541 people (46 per cent of those who were killed in the conflict according to the Sutton database) died in the Belfast Urban Area between 1969 and 2001.

The victim profile was overwhelmingly male at 94 percent of the total, and young, with a mean age of just 32. Loyalists were responsible for 67 percent of all random killings, in which the circumstances suggested that the victim was selected by chance or where the casualty was the unfortunate victim of an indiscriminate gun or bomb attack. Republicans accounted for approximately 29 percent of these killings while in contrast, they were responsible for 52 percent of 'targeted' killings, as opposed to 30 for loyalist paramilitary groups and seventeen percent for the various British security organisations. Over three-quarters of all victims in Belfast died in gun attacks, with eighteen percent being killed as a result of bomb blasts and just three percent due to blunt force trauma or stabbing.⁷⁴

The majority of deaths occurred in the early years of the conflict, with one in five of all deaths occurring in 1972 alone.⁷⁵ Interface areas were the site for low-intensity, or performative violence, such as rioting, while most fatal violence occurred inside the enclave (majority-Protestant or Catholic) areas bordered by the interfaces.⁷⁶ What the Sutton figures suggest is that paramilitary violence, and especially loyalist violence, was central in making certain spaces dangerous. It is also important to note that (as my

⁷³ Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast*, p73.

⁷⁴ Cunningham and Gregory, 'Hard to Miss', 2014, p67.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p76.

interviewees discuss – see for instance Alison’s account of being stopped by the police and the army) the apparently reactive or defensive spatial measures of the state were also a form of performative violence.⁷⁷ This violence – both that of state and non-state actors – is understood here as being concerned with (among other things), the contestation of territory and the symbolic freight afforded to certain spaces. In my interviews with former punks, a remembered fear of violence is often attached to stories about improper or transgressive engagements with sectarianized, segregated spaces.

In summary then, violence and the threat of violence “encouraged political and cultural retrenchment and the physical and cognitive remapping of the city”.⁷⁸ Retrenchment, or the hardening of division between the two communities, made existing inter-community cultural and social practices – “boxing, pigeon-racing, card-playing and drama” – less common, without of course occluding them entirely.⁷⁹ The punk scene was unusual in that it became a popular cultural formation in 1977 or 1978 – meaning, in Williams’ terms, it was an emergent social practice, rather than a residual one like those described by Shirlow and Murtagh above – and remained part of the city’s youth culture until the mid-1980s. While it did not necessarily act as a direct challenge to the logic of segregation and violence described above (young people from both communities met in the city centre, or the relatively-safe confines of south Belfast, but then returned to their homes in segregated residential areas afterwards) it does represent an attempt to reorder the symbolic meaning of place, and as will be argued below it provided a space for young people to engage in practices of mobility and transgression, and to rethink their own understanding of space and community.

Reshaping the ‘defensive city’

Of course, punks were not the only people attempting to reorder place in the period following the outbreak of conflict, particularly after the proroguing of Stormont and the inception of direct rule. On July 21st 1972, nine people died and a further 130 were injured over the course of ‘Bloody Friday’, when the Provisional IRA detonated 22 bombs

⁷⁷ Murray, Raymond, *State Violence: Northern Ireland, 1969-1997* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1998).

⁷⁸ Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast*, p74.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p77.

across Belfast, many in bus stations and other transport hubs. Following this attack and the launch of Operation Motorman, which brought about the deployment of 40,000 further British troops in Belfast and Derry, the capital became “a laboratory for radical experiments on the fortification of urban space”, in which defensive planning and architecture worked along with the police and the army to create a heavily securitised and surveilled urban environment.⁸⁰ The determination of the government to seal off the central business zone of the city was heightened by the fact that, while the bombs detonated on Bloody Friday all went off within the central area, they were kept outside all of the ‘restricted traffic zones’ – a forerunner to the ring of steel erected around this space by 1974.⁸¹

Initially, the ring of steel was split into four zones; by March 1976 it had been amalgamated to form one zone, meaning only one search was required when entering this part of the city rather than several as the shopper or walker moved between each area. The ‘ring’ consisted of “one large security sector ringed by seventeen ten to 12-foot-high steel gates”; this reduced the number of personnel needed to maintain the cordon, although many shops employed their own teams of security staff to carry out further searches.⁸² Working in tandem with a concerted effort on the part of the military to control and contain working-class estates, this strategy of insulation and normalisation – while largely functioning as a technique for keeping violence to the residential areas outside of the city centre – gave the area “the appearance of a besieged citadel”.⁸³

In 1978 the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason, set up a working group “to make the centre of Belfast a lively centre of social entertainment for citizens and visitors”.⁸⁴ However, in 1980 the Belfast Telegraph reported that the group’s ambitious proposals, which included a ball room, a family entertainment centre, an ice rink and an indoor sports stadium, would not be met with any additional funding. With some understatement, a spokesperson for the Department of the Environment told the paper

⁸⁰ Coaffee, Jon, *Terrorism, Risk and the Global City: Towards Urban Resilience*, (London: Routledge, 2006), p23.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p26.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p27.

⁸³ Jarman, Neil, ‘Intersecting Belfast’, p115, in Bender, Barbara (ed.), *Landscape – Politics and Perspectives* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

⁸⁴ HC Deb 09, November 1978, Vol 957, cc1161-2.

that “there are [...] many other pressing demands on public funds”, suggesting that the private sector should be encouraged to cover the costs of any potential developments.⁸⁵ Writing in 1984, retail analyst Stephen Brown described the commercial and shopping geography of Belfast as not unlike that of many other small British cities, while noting that new developments such as the Fountain Centre and the Central Arcade “as often as not represent compensation-funded replacements for premises destroyed during the campaign of terror”, and in his sanguine view as failing to provide “adequate retail accommodation” for the population.⁸⁶

Recent research based on declassified planning documents has shed light on the contentious issue of to what extent urban planning in Belfast was led by state security agencies. This information suggests that “the planning system in Northern Ireland was very much ‘steered’ in the direction of securing (literally) the maximum degree of segregation possible between contentious areas of the city and ensuring the delivery of ‘defensive planning’”.⁸⁷ As well as acting as an important corrective to previous work that minimises security force involvement in the manipulation of territory and urban planning, these findings emphasise the importance of understanding the connection between conflict management and the management of everyday life in the city.⁸⁸ Although urban architecture can be understood as an attempt to mould ideal citizens, it also functions through a process of exclusion and containment, the production of “spatial purification” whereby certain areas are considered safe and others not so, or certain areas considered accessible to some but not to others; in this sense it acts in a similar way to the mental architecture of fear and violence described by Shirlow and Murtagh above, although on the level of the state rather than that of everyday practices.⁸⁹ This process operated in Belfast through the attempt to wall off the city centre, warding off potential violence that could have materially affected the functioning of the area while also symbolically representing an attack on centralised state power; conversely, this also

⁸⁵ Belfast Telegraph, January 25th 1980, p4.

⁸⁶ Brown, Stephen, ‘The Retail Scene in: Belfast’, *Retail and Distribution Management* 12, no. 5 (1 May 1984), pp39–42.

⁸⁷ Cunningham, Tim, ‘Changing Direction: Defensive Planning in a Post-Conflict City’, *City* 18, no. 4–5 (3 September 2014), p459.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*; Cunningham makes the related point that these planning decisions had the effect of marginalising working-class communities in the north and west of the city, as well as further entrenching segregation.

⁸⁹ Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast*.

entailed allowing for a degree of violence outside of the cordoned-off zone, a policy that Cunningham suggests is partially to blame for the codifying of residential segregation across the urban landscape.⁹⁰

Three key points can be drawn from this history of Belfast's development from the Victorian period to the 1970s and 1980s. Firstly, residential segregation and the sectarianisation of space in Belfast has a historical basis in the conflicts of the 19th and early 20th century, although the way in which this segregation is articulated and marked out changed following the violence of 1969, and is unevenly dispersed across parts of the city. Residential segregation went along with social segregation, because residents understood certain spaces as safe and certain spaces as unsafe; however, even in the 19th century this was never totalising, as Hirst's account of shared working-class culture, and Shirlow and Murtagh's evocation of the same in the pre-Troubles period, suggest.⁹¹ The former punks interviewed here all had different experiences of segregation, depending on where in the city they grew up in, or where they lived after that, and whether their families were Catholic or Protestant; however, they were all conscious of it in some way.

Secondly, one of the ways in which segregation (and sectarianism) were maintained as practices and modes of thought is through violence and the fear of violence. Again, interviewees experienced this differently depending on their position and life-course, but it is a persistent theme throughout all of the conversations. Thirdly, symbolic factors are also relevant in considering how people experienced, used and interacted with spaces; this applies to the statuary around City Hall as much as to the murals on Sandy Row or the Falls. An account of the punk scene as a spatial phenomenon must consider its symbolic reappropriation of space as well as the different practices of sociality and movement it allowed young people to engage in.

The punk scene

Segregation, violence, and the state and non-state production of sectarianised and asymmetrical space are the context for the institutions and practices that were part of the

⁹⁰ Cunningham, 'Changing Direction', 2014, p460.

⁹¹ Hirst, *Religion*, p39; Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast*, p74.

punk scene. These forces also underpinned the dispositions, performances and acts that formed the lived spatial experience of the punk scene and helped to constitute its structure of feeling in the narratives of my interviewees. The institutions were both pre-existing spaces and venues, repurposed – the Ulster Hall, the McMordie Hall at Queen’s University, the Cornmarket, the Harp and Pound bars – and spaces that were deliberately geared towards the punk scene – Terri Hooley’s record shop, Good Vibrations, and later the A Centre and the Warzone Collective’s café and rehearsal space, Giros. All of these sites were scattered around the centre of the city, mostly within the area delimited by the ring of steel erected around this area from 1974 – the McMordie Hall, off University Road, is an exception. How, then, can we fit them into the history of segregation, sectarianism and violence outlined above? Did the existence of these places and the fact that they were patronised by young Catholics and young Protestants together have any relationship to the spatial politics of Belfast in the 1970s? What kinds of spatial practices are relevant to our understanding of these sites? I do not propose to answer these questions in full in this chapter. A more detailed engagement with them takes place through sustained engagement with the narratives of my interviewees in the final three chapters of the thesis. But this section will lay out some of the uses of these spaces as apparent in documentary accounts of the scene, before returning to the work of Lefebvre.

“It’s music we want to hear – not religion” – gigs and venues

Firstly, and most obviously, venues held gigs. The Ulster Hall and McMordie Hall were generally where the biggest gigs were held – the Ramones, the Clash, the Stranglers, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and later Stiff Little Fingers and the Undertones, and the Punk and New Wave Festival in 1980 – while the Harp and the Pound hosted smaller events featuring local bands. Accounts of the Clash’s cancelled gig at the Ulster Hall in 1977 give an insight into the structure of the larger events, which did not only entail standing or sitting in a hall and listening to a band, but also an arrangement of other movements in space – travelling to and from the venue from residential parts of Belfast or from outside of the city, congregating in streets and pubs before and after the music.⁹²

⁹² This point will be returned to in chapter five in Gareth’s account of getting home from a late-running gig featuring Siouxsie and the Banshees and local band Rudi.

The Clash's concert was scheduled to take place on 20th October, a few months after the release of their self-titled debut album – according to the promoter, some 2,000 fans intended to come to the concert, a few hundred more than the venue's maximum capacity. But issues with the venue's insurance meant it was called off just hours before the band were expected to play, to the obvious dismay of the crowd. This led to confusion on the ground, with rumours that the gig would be moved to the McMordie Hall, and then to fighting between young people and the police after the latter's heavy-handed attempts to move them on from the streets surrounding the Ulster Hall. The actual rioting itself seems to have been fairly desultory. Some of the venue's windows were broken and five arrests were made, but the sanguine tone of the report in the Belfast Telegraph does not suggest anything that would have taken the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) aback.⁹³ Nonetheless, Terri Hooley has described this incident (with his typical flair for fanning the flames of Belfast punk's mythology) as perhaps "the only riot of the Troubles where Catholics and Protestants were fighting on the same side"; for Hooley, it emphasised that "to be a punk was to be a pariah".⁹⁴

A similar tack was taken by Clash manager Caroline Coon in her account of the cancelled gig, written for *Sounds* magazine shortly after the cancellation.⁹⁵ As with Hooley's account, this story should be understood in part as an exercise in image creation, Coon working to position her band as political and daring just as Hooley works to emphasise the counter-cultural and non-sectarian nature of the Belfast punk scene. The *Sounds* article moves on dual tracks to both exoticise Belfast (as a site of potential violence – the article is called 'Clash in the City of the Dead') and to normalise or depoliticise the conflict by showing teenage punks behaving here as they might in London or Manchester. Coon describes the spatial and ideological constraints operating in the city, which is to her "one long nervously obsessive security check. You can't cross a road, drive down the street,

⁹³ Belfast Telegraph, 21st October 1977

⁹⁴ BBC News, 'The Ulster Hall: Belfast's Window on the World', 11 May 2012, accessed online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-17964509>, 11/4/18; Hooley, Terri and Sullivan, Richard, *Hooleygan: Music, Mayhem, Good Vibrations* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2010), p60.

⁹⁵ Coon, Caroline and Giovanni Dadomo, 'Clash in the City of the Dead', *Sounds*, 29th October 1977, accessed online: <https://www.rocksbackpages-com.ezproxy.brighton.ac.uk/Library/Article/clash-in-the-city-of-the-dead>, 12/4/18.

walk into a shop or hotel without passing through an elaborate system of flashing lights, concrete and steel barricades, high barbed wire fences or road blocks".⁹⁶

This constraint is opposed to the freedom embodied by punk. "Within minutes of arriving in town, the Clash are surrounded by fans. Heavy punks. Safety pins through their cheeks. Dog collars. Bondage straps. The lot. They are feverishly excited. Everyone's smiling and laughing."⁹⁷ A Protestant laboratory worker called George responds to her question as to whether the gig will attract both Protestants and Catholics, saying: "Oh yes. We all mix and we get on together. Everybody's bored with the fighting. Only a minority are fighting. It is music we want to hear – not religion".⁹⁸ A final volte-face, though, occurs in the article's final section, describing the sombre mood following the gig's cancellation. "Slowly the fact that there's nothing anybody can do to save the gig sinks in. Go home everybody."⁹⁹

So in terms of the spatial networks described above, large gigs brought large numbers of young people into the usually-quiet streets of the city centre at night; they brought Catholics and Protestants together into the same spaces, although it should be noted both that these sources do not tell us a great deal about the nature of their engagement with one another in these spaces (so it is perfectly possible that groups of Catholics and groups of Protestants could go to the same gig and not leave their friends, for instance). As Coon's vivid if somewhat overwrought account suggests, actually getting to the gigs involved negotiation of the securitised city, both inside and outside of the 'ring of steel'; and although the riot that attended the cancellation of the Clash gig is exceptional, this event alongside the reports on policing referred to in the previous chapter suggest that young people congregating in the streets before and after gigs would have encountered, in different ways and to varying extents, the policing of space by harassment and violence.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ See for example this story by Hector Heathwood, describing the experience of going to the Trident bar in Bangor, a seaside town on the south side of Belfast lough. "Yeah, but you had to get in the minibus, but it was funny cos the whole of Bangor was like a warzone, and when you got into Mr Addison's Taxis it was like a truce. So all the spideys, as it was the name, and all the punks would be like [noise indicating convivial sentiments being shared] dancing to Rivers of Babylon, Bony M, but I remember like, I

“If they weren’t there there’d be no trouble” – everyday spatial experience

The spatial experience of attending smaller gigs or going to club nights and pubs was different again, and less easy to reconstruct via documentary sources. This will be discussed in the following chapters, especially in terms of the memories my interviewees express of socialising in spaces with both Protestants and Catholics, within the framework of residential and social segregation described above. These more diffuse social experiences, less easily plotted than a major event like the Clash gig, are arguably more relevant in terms of thinking about the relationship between punk and space – hanging around town, meeting other punks in record shops or Just Books, the anarchist bookshop above Good Vibrations, going to the A Centre to congregate or sometimes to sniff glue and drink – these are the quotidian acts that engage people in the punk scene in the fabric of the city and its patchwork of segregated and securitised zones.

Terri Hooley’s record shop, Good Vibrations, was originally located on 102 Great Victoria Street, on a vacant premises Hooley remembers from the 60s as being “sandwiched between an antique shop with a big old cannon sitting outside on the pavement, and a shop which sold Lambeg drums”.¹⁰¹ The juxtaposition here between superannuated militarism and loyalist cultural formations is a deft one, again showing Hooley’s adept framing of youth culture as a disruptive force in Northern Ireland – Lambeg drums are large standing drums, worn on the chest with shoulder-straps, synonymous with loyalist marches and parades. As a place to pick up relatively obscure second-hand records it became popular, but again it is the social and affective possibilities of the site that is most notable – “the shop became a hub for people of all ages and creeds ... it was the social element which was the best part of the whole thing”.¹⁰²

remember coming up there one night and there was a rain of bottles coming down on us, I’m thinking fuck, but when we looked over they were coming from the top of the local police station (laughter) so who do you fucking call (laughter).” Interview with HH, 2016.

¹⁰¹ Hooley and Sullivan, *Good Vibrations*, p53.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p54.

John Callaghan offered up a slightly amended version of this proposition, telling me that “at that time, for all the image of big jovial Terri Hooley, he was a grumpy bastard ... he’d seize half a dozen of youse, right you three out, you three out, you right at the back, keep going ... it was an ordeal sometimes! It was one of those places you had to go to. Badges, I remember, good place for badges”.¹⁰³

The A Centre – also known as the Anarchist Centre or simply the Centre, opened in 1981, making it part of the second wave of punk that will be described in my interview with Petesy Burns in chapter six. For Sean O’Neill, its openness and willingness to let in young people made it an important hub for the punk scene of the early 80s. “It was solely responsible for giving the punks somewhere to go on a Saturday afternoon. Because it opened between 2pm and 6pm it allowed punks from other parts of the province to travel to Belfast, see a band and be able to get a bus home.”¹⁰⁴ The DIY ethos championed by Terri Hooley in his stewardship of the Good Vibrations record label is very much in evidence in the history of the A Centre, with volunteers operating every aspect of the venue, running a small vegetarian café and organising events.

Dave Hyndman published a short film in 2011, based on footage produced at the time, attempting to give an insight into an average day at the venue. The most striking section of this documentary is the depiction of the venue as, essentially, besieged by the RUC, who are alleged to be keeping up a constant surveillance on the site while it is open; ‘the peelers’ are a constant source of concern, with Hyndman positing that they’re simply waiting for a minor infraction or problem as an excuse to shut things down.¹⁰⁵ This concern also brings into relief the tensions between different groups within the space; the older figures involved urge the younger punks to refrain from attracting the RUC’s attention – particularly by not sniffing glue overtly inside the venue – and the overall mood is somewhat fractious. The centre was eventually forced to close by the council because it did not have an entertainment licence, although – as with the cancelled Clash gig at the city hall – the technocratic justifications of how space is managed and controlled

¹⁰³ Interview with JC, 2016, p10.

¹⁰⁴ O’Neill, Sean ‘A Centre’, accessed online: <http://www.spitrecords.co.uk/acentre.htm>, 13/4/18.

¹⁰⁵ David Hyndman, ‘The A Centre or the Lost Tribe of Long Lane’, 2010, accessed online: <http://archive.northernvisions.org/related/music/the-a-centre-or-the-lost-tribe-of-long-lane/>, 13/4/18.

by the state tend to merge into critiques of the police's behaviour in narratives of the scene.¹⁰⁶

By 1981, the punk scene in the city was generally becoming less coherent, and ironic reference is made by participants in the film to the dwindling numbers of punks visible on the streets as well as to Belfast's supposed tendency to lag behind other British cities in its adoption of trends and styles. However, the A Centre did host a number of gigs in the short time it existed, including those by local bands such as Stalag 17, Ruefrefx and The Outcasts. The increasing incoherence of the scene is reflected in the form of the film, which features impromptu interviews with bands and concert attendees and makes a conscious effort not to supply an 'official line' on the venue's approach or ideology. The good-natured exchanges between the anarchists and the younger punks is notable as an example of how spaces such as these allowed for franker political discussion than would have been the norm within social settings, particularly social settings that included both Protestants and Catholics. Eventually, RUC pressure did lead to the closing down of the A Centre. Hyndman and others in the film criticise the heavy-handed tactics of the police and their tendency to hassle the young punks, who are perceived to attract attention simply through a combination of youth and visibility. "They're standing outside now, waiting for someone to say something to them ... if they weren't there there'd be no trouble," one interviewee suggests.¹⁰⁷

To return to the question posed at the beginning of this section, then – how does this history fit into the history above? As I have suggested elsewhere, not neatly. We can break this relationship down into three categories. Firstly, we have the ephemeral and repeated movements and spatial acts (gathering on the street, going to a gig and travelling from your home to do so, going out to buy records or clothes) that punks engaged in. Secondly, we have the way in which these kinds of actions relate to practices of identity-formation – in other words, the way in which what you do in certain places makes you think and feel, both about the places and about yourself. Thirdly, we have the attempts made by punks and by facilitators of the punk scene like Dave Hyndman and Terri Hooley to create

¹⁰⁶ See, for instance, the Irish Anarchist History Collective, 'Fight War, Not Wars (October 1982), November 2011, accessed online: <https://irishanarchisthistory.wordpress.com/2011/11/25/fight-war-not-wars-october-1982/>, 29/8/18.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

new places and generate different kinds of social practices, in acts of self-conscious place-making. These categories are overlapping, because they work together – the ephemeral movements are necessary to the processes of spatialised identity-formation; the place-making is related to how people feel about where they are, and to the manifold small acts that come together to make a place. Taken as a whole they suggest a particular structure of feeling related to how people felt about themselves, about Belfast and about the conflict.

The specific spatial elements of the punk structure of feeling are discussed in more depth, via an engagement in critical geographical theory as well as Williams' concept, in the analysis chapters. To conclude, however, I will return to Lefebvre to emphasise the way in which this historical narrative relates to the production of space.

Lefebvre and sectarianised space

As outlined in the introduction, Lefebvre distinguishes between representations of space (maps, plans, drawings); representational space (symbolic space – so think of the statues and murals discussed above, but also places like the Ulster Hall, even the name of which is a referent to a symbolic geography); and spatial practice (the everyday actions undertaken in spaces, and the infrastructure that makes those actions possible – so the drive to work but also the motorway one drives along, for instance).¹⁰⁸ These types of space correspond to space as conceived (representations of space), space as perceived (representational space) and space as lived or acted upon (spatial practice). It is important to Lefebvre that this is a triad rather than a pair, because rather than working as opposites or antagonisms, they work together in interconnected ways to provide a theory of how space is produced and experienced. His account of how each society produces its own social space, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, is central to my understanding of the historical development of hegemonically unionist, sectarianised space in Belfast.

¹⁰⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production*, pp38-39.

Applying his triad to Belfast, we might think of it in this way. The question of representations of space being a true or false image of a material reality is irrelevant, argues Lefebvre – “representations of space are certainly abstract, but they also play a part in social and political practices”.¹⁰⁹ This is a helpful way of thinking about the planning decisions made by the Standing Committee on Security Implications of Housing Problems in Belfast as narrated by Tim Cunningham, who argues that:

There is little doubt that the security forces played a role in determining not just the overall patterns of the city in terms of the route of the Urban Motorway, but also design specifications such as the kind of material that should be used for pavements – that is, not flagstones – and the location of ‘aesthetically pleasing sight screens’ in the form of advertising hoardings, as well as the layout of children's playgrounds.¹¹⁰

As discussed above, the way in which the border determined social and political practices in the north of Ireland after 1920 is also an example of how representations of space have material consequences; so is the ring of steel, which entailed the construction of an image of the city with a safe commercial centre and a dangerous or unsafe periphery.

Representational spaces, “redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements”, are made powerful through the fact that “they each have their source in history – in the history of a people as well as in the history each individual belonging to that people”.¹¹¹ This is space as it is understood, imagined and experienced, but also as it is shaped by the productive forces of the state. In Northern Ireland following partition, the 1922 SPA and its ancillary legislations ensured that the official representational spaces of the province were encoded with an imaginary and a symbolism that was British and unionist.

Finally, spatial practices are defined by Lefebvre as “a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and the networks which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’ life, and leisure”.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p41.

¹¹⁰ Cunningham, ‘Changing Direction’, p459.

¹¹¹ Lefebvre, *The Production*, p41.

¹¹² Lefebvre, *The Production*, p38.

Returning to Shirlow and Murtagh's account of the relationship between fear of violence, violence and the use of space, we can consider the way in which the conflict (and the continuing violence in working-class parts of the city following the official end of the conflict, as their account makes clear) can cognitively and physically remap Belfast, and alter where people walk, closing off certain routes and encouraging the use of others.¹¹³ Segregation and the formation of Protestant and Catholic enclaves are further examples of how spatial practices developed in Belfast from the mid-19th century.

Lefebvre, then, provides a crucial framework for thinking about how space is rendered meaningful, and how this process takes place in a dialectical relationship between the way in which Belfast is planned and represented; the way in which it is imagined and given symbolic resonances, either at the level of the state or at the level of different individuals and communities; and finally the way in which people engage with the city in their everyday lives and practices. In this sense, his understanding of the production of space provides the bedrock for my understanding of the practices and experiences of the punk scene I describe below.

Furthermore, importantly for my project, he also suggests some possibilities for resisting the alienating effects of everyday life within this spatial triad, although for him this is the alienation immanent to capitalism in contemporary urban life rather than the hybridised relationship between class and sectarianism described above. The urban, he argues, is both the site of struggle and the stakes of that struggle.¹¹⁴

How could one aim for power without reaching for the places where power resides, without planning to occupy that space and to create a new political morphology – something which implies a critique in acts of the old one, and hence too of the status of the political sphere itself?¹¹⁵

What this occupation of space might entail in Belfast is suggested by John Nagle, drawing on Lefebvre's work but situating it in the context of urban division in the Northern Irish

¹¹³ Shirlow and Murtagh, *Belfast*, p74.

¹¹⁴ Lefebvre, *The Production*, p386.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p387.

capital. In his 2009 essay, Nagle uses three case studies (MayDay marches bringing together a cross-community group of labour activists, Gay Pride, bringing together parts of the city's LGBT community, and a carnival bringing together street artists and musicians from across the city) to suggest that Belfast "contains plentiful detritus to construct different stories which contradict and provide an antidote to normative discourses", drawing on Lefebvre's suggestion that the most important thing is to multiply the ways in which the city can be read.¹¹⁶ Nagle suggests that what these heterogeneous groups have in common is that they "are identity-involving and transforming, [and that] they manipulate symbolic spatial arrangements and challenge entrenched sectarian values".¹¹⁷ They reject singular narratives of identity, and reject the spatialised expressions of these narratives, in favour of a plural and multi-linear trajectory. Drawing on Nagle's efforts to use Lefebvre to think about sectarianism as well as about capitalism, but also on recent work on the specific practices that urban inhabitants can undertake to challenge the entrenched values and discourses that shape representations of space, representational space and spatial practice, I will argue that at times participants in the punk scene attempted to "manipulate symbolic spatial arrangements and challenge entrenched sectarian values".¹¹⁸

However, while Lefebvre's framework will provide the bedrock on which my analysis of spatial practice in the punk scene is built, it is important to note that his account of space does not comprehensively cover the spatialised structure of feeling in the punk scene as evoked by my interviewees. This is because (as Deborah Martin and Joseph Pierce propose in an invaluable 2015 account of the French geographer's indelible influence on the humanities and social sciences) his account of the history of how spaces like cities are produced is insufficiently attentive to the "inherently, irreducibly hybrid" knowledges and experiences of the people who live there.¹¹⁹ Pierce and Martin suggest that Lefebvre's focus on the ontology of space, or what it is, means that he offers little assistance in thinking about its epistemological dimensions, or in thinking about how it is known and experienced.

¹¹⁶ Nagle, John 'Sites of Social Centrality and Segregation: Lefebvre in Belfast, a "Divided City"', *Antipode* 41, no. 2 (25 February 2009), pp326–347.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Pierce, Joseph, and Deborah G. Martin, 'Placing Lefebvre', *Antipode* 47, no. 5 (9 October 2015), p1289.

In the context of an oral history project that is interested in both how people experienced places and how they narrate and describe those places, a consideration of place as well as a historical understanding of the production of space is important. This will be expanded upon in the analysis chapters as I describe how my interviewees remember the “affective elements of relational place” that constituted the punk scene as a spatial structure of feeling.¹²⁰

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that sectarianism in Northern Ireland is inextricable from the historical production of space in the province. In the context of Belfast specifically, it has suggested that three periods – the rapid industrialisation of the city in the 19th century, the conflict around partition and the partition itself from 1920 onwards, and the securitisation and retrenchment of segregation from 1968 – are crucial in understanding the production of sectarianised space. As with the previous chapter’s account of the structural nature of sectarianism, the emphasis here has been on the role of the post-partition state in creating an urban geography which worked to exclude and marginalise the minority-Catholic population, and which reinforced sectarian identity construction through the management of segregation and the symbolic unionist hegemony of the centre of the city.

Understanding the spatial politics of the punk scene entails considering its intervention in this landscape. This means recognising the limits of such an intervention as well as considering its capacity for the sort of disruptive or transgressive actions described by John Nagle in his work on Lefebvrian spatial performances in Belfast that “construct different stories which contradict and provide an antidote to normative discourses”.¹²¹ It also means placing the scene and the people who constitute it, including my interviewees, within sectarianised space; for instance, the act of going to a gig cannot be understood by focusing on the gig as an isolated moment without considering the process of getting

¹²⁰ Ibid., p1293.

¹²¹ Nagle, ‘Sites of Social Centrality’, 2009.

there, moving from a residential area to the city centre and back again, and the engagement with the infrastructure of division that movement makes necessary.

Having developed the backdrop for the punk scene in the previous two chapters, the following chapter will describe the method through which the structure of feeling in my interviewees accounts is analysed.

CHAPTER THREE: INTERPRETATIVE ORAL HISTORY, MEMORY STUDIES AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Introduction

The previous chapters have described and analysed the doubly-articulated sectarian culture of Belfast in the 1970s and 1980s through two historical narratives describing how this culture was expressed and produced at institutional and spatial levels. Alongside this, they have proposed, firstly, that we understand the punk scene as a structure of feeling constituted of a constellation of institutions, practices and feelings; secondly, that we can perceive those practices as spatial practices of sociality, performed in the context of the increasing segregation of Catholic and Protestant communities from 1969 onwards. This chapter will show how interpretative oral history can access this structure of feeling, and show this method's facility for drawing out the structure of feeling's relationship to experiences of space and place in everyday life. It will begin with an account of the role of memory in oral history work in general and to oral history work in Northern Ireland specifically. Following this it will describe oral history's methodological development; highlight several important facets of the method as they relate to this project; and conclude with an account of my own approach that connects it to the discussion outlined here.

Using an interpretative oral history method, and engaging with the way in which memory studies has developed its understanding of the relationship between cultural and individual memory, is in part a response to a relative paucity of documentary sources for analysing the punk scene in Belfast, particularly in terms of the everyday lives of its participants.¹ However, it is also a recognition of the specific set of insights that can be

¹ Here and throughout the chapter, I use the term interpretative oral history to refer to what Alastair Thomson calls post-positivist oral history and Linda Shopes calls textual oral history, although Thomson's feelings about this shift are more positive than those of Shopes. See Thomson, Alastair, "Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History", *The Oral History Review* 34, no. 1 (2007), pp49-70; Shopes, Linda, "Insights and Oversights": Reflections on the Documentary Tradition and the Theoretical Turn in Oral History', *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 2 (1 September 2014), pp257-268. This is not intended to suggest that oral history practices prior to the emergence of Alessandro Portelli and Luisa Passerini, discussed below, are not engaged in acts of interpretation. Indeed, it is important to bear in mind that any

generated by oral histories, the capacity of interviews to contain descriptions of affect, emotion, memory, temporality and subjective experience that are much more difficult (although certainly not impossible) to access through documentary sources. I will show here how oral history speaks to these categories, as a method that is well-suited to tuning into what the psychogeographical artist and writer Laura Oldfield Ford describes as “collective moments of euphoria, like Reclaim the Streets, parties taking over the Westway, blocking roads ... [moments of] breaking out of this atomised despondency and actually achieving something really empowering”.² Ford’s stress on the affective and emotional aspects of the squatting and activist scenes she documents is helpful, in that she seems to be working with something similar to what Williams calls a structure of feeling; it is also helpfully spatial – streets, roads, parties on dual carriageways. Finally, Ford’s account points nicely to the idea of unrealised possibility that is part of a residual structure of feeling, chiming with the critical nostalgia expressed at times by a number of my interviewees.³

The capacity of the oral history interview to produce traces of these feelings – not only the feelings of euphoria or empowerment that animate Ford’s work, but also the feelings of boredom, constraint or anomie that bracket and from these exceptional moments – is what will be considered throughout this chapter, which begins by formulating the concept of cultural memory that will be mobilised when in analysing my interviews.

Cultural memory and oral history

In the quote from Raymond Williams’ 1958 essay *Culture is Ordinary* which opened the first chapter of this thesis, he says: “The making of a society is the finding of common

attempt to organise oral or textual ‘historical records’ into a coherent narrative is interpretive. My aim is to emphasise the intersubjective and fluid nature of the texts produced through oral history, an important aspect of the methodology that has been particularly illuminated by feminist historians, also discussed below.

² Barry, Robert, 2018, “The Quietus | Features | Craft/Work | Zones Of Sacrifice: Drifting Through London With Laura Oldfield Ford”, *The Quietus*, accessed online here: <http://thequietus.com/articles/21820-laura-oldfield-ford-interview>, 29/8/18; see also Ford, Laura Oldfield, *Savage Messiah* (London: Verso Books, 2011).

³ This facet of Williams’ concept is helpfully explored in Gallagher, Catherine and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact and discovery, writing themselves into the land.”⁴ This section will attempt to make explicit what is implicit in this formulation through a consideration of one of its facets, that of memory and particularly of cultural memory. The movement between “common meanings and directions”, “experience, contact and discovery”, and what becomes written into the land – or what becomes part of a shared, if not necessarily national, culture – is animated in part by the interaction between public and private memory, and by the institutions, practices, discourses and texts that mediate and make possible this interaction.⁵ Cultural memory, then, is used here to refer to the social conditions under which individual memories are shared and discussed; to the various acts of commemoration, performance and heritage that organize memories in a whole other than the sum of their separate parts; and to the cultural texts that store, mediate and shape individual memories.

In line with the expansive definition of culture proposed by Williams in *Culture is Ordinary* and used throughout the thesis, my use of the term cultural memory is not limited to what Jan Assman calls in his definition of the concept the “fateful events of the past whose memory is maintained through cultural formations (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)”.⁶ In Assman’s definition, these are separate from communicative memory, which is a more fluid form of collective remembering between people, with a shorter effective life and a less definite structure than the monumental and institutional material he classifies under the rubric of cultural memory. Rather than taking this approach, which seems to imply a separation between forms of culture that would not make sense in relation to my use of Williams’ work, my understanding of cultural memory will draw on the work of the Popular Memory Group (PMG) and of oral historians influenced by the PMG to consider the way in which individual memory narratives are formed within their wider context, both in terms of the formations and institutions identified by Assman and in terms of the social narratives and groupings that he classifies under the term ‘communicative memory’.

⁴ Williams, Raymond, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London: Verso, 1989), p93.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Assmann, Jan, and John Czaplicka, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’, *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995), pp125–133.

This intersection between individual memory and society is one of the central lines of enquiry in the PMG's 1982 essay on the social production of memories.⁷ The PMG argue that a society's sense of the past is produced through public representations and through private memories. This suggests two sets of relations, in their account – firstly, the relation between dominant public representations and attempts to challenge or shift these public representations; secondly, “the relation between these public discourses in their contemporary state of play and the more privatized sense of the past which is generated within a lived culture”.⁸ Oral history, they argue, can help to analyse both these sets of relations by showing how public representations of the past are formulated; how they connect to and affect everyday senses and understandings of the past; and how individual narratives of the past are formed within these two, interconnected discourses of the past. This threefold relationship between public representations, everyday senses of the past and individual memory is central to my understanding in the thesis of how oral histories of the punk scene are constructed in conversation with various memory cultures in and out of Northern Ireland.

The work of Alistair Thomson on Australian veterans of World War One, and Penny Summerfield's research on British women's experience of World War Two, provide examples of how this understanding of the relationship between cultural memory, subjectivity and oral history can be mobilised for analysis. For Thomson, “our remembering changes in relation to shifts in the particular publics in which we live, and as the general public field of representations alters”, as well as “in relation to our shifting personal identity [or identities].”⁹ His interviewees compose their memories in relation to the dominant cultural memory of Anzac heroism during the war, some drawing on cultural texts such as the 1918 film *Gallipoli* to do so, others struggling to describe experiences of fear or trauma in relation to the powerful cultural memory of daring masculine bravado surrounding Australia's role in World War One. For Summerfield, “local and particular accounts cannot escape the conceptual and definitional effects of powerful public representations”, meaning all oral history narratives are the product of

⁷ Popular Memory Group, ‘Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method’, in Perks, Rob and Alistair Thomson (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp75-87.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p78.

⁹ Thomson, Alistair, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p9.

a movement between the experiential and the discursive.¹⁰ Her interviewees draw on available public narratives and archetypes to make sense of their roles serving on the home front – so on heroic or on stoic personas, for example.¹¹ Cultural memory discourses of modernisation and change are used to make sense of shifts in subjectivity – so among her interviewees who adopt a ‘heroic’ persona when characterising their wartime work, Summerfield says “one of the ways such an experience was portrayed in personal terms was through a story of development from a shy and inarticulate personality to an outgoing one”.¹² Personal and cultural memories are intertwined, and the inherent power dynamics of this process analysed, in both Summerfield and Thompson’s research.

In producing this analysis, Summerfield and Thomson mobilise a concept of composure which will also be useful for my account of the relationship between individual narratives and cultural memory. Composure, as originally described by Graham Dawson, has a double meaning in the context of oral history narratives.¹³ On the one hand, we compose narratives of the self by drawing on a repertoire of available social forms, meaning this is never an individual process as such; on the other hand, we engage in this process in order to achieve subjective composure. Alistair Thomson puts it well in explaining his use of the concept: “When we remember we also seek to create a past we can live with, a story that deals with the raw and jagged edges of past experience and offers a comfortable and coherent narrative for the present.”¹⁴ How my interviewees compose their narratives in relation to cultural memory in Northern Ireland will be considered in the analysis chapters below.

The crux of the work of the PMG and the oral historians drawing on their concepts, then, is that there is no such thing as purely individual memory; memories are formed by

¹⁰ Summerfield, Penny, *Reconstructing Women’s Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p266.

¹² *Ibid.*, p261.

¹³ Dawson, Graham, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (Hove: Psychology Press, 1994); see also Roper, Michael, ‘Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: The Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War’, *History Workshop Journal* 2000, no. 50 (1 January 2000), pp181–204.

¹⁴ Thomson, Alistair, ‘Anzac Memories Revisited: Trauma, Memory and Oral History’, *The Oral History Review* 42, no. 1 (1 April 2015), pp22-23.

drawing on available social and cultural narratives, or cultural memory discourses, alongside the composure and making-sense of past experiences. Anna Green, writing in 2004, expressed her concern that that “the cultural theorisation of memory/remembering increasingly rejects the value of individual recollection”.¹⁵ However, this is a misleading criticism. Whether the currency with which memories are mediated and articulated is understood to be psychic, social or (as is most often the case) a combination of both, this process does not imply an inability to “contest or critique cultural scripts or discourses”.¹⁶ As is clear in Thompson’s exploration of the contestation between official and unofficial Anzac memories of the Australian role in World War One, for instance, it rather emphasises that individual memories cannot exist in a vacuum or outside of power relations. To simply assert the “richness and variety of individual consciousness” without understanding the forces acting upon that consciousness would be to depoliticise the power of oral history as a method for making visible the relationship between cultural memory and individual remembering outlined by PMG.¹⁷

In summary, then, cultural memory is understood here as a way of thinking about the interplay between past and present, and about the power relations inherent in this relation. It is also understood as having interlocking layers within the narratives of my interviewees – so for instance, the punk scene in Northern Ireland has its own cultural memory, which colours the way in which my interviewees describe it, but this coexists with a transnational cultural memory of punk more generally, a cultural memory of the Troubles which is differently inflected depending upon the ethno-sectarian position of the interviewee, and so on.¹⁸ The essential point is that the narratives of the former punks I have interviewed for this project are formed through an engagement with a series of processes, mediations, texts and so on that are referred to throughout as cultural memory; the claim is not that their narratives are reducible to expressions of cultural memory, and it is not that the various cultural memories they draw on are uncontested

¹⁵ Green, Anna, ‘Individual Remembering and “Collective Memory”: Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates’, *Oral History* 32, no. 2 (2004), p37.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p42.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p43.

¹⁸ See Guy Beiner’s 2017 critique of collective memory as presupposing a uniformity or consensus within memory cultures; Beiner, Guy, ‘The Trouble with Remembering; or, the Seven Sins of Memory Studies’, *Dublin Review of Books* (1/11/2017), accessed online <http://www.drbb.ie/essays/troubles-with-remembering-or-the-seven-sins-of-memory-studies> on 3/8/18.

or static, but simply that no individual act of recollection takes place outside of a social context or without a movement between past and present

For example, the punk scene in Belfast's cultural memory is localised and mobile, articulated through different forms of heritage activity (websites, gigs, club nights), through records, YouTube clips and so on, and through the overlapping memories of participants.¹⁹ This memory is contested. In the context of punk in London, a good example of this contestation is Viv Albertine's graffitiing of the British Library's *Punk 1976-1978* exhibition, in which she added the name of the Slits, X-Ray Spex and Siouxsie and the Banshees to a board describing the supposed importance of the Clash, the Sex Pistols and the Buzzcocks to the formation of the British punk scene, was an intervention intended to draw attention to the display's focus on male punk bands at the expense of their female counterparts.²⁰ In terms of my interviews and the Northern Irish punk scene, we frequently discussed the recent Terri Hooley biopic *Good Vibrations* and its status as a memory text and cultural representation of punk. The film generated an ambivalent recognition in the participants who had seen it – some expressed pride at seeing their experiences represented in a public format, becoming part of a tangible historical document, while others were discomfited or unimpressed by the narrative structure the film imposed on the scene through its attempt to impose a particular pattern of remembrance on to events. These conflicting responses will be analysed further in the relevant chapters, but it is worth pausing here to consider firstly the status of *Good Vibrations* as an intervention in the memory of punk in Northern Ireland, and secondly its position within a constellation of different cultural markers referring to the history of the punk scene.

Good Vibrations and the cultural memory of punk in Belfast

¹⁹ See Rumsy, Abby Smith, *When We Are No More: How Digital Memory is Shaping Our Future* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2016) for an interesting discussion of the relationship between collective memory and digital media.

²⁰ Daly, Rhian, 'The Slits' Viv Albertine defaces punk exhibition for erasing women's involvement', *The NME*, 17/7/16, accessed online <https://www.nme.com/news/music/the-slits-1188853>, 3/8/18.

Released in 2013, *Good Vibrations* is a biopic of Terri Hooley that uses his life story as a lens to depict the punk scene more broadly as an oasis of non-sectarian solidarity and friendship amidst the violence of the Troubles.²¹ There are some problems with this narrative, notably its tendency to depoliticise the conflict and its tendency to collapse the complex politics of youth culture and agency into a simplified account that relies heavily on the individual actions of Hooley himself.²² But for the purpose of this thesis these critiques are less important than the visibility and success of the film itself, which was well-reviewed and won a number of awards.²³ This success represented the most visible manifestation of the punk scene in cultural memory since at least the publication of *It Makes You Want to Spit* in 2003, which was released to mark the 25th anniversary of the beginnings of punk in Belfast in 1976 (although this is a somewhat arbitrary choice of date, as discussed above).

Along with the unveiling of a blue plaque commemorating the punk scene at the former site of the Harp Bar on Hill Street near the end of 2012 (as the finale of Belfast Music Week, and followed by an early screening of the film), *Good Vibrations* marks the consolidation of the already-existing narrative of punk as a non-sectarian youth culture. Speaking at the unveiling of the plaque, then-Lord Mayor Gavin Robinson said of Terri Hooley:

He is a remarkable man who came out of difficult times in Belfast. In the 1970s he set up a record shop in the city when many other people were going out of business: he provided an open and welcoming space when much of Belfast was closing down. He was a living example of how to survive beyond sectarianism and mistrust ... he discovered a new

²¹ D'sa, Lisa Barros and Glen Leyburn, *Good Vibrations* (London: Universal Pictures UK, 2012).

²² For an extended critique of these tendencies in representations of youth in Northern Irish cinema more broadly see Newby, Lucy and Fearghus Roulston, 'Innocent Victims and Troubled Combatants: Representations of Childhood and Adolescence in Post-Conflict Northern Irish Cinema', pp23-41, in Ingrid E Castro and Jessica Clark (eds), *Representing Agency in Popular Culture: Children and Youth on Page, Screen and In Between* (London: Lexington Books, 2018).

²³ See for example McNeilly, Clare, "Good Vibrations: Critics are bowled over by Belfast's feel-good punk movie smash", *Belfast Telegraph*, 2/4/13, accessed online:

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/film-tv/news/good-vibrations-critics-are-bowled-over-by-belfasts-feelgood-punk-movie-smash-29166356.html> 24/2/19

generation of bands in the town who were inspired by the ideals of punk rock.²⁴

This narrative is consistent with that of *Good Vibrations*, although the film is perhaps more concerned with the debauchery and fun of punk than with its non-sectarian potential or its role as a precursor to the business-led regeneration of the city²⁵. Glenn Leyburn, who directed the film along with Lisa Barros D'Sa, told *The Herald*:

People who grew up through that time don't want to be seen as casualties of war. They were young, they were going out, and they were being like young people everywhere else in the country. A lot of the songs Good Vibes bands wrote weren't necessarily about The Troubles, they were about fancying girls and buses, that sort of stuff.²⁶

In these interventions in the memory culture of punk in Belfast (the film, the plaque and the various events around the film and the plaque) we can discern the outlines of the dominant understanding of the scene, as being on the one hand a form of grassroots community-building and on the other hand a source of fun and escapism for beleaguered young people in the city. We can also see the centrality granted to Terri Hooley as the node around which the scene formed. And finally, we can see the desire to place punk within what Aaron Kelly calls “a new multicultural discourse of equality and reconciliation” in which the scene, somewhat defanged, makes sense in the context of the redeveloped Cathedral Quarter (where the plaque commemorating it now stands) as a signifier of youthful rebellion and the vaguely-defined power of culture to transcend sectarian boundaries.²⁷

²⁴ McClade, Michael, 'Plaque for Godfather of Punk', *Belfast Newsletter*, 9/11/12, accessed online here: <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/whats-on/music/plaque-for-godfather-of-punk-1-4465322>, 22/2/19

²⁵ On this see Legg, George, *Northern Ireland and the Politics of Boredom: Conflict, Capital and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), especially the introduction.

²⁶ Rowat, Alison, 'Interview with Lisa Barros D'Sa and Glenn Leyburn, directors of film Good Vibrations', *The Herald*, 21/3/13, accessed online: https://www.heraldscotland.com/arts_ents/13096898.interview-with-lisa-barros-dsa-and-glenn-leyburn-directors-of-film-good-vibrations/, 22/2/19.

²⁷ Kelly, Aaron, 'Geopolitical Eclipse', *Third Text* 19, no. 5 (1 September 2005), p550.

My interviewees engaged in conversation with this memory culture both explicitly and implicitly. John and Brian both described their involvement with the production of the film, as well as their issues with some aspects of its narrative framing; John's narrative, in particular, drew on a number of the tropes of this memory culture as a way of describing the affective resonances of his initial encounter with punk, while Brian was somewhat more sceptical of its overarching plot. Petesy, strikingly, offered a broadly anarchist critique of the film's emphasis on individual agency, while also acknowledging the emotional force of the representation; Alison, as discussed at length in chapter four, was especially engaged with the usefulness of the film as an intergenerational memory text.

Following on from the useful work in this field of Penny Summerfield and Alistair Thomson, then, it is important to acknowledge that the prominence of this specific cultural memory discourse about punk was present in the formation of the narratives produced through my interviews, and helped to colour the memories expressed by my interviewees. As Summerfield points out in relation to her own work on World War Two, even narrators who are critical of cultural frames may also draw on them to some extent: "Oral history respondents, talking about their own wartime Home Guard experiences, used the narrative structures and imaginative possibilities offered by *Dad's Army*, sometimes explicitly, even when they were critical of [scriptwriters] Perry and Croft's interpretation of the force."²⁸ While it is difficult to assess the precise impact of the increased visibility of punk between 2012 and 2013 on my interviewees' accounts (given that my interviews were conducted between 2015 and 2016, meaning I have no access to their modes of remembering the scene prior to that), what follows in the analysis chapter will be attentive to the cultural circuit at work in the relation between their memories and other cultural texts.

Memory and oral history in Northern Ireland

²⁸ Summerfield, Penny, 'War, Film, Memory: Some Reflections on War Films and the Social Configuration of Memory in Britain in the 1940s and 1950s', *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 1, no. 1 (28 August 2007), p20.

Debates around cultural memory have a particular weight in Northern Ireland. In Graham Dawson's account, "there are good reasons why the past continues to exercise pressure on the present in societies like those in still-partitioned Ireland where political, cultural and psychic landscapes continue to be shaped and polarised along lines inherited from an unresolved time of conflict".²⁹ This section concentrates on two ways in which my project is related to the debate around Northern Irish memory cultures. Firstly, it considers the possibility that memories of the punk scene can be read as generating more pluralistic narratives of the province's recent past. Secondly, it relates this possibility to recent debates around the role of storytelling and oral history mechanisms in 'dealing with the past', and positions my work in relation to this debate.

Punk, memory and alternative solidarities

In terms of how memories of the punk scene relate to memories of the recent past in Northern Ireland, it is first necessary to establish the scale and parameters of the wider memory culture in the province. As the previous two chapters have suggested, sectarianism at the level of institutions and the state and at the level of everyday life, and the spatial expression and maintenance of this sectarianism, characterise Northern Ireland's recent history while also connecting it to a longer history of colonialism and violence. This is both reflected in and reproduced by divisions within cultural memory. For unionists and nationalists, material culture (especially murals), commemorative practices such as parades, and interpersonal practices of remembering are all mechanisms through which the past is renewed with meaning. Ian McBride suggests that this contributes to the fact that "in Ireland, perhaps more than in other cultures, collective groups have thus expressed their values and assumptions through their representations of the past".³⁰ The highly localised experience of conflict violence from 1968 onwards also means that "perceptions [and memories] of victimhood and responsibility remain

²⁹ Dawson, Graham, *Making Peace With the Past? Memory, Trauma and the Irish Troubles* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p8.

³⁰ McBride, Ian, 'Memory and National Identity in Modern Ireland', p3, in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, McBride, Ian (ed) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

overwhelmingly determined by local experiences”.³¹ To draw on the language of the Popular Memory Group (PMG), discussed above, there are a range of distinct public representations of the past in Northern Ireland, in which republican memories of state violence and repression clash with loyalist memories of Provisional Irish Republican Army violence; additionally, there are the various past-driven mechanisms of the state and official and unofficial discourses of peacebuilding and reconciliation, themselves constituting a set of memory cultures.

In this sense, commemorative practices and antagonistic discourses of cultural memory form part of the double articulation of sectarianism described in the first chapter and work to maintain both spatial segregation and cultures of division. However, again, the argument is not that these discourses are themselves fixed or uncontested, internally or externally. Stephen Hopkins, for instance, has shown how the memory of the 1981 hunger strikes has become a site of contestation for contemporary republicanism; Kris Brown has highlighted the way in which local communities in Belfast “engage in a complex calendar of Troubles-related commemoration” that make visible “the hidden [and contested] everyday politics of memory”.³² When considering how my interviewees compose and narrate their memories in relation to broader cultural scripts, the implication being made is not that those scripts are themselves set in stone. But the central question for my project is the consideration of how the individual memories of my participants relate to these wider public memory cultures, as well as to cultural memories of the punk scene, and particularly whether or not the memory of punk can be read as part of what the PMG call a historiography that provides “the means by which we may become self-conscious about the formation of our own common-sense beliefs, those that we appropriate from our immediate social and cultural milieu”.³³ For the PMG, the emphasis here is on the production of socialist, feminist and anti-racist memory cultures within 1980s Britain; for my project, the emphasis is rather on drawing on oral narratives

³¹ Jankowitz, Sarah, ‘The “Hierarchy of Victims” in Northern Ireland: A Framework for Critical Analysis’, *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 12 (2), 2018, p5.

³² Hopkins, Stephen, “‘Our Whole History Has Been Ruined!’ The 1981 Hunger Strike and the Politics of Republican Commemoration and Memory’, *Irish Political Studies* 31, no. 1 (2 January 2016), pp44–62; Brown, Kris, “‘What It Was Like to Live through a Day’: Transitional Justice and the Memory of the Everyday in a Divided Society’, *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 6, no. 3 (1 November 2012), pp444–466.

³³ Popular Memory Group, ‘Popular Memory’, p79.

of the punk scene to consider what they reveal about the double-articulation of sectarianism in space and in everyday life, particularly as this relates to the lives of young people in the province.

Cilian McGrattan, arguing for the importance of critical historical work in a 2011 essay on the role of history in 'post-conflict' societies such as Northern Ireland's, suggested that historians' responsibility should be to develop more pluralistic historical narratives, especially by engaging with under-recognised experiences of the Troubles and with cross-community histories, looking for attempts to construct "alternative solidarities" across lines of class and gender.³⁴ Insofar as the dominant cultural memory of the punk scene is one of non-sectarian and cross-community engagements between young people, my project fits into this rubric to some extent. Furthermore, the focus on everyday life within and around the punk scene makes possible a different kind of narrative about recent Northern Irish history, one that does not focus on spectacular moments of violence but instead concentrates on quotidian practices of sociality as well as quotidian experiences of low-resolution violence. But – as suggested in the first chapter's argument about the structural nature of sectarianism and punk's unavoidable embeddedness in that structure – it is equally important not to reify the construction of alternative solidarities to such an extent that it makes more complex memories of the scene, or of the conflict, more difficult to speak or to hear.³⁵

The memories of my interviewees do not present a utopian narrative of cross-community collaboration in the context of inter-community conflict. They suggest a considerably more complex picture than this, both of the scene and of the social world in which it was staged. Furthermore, the memories of participants in the punk scene exist outside of the larger memory discourses of the conflict. A more accurate image would be of collective memory as a palette on which different layers of colour are mixed. Interviewees use their recollection of punk to give their narratives of Northern Ireland's recent past a particular hue but they are still working within a collective memory culture that is coloured by

³⁴ McGrattan, Cilian, 'Historians in Post-Conflict Societies: Northern Ireland After the Troubles', March 2011, *History and Policy*.

³⁵ See Newby, Lucy Kate, *Troubled Generations? An Oral History of Youth Experience of the Conflict in Belfast, 1969-1998*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Brighton, forthcoming.

questions of conflict and violence. My aim here is to consider how these different memory discourses are engaged with and mobilised by my interviewees, partly in light of the emancipatory possibilities that are glimpsed in the PMG's work, and partly as a way of thinking about the structural complexity of sectarianism in the province and punk's intervention in this structure.

Oral history and 'dealing with the past'

In the decades since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the field of cultural memory has become an area of interest for policymakers and the state, often as part of the expression of a desire to 'deal with' the past and thus allow the province to move forward into an imagined future. Most recently, this has been made manifest in the Stormont House Agreement and the follow-up Legacy Bill of 2018.³⁶ What is particularly striking about this top-down approach to memory-work is its attempt to encompass all possible facets of dealing with the past; so on the one hand, there are plans for an Oral History Archive that will contain the testimony of those affected by the conflict, but on the other hand there are also plans for more legalistic approaches to identifying those responsible for unsolved deaths and crimes through the Historical Enquiries Team.³⁷ While my project does not speak directly either to government policy or to the field of transitional justice, the debate on the role of oral history occasioned by the emergence of the Stormont House Agreement is relevant to my approach here.³⁸

Oral history and storytelling projects (as distinct from testimony-driven projects aimed at producing objective records of events) have been used within Northern Irish communities that consider themselves deliberately occluded from national narratives to

³⁶ Northern Ireland Office, *Stormont House Agreement*, 2014; Northern Ireland Office, *Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past*, 2018.

³⁷ See Bryson, Anna, 'Victims, Violence and Voice: Transitional Justice, Oral History and Dealing with the Past', *Hastings International Comparative Law Review*, Vol 39 No 2, 2016, p306, for an account of the possible benefits of adopting interpretative oral history methods alongside other transitional justice mechanisms.

³⁸ See for instance McGrattan, Cillian, 'The Stormont House Agreement and the New Politics of Storytelling in Northern Ireland', *Parliamentary Affairs* 69, no. 4 (1 October 2016), pp928–946; for a further consideration of McGrattan's useful but flawed critique of the politics of oral history and storytelling in the province, see Roulston, Fearghus, 'Oral History and Pluralising the Past in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland', *Oral History Forum/Forum D'Histoire Oral* 37, No.2, 2017.

produce a counter-narrative or to talk back to power; they have been used to record the stories of those directly affected by the conflict through the experience of violence and the loss of relatives; they have also been used to foster cross-community links by drawing commonalities between the experience of Protestant and Catholic communities.³⁹ Additionally, it has been argued that storytelling mechanisms can “carve out safe spaces in the public sphere” in which “the voices of the young and those who have been marginalised or oppressed can be acknowledged, and their stories heard”.⁴⁰ Projects such as An Crann/The Tree, the Dúchas Archive, the Prisons Memory Archive, the WAVE Trauma Victims Group and Border Lives have recorded the stories of people affected by the conflict, and along with many local projects, extensive attempts have been made to collect the memories of Northern Irish people.⁴¹ Some of these projects adopt a more-or-less explicit commitment to generating reconciliation between Protestant and Catholic communities; others have focused on gathering narratives from people in particular roles or regions in the province.⁴²

Criticism of storytelling and oral history mechanisms, especially following their incorporation into the legislative framework proposed by the Legacy Bill, has focused on two main issues. Firstly, on concerns that an uncritical approach to individual memory will reproduce antagonistic cultural memories of the past and exacerbate existing political divisions in Northern Ireland.⁴³ Secondly, on the possibility that top-down adoption of storytelling mechanisms will simply prove to be “merely the latest means of

³⁹ Kelly, Gráinne, *Storytelling Audit: An Audit of Personal Story, Narrative and Testimony Initiatives Related to the Conflict In and About Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Healing Through Remembering, 2005). In HTR's definition of storytelling, it is a capacious category that includes oral history as one of its possible manifestations along with other forms of memory-driven dialogue; for my purposes the distinction is between an approach that is primarily focused on creating a space for memories of the past (storytelling) and an approach that is also focused on contextualising and analysing those memories (oral history).

⁴⁰ Maiangwa, Benjamin and Sean Byrne, 'Peacebuilding and Reconciliation through Storytelling in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland', *Storytelling, Self, Society* 11, no. 1 (2015), p105.

⁴¹ An attempt has been made to centralise the results of some of these projects through the *Accounts of the Conflict* web archive – accessed online: <http://accounts.ulster.ac.uk/repo24/index.php> 26/9/18.

⁴² Dybris McQuaid, Sara, 'Passive Archives or Storages for Action? Storytelling Projects in Northern Ireland', *Irish Political Studies* 31, no. 1 (2 January 2016), pp63–85.

⁴³ McGrattan, 'The SHA', 2016.

state management of the memory of the past,” serving to elide or conceal the role of the state in the conflict through, for instance, collusion with paramilitary groups.⁴⁴

My project does not entail any direct engagement with experiences of victimhood, and while violence and the fear of violence are spectral presences within the narratives – as will be discussed below – these concerns remain at the margins throughout. The relatively narrow thematic focus of the interviews places my work at something of a tangent to the discussions around the putative role of both grassroots and top-down storytelling and oral history projects. However, there are two senses in which an interpretative oral history method is potentially useful in the context of post-conflict memory culture in Northern Ireland.

Firstly, a method that is sensitive to the ways in which memory narratives are constructed through wider discourses as well as through past experiences can be used to make embedded or hegemonic cultural memories of the past visible, and perhaps create a space in which they can be contested. Secondly, concentrating on everyday life and everyday engagements in space makes the production of alternative historical narratives of the Northern Irish conflict possible, particularly by listening closely to how people negotiated the parameters and problems of the conflict, and how their subjectivities were formed through this experience. Interpretative oral history’s awareness of the constructedness of memory, and its focus on people’s accounts of their own lives, mean it is a potentially productive method in considering the ongoing legacy of conflict in the province, and addressing the movement between past and present this legacy entails (in terms of how interviewees compose their narratives). This may also make it possible to think more precisely about the politics of top-down measures aimed at dealing with the past, which as Berber Bevernage has suggested in reference to truth commissions can mobilise historical discourses in order to ‘pacify’ the past, by imposing a radical break

⁴⁴ Lundy, Patricia, and Mark McGovern. ‘Truth, Justice and Dealing with the Legacy of the Past in Northern Ireland, 1998–2008’. *Ethnopolitics* 7, no. 1 (1 March 2008), p193; see also Hackett, Claire and Bill Rolston. ‘The Burden of Memory: Victims, Storytelling and Resistance in Northern Ireland’. *Memory Studies* 2, no. 3 (1 September 2009), p355–376.

between the past and the present.⁴⁵ In terms of my research specifically, the aim is for an approach that affords “space for the complex, contradictory and sometimes inchoate nature of individual experience” in order to relate it to the social world in which it was formed and is narrated.⁴⁶

In summary, then, the argument here is that the cultural memory of the Troubles in Northern Ireland is volatile and contested, as well as being the object of both top-down and grassroots mechanisms aimed at ‘dealing with the past’ in various ways. My focus will be on charting the relationship between the individual memories expressed by my interviewees and the social and cultural context in which those memories are generated and told. In order to analyse this relationship, I will use a method drawn from interpretive oral history, as described in the following section.

Portelli, Passerini and interpretative oral history

What I am calling interpretative oral history here is a methodology informed by a shift in the field from the late 1970s onwards, one in which the potential of oral histories for offering specific insights about the past and about the relationship to the past and the present was made central. This shift is encapsulated in Luisa Passerini’s seminal 1979 essay, *Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism*. Here she argues that two aspects of oral history needed to be defended from criticism in the 1960s and 1970s. Firstly, its reliability and validity as a source when compared with documentary sources; secondly, its extension of the subjects of historical research to everyday life, the domestic and the quotidian.⁴⁷ For Passerini, the debate over these aspects of oral history has already been settled, with Paul Thompson one of the key proponents of both arguments, particularly in the UK.⁴⁸ However, she expresses her concern that an over-emphasis on

⁴⁵ Bevernage, Berber, ‘Writing the Past Out of the Present: History and the Politics of Time in Transitional Justice’, *History Workshop Journal* 69, no. 1 (1 March 2010), pp111–131; an example of how this kind of delineation might function came in Karen Bradley’s foreword to the Legacy Bill, in which she disavows the possibility of “any attempts to rewrite the history of the past”. Northern Ireland Office, *Legacy*, p3.

⁴⁶ Bryson, ‘Victims, Violence and Voice’, p343.

⁴⁷ Passerini, Luisa, ‘Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism’, *History Workshop Journal* 8, no. 1 (1 October 1979), pp82–108.

⁴⁸ Thompson, Paul and Joanne Bornat, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017 [1978]).

these elements of oral history might lead to a “complacent populism”, in which the method’s capacity for recording the voices of those otherwise ignored by history is lionised to the exclusion of its other qualities.⁴⁹

Her prescription against this unproblematised understanding of oral history is to consider the specific nature of oral history narratives as composite and multi-dimensional texts. In her account, oral history’s value is not only its ability to provide facts that would otherwise be inaccessible, for instance by describing working practices in a particular factory during 1930s. Its value also resides in the “dimension of memory, ideology and subconscious desires” that can be drawn out from oral material as a cultural text, as a way of thinking about – for instance – the kind of ‘smokestack nostalgia’ for industrialism and factory-work expressed in deindustrialised zones that is described by Tim Strangleman.⁵⁰ Essentially, Passerini argues against a positivist use of oral sources that treats them as fragments through which the past ‘as it really was’ can be constructed. She uses the category of ‘subjectivity’ to describe the sphere that oral sources refer to and come from, defining this as “that area of symbolic activity which includes cognitive, cultural and psychological aspects”; there is a concord here with the concept of structures of feeling described in the previous chapter, and with Williams’ sense of culture as lived and experiential.⁵¹ Oral sources are not simply collections of facts about the past; they are expressions of a subjective and social relationship to the past in the present.

This idea is extended in Passerini’s research on fascism and cultural memory in working-class Turin, in which she analyses social, cultural and psychological responses to fascism in the narratives of workers from the city. Her account of memories of Mussolini’s visit to a Fiat factory in the 1920s and 1930s is instructive. These visits have become legendary, Passerini explains, as sites of cultural resistance against the fascist regime, which is particularly striking giving the emphasis placed in Italian fascism on the legitimisation of power through the approval of the masses. In her interviewees’ accounts, a number of different visits from Mussolini blur into one symbolic confrontation between the workers

⁴⁹ Passerini, ‘Work, Ideology, and Consensus’, p53.

⁵⁰ Strangleman, Tim, “‘Smokestack Nostalgia,’ ‘Ruin Porn’ or Working-Class Obituary: The Role and Meaning of Deindustrial Representation’, *International Labor and Working-Class History* 84 (2013), pp23–37.

⁵¹ Passerini, ‘Work, Ideology and Consensus’, p53.

and the fascist regime, and a local story morphs into a national one. She describes this process like this: “The beginning and end of the story of the struggles between two protagonists – the working class and the dictator – are, in turn, welded together and reaffirmed. Thus, the Turin workers become the vanguard that interprets and stands for the true attitude of the Italian working class.”⁵² Similar dynamics (the narrative production of clearly-defined protagonists; the privileged symbolic role affixed to punk as a site for critique of the Northern Irish state and sectarian relations; the merging and reordering of events in the past) are apparent in my interviewees’ accounts, as will be suggested in the following chapters. Passerini’s approach has been developed and refined in her later work through a more explicit engagement with feminist theory, the political context in which oral histories are produced, and the history of emotions.⁵³

The second key theorist of interpretative oral history for my method is Alessandro Portelli, who provides a useful framework for analysing the subjective elements of oral history texts identified by Passerini above. For Portelli, the way in which stories are remembered and expressed by interviewees opens a rich vein of possibilities for historians interested in how people are shaped by the past and how they make sense of their experiences in the present. Again, there is a possible connection here between Williams’ account of structures of feeling and of interpretative oral history as a method. Taking the novel as a source in which emergent structures of feeling can be found, Williams suggests that reading for “characteristic elements of impulse, restraint and tone” is how to tune into this movement within the text; as Ben Highmore has pointed out, ‘tone’ is a word that Williams returns to often in his efforts to clarify the concept of structure of feeling.⁵⁴ Portelli’s understanding of the oral history interview as containing “culturally shared symbolic structures and narrative devices” that can be analysed as the representation of a “horizon of shared possibilities, real or imagined” makes a similar

⁵² Passerini, Luisa, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1984]), p187.

⁵³ Passerini, Luisa, *Memory and Utopia: The Primacy of Intersubjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2005); Passerini, Luisa, *Women and Men in Love: European Identities in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); for a substantial historiographical essay on Passerini’s work see Gabaccia, Donna R., and Franca Iacovetta, ‘Borders, Conflict Zones, and Memory: Scholarly Engagements with Luisa Passerini’, *Women’s History Review* 25, no. 3 (3 May 2016), pp345–364.

⁵⁴ Williams, Raymond, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1977), p132; Highmore, Ben, ‘Formations of Feelings, Constellations of Things’, *Cultural Studies Review* Vol 22 No 1 (2016), pp144-167.

argument, shifting the focus from novels on to memories as expressed through oral history.⁵⁵ For both Williams and Portelli, the mode in which something is expressed is suggestive of a residue of social life in which experience and subjectivity can be felt; and for both, this is never just the product of an individual capacity for expression but marked by collective worlds.

In Portelli's account of the death of Luigi Trastulli, a 21-year-old steel worker from Terni who died at the hands of the police during a factory walk-out protesting the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, he gives a bravura example of how the symbolic and narrative structures of oral history work.⁵⁶ The importance of locally-remembered accounts of Trastulli's death, he claims, lies "in the fact that it became the ground upon which collective memory and imagination built a cluster of tales, symbols, legends and imaginary reconstructions".⁵⁷ A striking element of the oral histories Portelli collects about the event is that several interviewees transplant the date of the worker's death from 1949 to 1953, when street fights and protests broke out in the city following the sacking of more than two thousand workers from a local steel factory.⁵⁸ This narrative strategy brings together the two signal events of Terni's post-war history into a coherent whole. The 'discrepancy' does not invalidate the oral histories of the event as historical sources, but instead makes them differently useful – rather than reading this temporal dislocation as "faulty recollection", we should understand that the narratives Portelli gathers were "actively and creatively generated by memory and imagination in an effort to make sense of crucial events and of history in general".⁵⁹ This account also speaks to the way in which oral history can trouble linear temporalities in favour of a more complex understanding of historical time.

For my project, there are three key points to be taken from Portelli and Passerini's approach. Firstly, when my interviewees describe the punk scene, they are

⁵⁵ Portelli, Alessandro, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p83.

⁵⁶ The North Atlantic Treaty was the founding document of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), a post-World War Two alliance cementing the USA and Europe's relationship and their stance against Soviet Russia.

⁵⁷ Portelli, Alessandro, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), p1.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p14.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p26.

reconstructing a narrative that draws on cultural memories and shared symbolic structures of expression, cultural memories that have different layers (public and private, for instance) and that are themselves contested rather than fixed. Secondly, the presence of this reservoir of cultural memories and discourses means that individual memories are never entirely individual; instead, they are social products, in which people make sense of their experiences through an engagement with these wider frames. Finally, it also means that my interviewees' memories are expressions of their understanding of and position in the present as well as the past, making them temporally fluid in a way that differs from, for instance, the 19th century novels considered by Raymond Williams in his account of structures of feeling.

Methodologically, these three points entail a particular kind of engagement with my interviewees' narratives. My approach is to listen to individual memories for their social echoes, and for their imbrication in and evocation of a particular structure of feeling; to pay attention to the form and style of the memories as well as to their content; and to frame and narrate the analysis in a form that makes the present-driven formulation of the accounts, and the intersubjective dimension of this formulation, apparent. The following three sections will deal with each of these methodological imperatives in turn, concluding with a final section outlining the way in which oral history can engage in the history of space and of everyday life.

Oral history and social worlds

Portelli's proposition that oral history narratives are composed through "culturally shared symbolic structures and narrative devices" is not only relevant to my method because of its consonance with Raymond Williams' work.⁶⁰ It also suggests that careful reading of individual narratives, alongside other historical sources and texts, can speak to the material and social conditions of the past as well as to the memories of the person telling the story. Lynn Abrams describes this interplay between the individual and the social well in her analysis of an oral history transcript containing the narrative of Mary Manson, a woman born on the Shetland Islands in the late 19th century. Mary's narrative,

⁶⁰ Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Guilia*, p83.

in which she recounts the story of a family member's visit to a woman in a neighbouring village known for her capacity for curing illness, is in part an archetypal piece of folk storytelling; additionally, Abrams argues, "it offers a framework for interpreting historical and contemporary understandings of culture, privileging a female-centric world view rooted in everyday experience."⁶¹

It is this movement from the individual to the social that I want to consider in my interviews. Mary Manson's story – first told to her by her mother – is not an ossified piece of folk culture, or a memory that connects her to her family. It is a way of accessing "a female culture of different kinds of knowledge and power: knowledge of women's bodies, illnesses and cures and a lost culture of mutuality and reciprocity".⁶² The relevance of this to my work is that within the interview, my interviewees are not only engaged in recounting their life stories in relation to the punk scene, prompted by my lines of enquiry. They are rather evoking both a structure of feeling (the structure of feeling of the punk scene) and the wider culture in which this structure of feeling existed, through an engagement with cultural memory discourses.

The intersection between the social and the individual, and between personal and cultural memory, will be of particular interest to this project because it relates to the historical account of institutions and space detailed in the previous two chapters. Both the specific lineaments of the structure of feeling described by individual interviewees, and the way in which this intersects with Northern Irish culture, are shaped by their social experiences – not exclusively within the punk scene but within everyday life more generally. My analysis of their narratives will draw out these intersections.

Narrative techniques and forms

A central way in which this analysis will function is through a consideration of narrative techniques and forms. The epiphinal mode, as described by Lynn Abrams, and the anecdotal mode, as described by Daniel James, will be of particular interest. This

⁶¹ Abrams, Lynn, 'Story-Telling, Women's Authority and the "Old Wife's Tale": "The Story of the Bottle of Medicine"', *History Workshop Journal* 73, no. 1 (1 April 2012), p102.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p114.

approach entails listening to the constructed-ness of the oral history narrative – to silences or pauses, tone and body language, word choice and syntax. As Portelli suggests, these elements of the interview are “the site (not exclusive, but very important) of essential narrative functions: they reveal the narrators’ emotions, their participation in the story, and the way the story affected them”.⁶³

What Abrams calls the epiphinal moment is helpful for thinking about my interviews.⁶⁴ When asked about how they first encountered the punk scene, interviewees often described a shock of excitement and realisation attending to this encounter, generally encapsulated by a single story – the first time they saw a punk band on the television, or the first time they went to a Belfast punk bar like the Harp. Punk is epiphinal here, part of a narrative strategy mobilised by a narrator “attempting to align past and present selves, to make a smooth or coherent story from a disjointed or incoherent life”.⁶⁵ In this sense it is a technique of composure, in the double sense given to this term in the work of Graham Dawson and Alistair Thomson as relating both to the composition of a self and the composition of a narrative.⁶⁶ It makes sense of the staggered or striated texture of a remembered life by connecting the disparate aspects of subjectivity into a straight line, from who you were to who you became to who you are at the moment of telling the story.

For this project, and following on from the previous section, the epiphinal mode is a particularly interesting technique of composure because it speaks to the social and cultural content of individual narratives. Abrams’ interviewees are from a post-war period in which, she argues, competing discourses of conservative respectability and of potential liberation influenced how young women made sense of their position and role in society. Having reached adulthood amidst these conflictual discourses, their memories “offers a vantage point for revealing the impact of rapid social and political change upon subsequent life narratives and constructions of the self”.⁶⁷ In the context of my work, the

⁶³ Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p41.

⁶⁴ Abrams, Lynn, ‘Liberating the Female Self: Epiphanies, Conflict and Coherence in the Life Stories of Post-War British Women’, *Social History* 39, no. 1 (2 January 2014), pp14-35.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p21.

⁶⁶ Dawson, Graham, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994); Thomson, Alistair, *Anzac Memories: Living With the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁶⁷ ‘Abrams, ‘Liberating the Female Self’, p15.

epiphinal moment in interviews speaks to the remembered culture in which punk intervenes (and the narrator's part in that culture); it also speaks to the structure of feeling of the punk scene and of its position within this remembered culture.

Anecdotes and the anecdotal are, similarly, vehicles for relating an individual narrative to a social world or a wider culture. They are also techniques of composure, again in the double sense described above. Daniel James, in his analysis of the life story of Peronist union organizer and factory worker Doña María, says: "Anecdotes represent the relationship of the individual to dominant social models and attitudes. They express in a synthesised form, on a local scale, the transgression or acceptance of hegemonic values."⁶⁸ If the epiphany explains how someone's sense of self has been developed through encounters with society and culture, the anecdote shifts the focus to dramatize the moments where the narrator encounters particular aspects of this wider world, either in a positive or negative sense.

In the context of talking about the punk scene, anecdotes were often the building blocks of my conversation with the interviewees. They described particularly memorable gigs or nights out, frightening encounters with violence or with proximity to violence, interactions with the various institutions described in the first chapter, and so on. While the anecdotal form can initially appear moribund – and certainly it is a firm reminder to the oral historian that people are not hidden archives, uncovered in order to tell their stories for the first time – careful analysis, along the lines of that proposed by James in his intricate engagement with Doña María's narrative, can reveal the historical freight of this mode of telling. The anecdotal and the epiphinal are two narrative forms that recur across my analysis below, then, and along with other strategies and techniques they will be considered as ways of understanding what is being expressed by the interviewee and how this expression relates to punk as a structure of feeling and the culture of Northern Ireland.

Intersubjectivity and co-construction

⁶⁸ James, Daniel, *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p178; p172.

Samuel Beckett's 1965 film, *Film*, depicts a character played by Buster Keaton desperately attempting to avoid the invasive gaze of the camera as it follows him through a city street and into an anonymous room. In Beckett's words: "It's a movie about the perceiving eye, about the perceived and the perceiver – two aspects of the same man. The perceiver desires like mad to perceive and the perceived tries desperately to hide. Then, in the end, one wins".⁶⁹ The interplay of perception and concealment relayed in this account, and the mingling of subject and object it entails, is comparable to the intersubjective relationship in oral history. Lynn Abrams puts it succinctly:

The oral history interview is a conversation between a researcher and a narrator. Usually the narrator is responding to questions posed by the interviewer, and hence the story told is a product of communication between two individuals, both of whom bring something of themselves to the process. Oral history theory is now founded on this idea of there being two subjectivities at an interview, interacting to produce an effect called intersubjectivity which is apparent in the narrator's words.⁷⁰

This generates a three-way dialogue, in her account – the respondent's dialogue with themselves, the interviewer's dialogue with the respondent and the respondent's dialogue with "the cultural discourses of the present and the past".⁷¹ It further complicates this network to note that the interviewer is also involved in an internal dialogue throughout the interview, and that both this internal dialogue and the form of the questions and prompts that emerge from it are also shaped by cultural discourses. Abrams adds:

"The key point here is to acknowledge the intersubjective relationships that are present within the interview situation and to think about how they influence the outcome. It starts with the interviewer being reflexive upon

⁶⁹ Thompson, Howard, 2018, "Buster Keaton In Beckett's First Film", *Nytimes.Com*, accessed online: <http://www.nytimes.com/1964/07/21/buster-keaton-in-becketts-first-film.html>, 20/6/18

⁷⁰ Abrams, Lynn, *Oral History Theory*, (London: Routledge, 2016), p54.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p59.

what impact the self she projects to the interviewee has had on the resulting testimony.”⁷²

There is a substantial corpus of writing on practices of reflexivity in oral history, with feminist oral historians in particular considering the ways in which intersubjectivity shapes testimonies and narratives.⁷³ A recent review article draws a thread between this important work and the approaches of Alessandro Portelli and Michael Frisch, suggesting that both sets of oral historians in question “pushed themselves to view these encounters as dialogic, collaborative, and respectful spaces that would facilitate meaningful exchanges and result in the building of productive research relationships”.⁷⁴ This literature suggests that a reflexive understanding of the intersubjective nature of the oral history interview has two modes. Firstly, it is an ethical response to the interview as an encounter, demanding an awareness of the encounter’s power dynamics and of the position of the researcher with regards to the interviewee. This response begins at the moment of contacting an interviewee, continues throughout the interview process and remains important when dealing with the recording and text that is produced from this process. Secondly, reflexivity is an interpretative technique that works in tandem with the understanding of interpretative oral history described in the previous section above to consider the production of narratives within an interview. How these two modes play out in my research is considered next.

As Abrams explains, it is necessary to acknowledge that the interviewer will inevitably influence the testimony they receive in several ways: through the pre-conceived nature and framing of their inquiries, through their relationship with the participant and their position as a researcher, and through the reactive verbal and non-verbal actions and

⁷² Ibid., p63.

⁷³ For example, see Gluck, Sherna Berger and Daphne Patai (eds.), *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (London: Routledge, 1991); Coslett, Tess, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield (eds.), *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods* (London: Routledge, 2000); for a critical overview of some of this literature see Geiger, Susan, ‘What’s So Feminist About Women’s Oral History?’, *Journal of Women’s History* 2, no. 1 (1990), pp169-182.

⁷⁴ Sheftel, Anna, and Stacey Zembrzycki, ‘Who’s Afraid of Oral History? Fifty Years of Debates and Anxiety about Ethics’, *The Oral History Review* 43, no. 2 (1 September 2016), pp338–366; Frisch, Michael, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990), especially pp59-81; Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*.

reactions involved in conversation.⁷⁵ Firstly, my position as a Northern Irish person generated a form of rapport with my interviewees. A good example comes from my interview with Gareth Mullan, who is explaining that even in the avowedly non-sectarian context of punk there was still an awareness of who was from a Protestant background and who was from a Catholic background.

F: So even with punk being the first interest, there's still a sort of ... broader awareness?

G: When you're getting introduced to people you sort of, again, Sean O'Neill ... [widens eyes at me to suggest a kind of Northern Irish complicity in the telling process; this is something to think about really, I didn't challenge or question the telling process because, despite myself, I'm engaging in it as well] ... you would know what they were sort of thing. That was just part of it but it didn't matter.⁷⁶

In terms of intersubjectivity here, there are three layers of silences – the circumlocutory wording of my initial question, in which I avoid referring directly to either community; Gareth's non-verbal cue, which I understood at the time and remembered well enough to describe in square brackets within the transcript; and his response to my circumlocution, as he also avoids making a direct reference to either community but makes it clear that “you would know who they were”, implying that Sean O'Neill is a stereotypically Irish and thus Catholic name. Michael Roper, in an account of transference and counter-transference in the interview process, argues that “the general direction of interviewing often works towards the fostering of coherence and against domination by feelings of disappointment, frustration, failure or despair”, in part because of a desire to make the conversation mutually productive.⁷⁷ In terms of practice at the level of the interview, my

⁷⁵ Abrams, Lynn, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp65-66.

⁷⁶ Interview with Gareth Mullan, 2015.

⁷⁷ Roper, Michael, 'Analysing the Analysed: Transference and Counter-Transference in the Oral History Encounter', *Oral History* 31, no. 2 (2003), pp20-32; for a more recent consideration of these dynamics within the oral history interview see Holmes, Katie, 'Does It Matter If She Cried? Recording Emotion and the Australian Generations Oral History Project', *The Oral History Review* 44, no. 1 (1 April 2017), pp56-76.

failure to ask Gareth to expand on his silent cue came in part from a conscious desire to keep the conversation flowing; but it also came, in part, from my unconscious complicity in the telling process, which in turn suggests an important cultural discourse shaping both questions and answers within the text.⁷⁸

There are further examples of intersubjective silences and elisions in my interviews – for example, on reviewing my transcripts, I noticed that I had not asked anyone directly whether or not they were a Protestant or a Catholic, although this identification was expressed one way or another throughout the conversation. Daniel James describes his own experience of revisiting transcribed interviews to find himself “amazed at my own deafness, my own lack of judgement, as I read myself cutting off a promising story”; this retroactive self-criticism (along with an understanding of the culturally-determined reasons for these lapses, beyond their status as failures of technique or judgement) is an important analytical lens for reflexive oral history.⁷⁹ Portelli describes this as “the assumption of responsibility which inscribes [the historian] in the account and reveals historiography as an autonomous act of narration”.⁸⁰

It is worth noting here that my own slightly ambiguous position within the ‘telling’ schema – I am from a Protestant background and from the majority-Protestant town of Ballymena, and have the vestiges of a Ballymena accent, but I also have a first name which is often read as a signifier of Irishness and thus Catholicism – might have been a factor in how my interviewees ‘read’ my position, although none of them attempted to do so explicitly.⁸¹ It is additionally worth noting that I did not intervene to minimise this ambiguity, despite my efforts to be as transparent as possible about (for instance) the nature of the project, its relationship to the university as an institution, and so on. These

⁷⁸ See chapter one for a consideration of telling, the process of ascertaining someone’s supposed ethno-sectarian identity based on a series of cues first formally described by the sociologist Frank Burton.

⁷⁹ James, Daniel, *Doña María’s Story*, 2010, p159.

⁸⁰ Portelli, Alessandro, ‘The Peculiarities of Oral History’, *History Workshop Journal* 12, no. 1 (1 October 1981), pp96–107.

⁸¹ See Bryson, Anna, “‘Whatever You Say, Say Nothing’: Researching Memory and Identity in Mid-Ulster, 1945-1969”, *Oral History* Vol. 35, 2 (2007), pp45-56, for an account of how sectarian structures influence oral history testimony in Northern Ireland; see Smyth, Marie and Ruth Moore, ‘Researching Sectarianism’, presented at The Annual Conference of the Sociological Association of Ireland, Clonmel, 13 May 1995 (Derry/Londonderry: Templegrove Action Research), for the importance of reflexivity when researching issues of sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

repeated silences can be interpreted in various different ways and understood as having had various effects on the research produced, both positive and negative. In line with the work by Michael Roper on the emotional currents of oral history interviewing mentioned above, it is clear that ambiguity here was something of a comfortable space in which to stay, a way of avoiding “feelings of disappointment, frustration, failure or despair.”⁸² It allowed me not to broach the subject of my own position, an allowance which while being to some extent necessary to the functioning of an oral history interview can also be understood as a problematic reproduction of the role of the historian as a neutral, ungrounded observer of the past.⁸³ This is particularly problematic in the context of Northern Irish oral history, given my own implication in the structures of telling and sectarian identification – to some extent the maintenance of this ambiguity represented an attempt to avoid being placed within this schema, and this avoidance may have influenced the intersubjective construction of the interviews.

However, the maintenance of this position of ambiguity was also a deliberate decision, motivated consciously by a desire to create a space in which my interviewees felt comfortable to speak. How this decision works alongside an approach that attempted to create “dialogic, collaborative, and respectful spaces that [...] facilitate meaningful exchanges and result in the building of productive research relationships”, or alongside Alessandro Portelli’s description of the oral history interview as an experiment in equality, is a complex question.⁸⁴ In one reading it might sit somewhat uneasily with these claims, given the dynamic of withholding and restraint on one hand and demanding on the other that it entails. However, in my reading of Portelli’s 2018 revisiting of this description, the choice to allow some ambiguity about my ethno-sectarian background can be understood, as it was by me at the time, as engaging in a dialogue with my interviewees. Portelli, recounting an interview with the black civil rights activist Julia

⁸² Roper, ‘Analysing the Analysed’, p21.

⁸³ On the problems of this dynamic within the oral history encounter, see Yow, Valerie, “‘Do I like Them Too Much?’: Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa”, *The Oral History Review* 24, no. 1 (1997), pp55–79.

⁸⁴ Sheftel, Anna, and Stacey Zembrzycki, ‘Who’s Afraid of Oral History? Fifty Years of Debates and Anxiety about Ethics’, *The Oral History Review* 43, no. 2 (1 September 2016), pp338–366; Portelli, Alessandro, ‘Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience’, *The Oral History Review* 45, no. 2 (1 August 2018), pp239–48.

Frisch, Michael, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990), especially pp59-81; Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*.

Cowan and her statement that however far she is willing to engage with him there will always be a line preventing her from trusting him wholly because of his whiteness, says: "Ultimately, the line is what the interview (the inter/view) is about, whether explicitly as in this case, or implicitly: we may be looking for information, but what we ultimately get is the relationship."⁸⁵ In maintaining a degree of ambiguity around my ethno-sectarian identity, I was attempting to shape a relationship with my interviewees in which they decided where the line would be, and they decided whether or not they would pursue or attempt to reduce the ambiguity in my position. In this sense, the withholding of some aspects of the interviewer's identity is not necessarily a re-inscription of the problematic neutral observer position, but a gesture towards the agency of the interviewee in shaping the discussion, both in terms of their answers and in terms of their relation to the interviewer.

The logic of this decision in my research can be seen in thinking about its inverse. If I had insisted upon positioning myself within the interview – either before it started, or by responding to answers by the interviewee with narratives about my own adolescence, or about my understanding of the Protestant community – this would have had a specific, albeit indescribable, effect on the dynamic and the dialogue taking place. The decision not to do so created a space in which the interviewees were free to ask questions of me but choose (at least on the level of explicit language) to leave the ambiguity in place. Following on from Portelli's comments, this seemed to me at the time to be the best way of attending to the relationship formed through the interview process.

Further to this, my reticence here extended to not asking any of my interviewees directly about their ethno-sectarian identity. This also affected the nature of the discussions about sectarianism and punk within the interviews, insofar as I did not question anyone about (for instance) their understanding of the sectarianised structure of the Northern Irish state, or about encounters with sectarianism in the punk scene, although both of these things were discussed in different and sometimes less explicit ways. Along with the relatively small sample size drawn upon and the decision to analyse four interviews in-

⁸⁵ Portelli, 'The Oral History Interview', 2018, p244.

depth rather than all of the interviews together means there is no attempt made here to make a straightforwardly empirical claim about the number of Protestants and number of Catholics who participated in the punk scene. It may also mean that the account of sectarianism in relation to punk is skewed or muted by the decision not to make it the focal point of the interviews.

This approach, however, is also understood under the rubric of Portelli's understanding of the interview as an experiment in equality. The consistent narrative of my interviewees was that the punk scene, to some extent, allowed them to reconstitute or reconsider their identity within the doubly-articulated sectarian structures of Northern Irish society, albeit without transcending or rendering invisible the continued existence of these structures. While, both at the level of the interview and at the level of analysis, the project aimed to analyse these narratives, it felt as if accepting the interpretation proposed by my interviewees within the interview (rather than challenging them by returning repeatedly to the question of sectarianism or by asking them to reflect upon their ethno-religious identity more than they choose to do within the framing of the interview) was the most sensitive approach to allowing the interviews to develop. This also allowed for a relatively open-ended form of questioning, and avoided an excessive level of steering on my part – although all interviews are shaped by the desires of the interviewer as well as those of the interviewee, of course.

Secondly and relatedly, not centering the interviews around specific discussions of ethno-religious identity created space for the interviewees to construct and express narratives of the punk scene that were not centered around the discussion of sectarianism. Given the relative predominance of this aspect of the scene in its cultural representations, as discussed below, it was helpful to allow the interviewees to touch on different elements in their memories of the period, and made it possible to produce the different account of punk expressed below.

I have concentrated here on the way in which my status as a Northern Irish person – albeit both someone who has lived away from Northern Ireland for many years and

someone who's not from Belfast, unlike many of my participants – affected the intersubjective production of the texts. Gender and age are also important considerations. To take these one by one (more detailed engagement with these questions will come up in the analysis chapters) – it is possible, firstly, that my position as a man shaped the fairly masculinised narrative of the punk scene offered up by many of my interviewees, in which women feature only elliptically (other than in the interview with Alison Farrell); secondly, this might also have been one factor in the relative paucity of female interviewees I was able to contact. In terms of age, my generational position (as someone who was still a child when the peace process began) is important – both certain silences and certain moments of articulation or explanation would have operated differently in an interview with someone who had been alive during the 1970s.

This accounts for one aspect of intersubjectivity and reflexivity – that of the historian's role in shaping both the account as produced in the interview and the account as it is analysed or framed as a text. The second aspect is an inversion of the first – that is, the role that the interviewee plays in producing the text. Michael Frisch has proposed the notion of 'shared authority' as a form of community history, where interviews become "an opportunity for an informed interviewer to talk in depth with a knowledgeable participant about a subject of mutual interest" rather than a one-sided solicitation of insight on the part of the historian.⁸⁶ This mutuality can also be brought into the presentation and afterlife of information gleaned through an interview process, through public history that attempts to "expand the conversation outward" through workshops, exhibitions, documentaries or community publications.⁸⁷ Even where this approach is not viable (for instance, within the confines of a PhD project intended to be conceived, prepared, researched and written in three years) it suggests some practical imperatives for the oral historian that I have attempted to follow in my work.

Methodologically, this means keeping participants informed about the ways in which their interview is being used, giving them the option to remove their consent at their

⁸⁶ Frisch, *A Shared Authority*; Shopes, Linda, 'Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities', *Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (1 September 2002), p596.

⁸⁷ Shopes, 'Oral History', 2002, p597; see also Bornat, Joanna, 'Oral History as a Social Movement: Reminiscence and Older People', *Oral History* 17, no. 2 (1989), pp16–24.

discretion and being as open as possible about the aims of the project from the outset. However, working within the remit of a project that has not been conceived with co-production or community activism at its forefront, it remains a concern that interpretative conflicts could arise.⁸⁸ To some extent this is impossible to avoid, given the necessity of at least organising and framing interviews to create a coherent structure. Working with sensitivity that “honours the oral history by focusing a shining light upon the meanings already inherent within ... [through an analysis that] is not meant to displace the narrative, but to illuminate it for the reader” is the only way to approach this issue, along with an understanding that the interviewees themselves may be engaged in forms of historical practice that are not exclusively made comprehensible through the intervention of an academic interpreter.⁸⁹

Everyday life and everyday spaces

The previous sections described oral history as a method that allows for an account of the relationship between subjectivity, sociality and the political, and the intersubjective methodological imperatives this method entails. This section will concentrate on its capacity for illuminating, firstly, the sphere of everyday life and institutions analysed in chapter one; and secondly, its capacity for producing sources that allow us to think through the spatial configurations described in chapter two. In short, it will argue that oral history is useful not just because of the type of knowledge it gives us access to (that is, subjective, experiential, felt, affective), but because of the subjects it sheds light on.

In terms of everyday life, oral history’s usefulness is clear – the things that people remember are different from the things that enter the documentary record.⁹⁰ To take an

⁸⁸ There is some ambiguity around the concept of co-production within oral history literature – it can signify the process whereby a narrative is produced through the back and forth of questions and answers that take place in an interview setting, described above, or a deliberate attempt to involve participants in the shaping, editing and publicising of that narrative after the interview. I am using it in the latter sense here.

⁸⁹ Madison, Soyini D, *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics and Performance* (London: Sage, 2011), p243.

⁹⁰ Paul Thompson, in the latest edition of *The Voice of the Past*, puts this adroitly: “In the most general sense, once the life experience of people of all kinds can be used as raw material, a new dimension is given to history”, Thompson and Bornat, *The Voice*, p5.

example from the first chapter, one can use census data, specialist histories, newspapers and government reports to produce a narrative account of the development of the education system in post-partition Northern Ireland; but it is more difficult to understand how young people's engagement in this system felt, how it altered their sense of themselves as gendered, classed, sectarianized subjects, from these sources. Oral history gives a different texture to the documents described above; it allows us to think about affective, subjective experience in its interaction with structures of power. That being said, it might seem counter-intuitive to conflate people's experiences of the punk scene and their experiences of everyday life or the quotidian, because to some extent taking part in something like the punk scene is a deliberate attempt to make life less ordinary; we do not need to over-emphasise the relationship between punk and the Situationist International to understand participation in the punk scene as a response to boredom and anomie.⁹¹ But the argument here is that oral history allows us to see the punk scene as embedded in everyday life, rather than an efflorescence existing somehow outside of it – my interviewees negotiate encounters with school, work, family and so on alongside their engagement in the punk scene, and the sites where this negotiation occurs are of particular interest to my project.

This is because of the double articulation of sectarianism described in the first chapter. Everyday life has a specific relationship to contestation and the formation of identities in Northern Ireland. Following the idea that “nothing too commonplace, nor too trivial, escapes from having the distinctive mark of the times ... through the everyday is refracted the spectrum of society's structures and values, as well as the individual's responses [to those structures and values]”, the argument here is that attending to people's accounts of their lives can tell us something about the double articulation; about how sectarianism functioned and about how it felt to live in Belfast in the 1970s and 1980s.⁹² Despite this, the history of everyday life remains something of a lacuna in the sprawling historiography of the conflict, with exceptions largely coming from ethnographic and

⁹¹ See Home, Stewart, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (Stirling: AK Press, 1991), for a critique of the identification made between the avant-garde intellectual and artistic movement of the Situationist International and British punk.

⁹² Abrams, Lynn and Callum G Brown, 'Conceiving the Everyday in the Twentieth Century', in *A History of Everyday Life in 20th Century Scotland*, Lynn Abrams and Callum G Brown, (eds.) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p1.

anthropological traditions rather than historical ones.⁹³ The use of oral history in this project is partly driven by an attempt to access narratives of everyday life in Belfast in the 1970s and 1980s, and also by an intuition that listening to these narratives is a way of writing about the daily actions and performances that made Belfast's social world.⁹⁴ In his work on the Fosse Ardeatine massacre during the German occupation of Rome in 1944, Portelli argues that the history of everyday life and the memory of everyday life is particularly potent in this context because "history wears a capital H, and its burden seems to frustrate and annihilate the work of memory or to make it seem irrelevant. Too often, history is a faraway sphere, distant from the daily lives of its people or a crushing, annihilating weight upon them".⁹⁵ The role of history with a capital H is similarly potent in Northern Ireland, meaning the history and memory of everyday life has a similar resonance.⁹⁶

Luisa Passerini, writing about fascism in Turin, suggests that oral history allows us to see symbolic orders as they function in the world and as people negotiate with them – laughter, for example, and making jokes about Mussolini's regime, suggest for her both "pragmatic acceptance of daily compromise with the regime and rebellion at the symbolic level".⁹⁷ This juggling between compromise and challenge, and between the experiential and symbolic, is something oral narratives give us some access to – albeit in reconstructed, remembered forms.

⁹³ See for example Aretxaga, Begoña, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Healy, Julie, 'Locality Matters: Ethnic Segregation and Community Conflict—the Experience of Protestant Girls in Belfast', *Children & Society* 20, no. 2 (1 April 2006), pp105–15; Curtis, Jennifer, "Community" and the Re-Making of 1970s Belfast', *Ethnos* 73, no. 3 (1 September 2008), pp399–426; oral history projects have also given people an opportunity to speak about their everyday lives – see for instance Smyth, Marie and Marie-Therese Fay, *Personal Accounts from Northern Ireland's Troubles: Public Conflict, Private Loss* (London: Pluto Press, 2009) and Pieces of the Past, *Living Through the Conflict: Belfast Oral Histories* (Belfast: Dúchas Archive, 2014).

⁹⁴ Kelleher, William, *The Troubles in Ballybogoin: Memory and Identity in Northern Ireland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p13.

⁹⁵ Portelli, Alessandro, *The Order has Been Carried Out: History, Memory and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p9.

⁹⁶ Graham, Brian, and Yvonne Whelan, 'The Legacies of the Dead: Commemorating the Troubles in Northern Ireland', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 3 (1 June 2007), pp476–495; see also Lane, Karen, "Not-The Troubles": An Anthropological Analysis of Stories of Quotidian Life in Belfast', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, April 2017).

⁹⁷ Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*, p92.

The second point here is that oral histories are particularly helpful when thinking about people's everyday interactions with their spatial worlds. This project makes sense of the narratives of former participants in the punk scene by drawing out the spatial aspects of their stories. As with everyday life, this entails giving oral sources a double credence. On the one hand, they allow us to make claims about the past – so, for instance, when Alison describes punk as allowing her to transgress certain boundaries of what was considered to be acceptable behaviour in the small town where she lived, we can extrapolate from this and from other sources, not all of them oral histories, to posit that a discourse of respectability existed in her community that acted as a constraint on certain forms of behaviour or particular practices. On the other hand, they also allow us to make claims about the relationship between the past and the present – Portelli puts it well when he argues that “even when [oral sources] do not tell the events as they occurred, the discrepancies and the errors are themselves events, clues for the work of desire and pain over time, for the painful search for meaning”.⁹⁸

Memory is important in the construction of place – “spatial identity, based on feelings of belonging in a place, develops over time as ‘layers of meaning’ and remembered associations accrue to a location in the course of everyday life”.⁹⁹ In Northern Ireland, places are marked through the memorialisation of the conflict, by commemorative practices such as the production of murals and parading; as Shirlow and Murtagh explain, this also takes less formal shapes in terms of individual memories and “discourses of shared values, self-worth and identity within segregated spaces”.¹⁰⁰ In this context, listening to and foregrounding memories of place and mobility that challenged the logic of segregation in collective and individual ways can “act to disrupt unproblematic and one-dimensional accounts of the landscape, reminding us of the importance of the personalised and lived experience of individuals”.¹⁰¹ The way in which memories of the city then, as experienced through forming part of the punk scene, relate to the city now, will be one of the themes of my analysis, especially in chapter six.

⁹⁸ Portelli, *The Order*, p16.

⁹⁹ Dawson, Graham, ‘Trauma, Place and the Politics of Memory: Bloody Sunday, Derry, 1972–2004’, *History Workshop Journal* 59, no. 1 (1 March 2005), p155.

¹⁰⁰ Shirlow, Peter and Brendan Murtagh, *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), p19.

¹⁰¹ Riley, Mark, and David Harvey, ‘Talking Geography: On Oral History and the Practice of Geography’, *Social & Cultural Geography* 8, no. 3 (1 June 2007), pp345–351.

Methodology

The final section will outline how my project was developed in line with the considerations above of cultural memory, the specific lineaments of cultural memory in Northern Ireland, and the use of an interpretive oral history approach. It will also consider the question of representation and representativeness within the project, and the decision to select four specific interviews for analysis rather than drawing on all of them.

I went to Belfast in September 2015, spending around six months there in total. In this period I interviewed ten people, as well as meeting and speaking with others who were happy to talk but did not want to be interviewed formally or recorded. I used three avenues to find participants – posts on existing punk heritage websites, particularly the Belfast Punk Heritage Facebook page; posters that I put up around the centre of the city in record shops and bars; and pre-existing contacts, not of all of whom agreed to be interviewed but some of whom put me in touch with friends who did wish to take part in the project. After returning to Brighton, I carried out two additional interviewees with participants based in England, who had heard about the project through friends; these interviews have yet to be transcribed. The interviews themselves were formally unstructured, apart from in Gareth Mullan's case in which I sent a list of questions to him ahead of time, at his request, as discussed in chapter five. I offered to meet interviewees either in a public space or in their home, and apart from in the case of Gareth, John T Davis and Brian Young, all of the interviews took place in public spaces. Most lasted for between an hour and an hour and a half, although some were slightly longer. The interviewees were all given information sheets and consent forms at the beginning of the interview, and discussed both of these documents with me before any recording took place.¹⁰²

In terms of representativeness, or the question of to what extent I was attempting to generate a series of interviews that would accurately reflect the composition of the punk

¹⁰² See Appendix A for copies of each of these documents as well as of the poster used to solicit participants; see Appendix C for biographical cameos of each of the interviewees.

scene in relation to the composition of Northern Irish society, this issue did not form a major part of my planning when soliciting interviews. This lack of initial attention to ensuring as wide a representation of people as possible may have been a factor in the relatively small number of women interviewed in Belfast, as discussed in the conclusion; however, it did not appear to have any impact on the numbers of Protestants and Catholics interviewed. My assumption was that both the Facebook page and the record shops and venues in the centre of town would attract both Catholic and Protestant visitors, and that friendship networks in the wake of the punk scene would remain sufficiently mixed to ensure people from both communities would participate, which proved to be the case; if only Protestants or only Catholics had responded I would have reconsidered this approach during my six months of fieldwork. However, my intention from the outset was to focus on the subjective meanings ascribed to punk in the narratives of a small number of interviewees, rather than on the sectarian composition of the punk scene itself or on a narrative reconstruction of the events that took place within the punk scene, and in this context I was less concerned with representativeness than with making sure those interviewees who did want to take part were comfortable with and informed about the project.

While there would be some value in an attempt to generate a more representative sample of participants in the punk scene, such an attempt would be fraught with difficulty, particularly given the relatively loose nature of the affiliation in question – ‘having been a punk between the mid-‘70s and mid-‘80s’ is a different and less stable historical state than, for instance, ‘having worked in a specific factory over a specific range of years’. It would also be difficult to assess what would constitute a representative sample given the lack of primary sources or statistics that would allow a meaningful comparison to be made – so without knowing how many Protestants, how many Catholics or how many women took part in the punk scene, figuring out the representativeness of any possible sample of interviews would be challenging, unless the relevant figures for young people in Northern Ireland at the time were used as a benchmark, which would form a somewhat unsatisfactory metric. And finally, as Penny Summerfield points out, even in relation to more sharply-defined and well-documented historical positions, representativeness is a complex category. She argues:

It is not possible to obtain a statistically representative sample of any population in the past. If one wanted to interview a representative sample of the workers at a particular factory in 1940, for example, one would be confronted firstly by the complications of collecting data on the social profile of all the workers at that time, and then by the difficulties of tracing those who fitted the sampling criteria, many of whom would have moved or changed their names, and by the demographic problem of differential survival rates since 1940. Even supposing a sample could have been identified, there would still be the difficulty of the researcher's dependence on the willingness of those whom it was possible to track down, not just to answer questions, but to delve into personal memory and weave what they found there into narrative form.¹⁰³

However, neither the ultimate impossibility of achieving representativeness within a sample of oral history interviews nor the intended focus on the subjective construction of meaning within a small number of interviews completely exhausted the question of representation within the thesis. In terms of the choice of four interviews analysed in-depth below (with Alison Farrell, Gareth Mullan, Petesy Burns and Damien McCorry) there is something like an attempt at representativeness, in that Alison is a woman, Alison and Gareth are both from Protestant backgrounds and Petesy and Damien are both from Catholic backgrounds. The decision to select these four interviews in particular was partly motivated by a desire to ensure that a set of contrasting and varied experiences of the punk scene were included. This entails some kind of awareness of representativeness, then – the interviews were not simply chosen randomly, or because they cleaved particularly closely to particular narratives – but not one that entails an empirical intervention in the historicisation of the punk scene in Northern Ireland through an argument about the number of Catholics, Protestants, men or women that took part in it. My intention in this gesture towards representativeness is twofold – firstly, to make the minimal empirical claim that Protestant and Catholic men and women demonstrably all took part in the punk scene; secondly, to highlight the different memories and narratives

¹⁰³ Summerfield, Penny, 'Oral History as an Autobiographical Practice', *Miranda* (Vol. 12, 2016).

participants have of the punk scene in relation to their different identifications and experiences.

After returning to Brighton in March 2016, I transcribed the interviews and began the analysis.¹⁰⁴ My decision to concentrate on analysing one or (in the case of chapter six) two interviews in depth, rather than reading across the interviews or attempting to produce a polyvocal narrative or thematic history, was driven by the methodological imperatives outlined in the previous section as well as by the considerations expressed in this section around representation. In terms of the relationship between Northern Irish culture, punk as a structure of feeling, and individual narratives, it made more sense to concentrate in detail on an interview rather than slice all of the interviews up in search of particular themes; following the example of Lynn Abrams and Daniel James, my intention is to draw out the entanglement of individual memories in social worlds, meaning that while the analysis will concentrate on one or two people's narratives of the punk scene at a time it will move from those narratives to broader points about punk as a structure of feeling and the cultural memory discourses the interviewees engage with.

In terms of narrative technique, the intention is similar. Giving the narratives sufficient space to be analysed in detail makes their formal and stylistic elements more visible, thus allowing for a richer sense of the structure of feeling being evoked, and the techniques of composure and expression utilised by the narrators. It also makes clear the movement between past and present that is characteristic of the oral history interview and of composure as a concept, by showing how the interviewees move across different temporalities and different subjectivities within a single interview, and how they related their narratives to the present moment or the moment of telling

Finally, in terms of intersubjectivity and co-construction, analysing the interviews in a situated way that makes clear their conditions of production – where we were, what I asked, the non-textual cues and interactions that took place – is helpful, and allows for a richer sense of the flow and pattern of the conversations.

¹⁰⁴ I told interviewees I would be happy to share transcripts with them if they wanted to read them before making a final decision on consent; in the event, only Brian Young took me up on this.

The four interviews that were selected were selected partly for the reasons of representation discussed above and partly because their content spoke most closely to the themes that are of interest to the thesis. This meant that six interviews, not including the two conducted on my return to Brighton, were not selected for extensive reading and instead used for context or for occasional comparison. To some extent this is justified through the explanation above – the method entails dealing with the interviews in granular detail and to do this to all of them would have required more time and more space than was available. In terms of the decision to leave certain interviews out, those with John T Davis and Brian Young, while invaluable for developing the historical narrative, were more focused on specific aspects of the punk scene (John’s documentary *Shellshock Rock*, Brian’s band Rudi) than on the punk scene within everyday life, and thus of less interest to this project. These interviews also tended to reproduce some familiar narratives about the scene (from cultural texts such as *Good Vibrations*), and as such offered less in terms of thinking about the relationship between past, present and culture within the oral history interview. Sheena’s interview was not recorded and thus not suitable for the approach used on the four analysed below. John, Paul and Hector’s interviews, while interesting in their own right and potentially useful for the kind of analysis carried out below, spoke less directly to the themes in which the project is interested and were therefore relegated to a supporting role; in any later publication of this work it could be possible to engage with their narratives more fulsomely along with those of Tabitha Lewis and Claire Shannon.

Conclusion

The method of this thesis is interpretative oral history. This is because the collective memory of the punk scene in Belfast is much richer than the documentary record it has left behind – richer both in that it is simply broader and deeper, but also in the nature of what it contains. A form of oral history that is attentive to memory, ideology, symbolic structures and narrative devices as they emerge in the construction of interviews can produce insights into the meaning of the punk scene for its participants and the nature of the punk scene in Belfast as a structure of feeling and a cultural formation. It can highlight the interaction of experience and emotion in narratives of the past; it can consider how

different temporal understandings inflect these narratives and the broader narratives they are in conversation with; and finally, it can give us a way of thinking about the spatial dimensions described in the previous chapter by thinking about the social construction of place.

The analyses presented in the following three chapters are inductive; that is, the ideas being drawn on have come out of the interviews and my writing and analysis is an attempt to illuminate and extend them. This entails mobilising different ideas in each chapter (mobility and transgression in Alison's interview; habitus and historical practice in Gareth's interview; place in Petesy and Damien's interviews). But these different practices and modes of understanding are connected by two conceptualisations of the punk scene that remain constant throughout – that of punk as a structure of feeling, and that of punk as something that cannot be understood outside of the spatial politics of Belfast in the 1970s and 1980s. Alison's narrative is about forms of movement within that space; Gareth's is about remaining relatively static, spatially, but also about changing his relationship to the space through shifting dispositions and forms of historical practice; Petesy and Damien's is about the attempt to generate new spaces. All of the narratives are descriptions of punk as a structure of feeling, with Williams's term used here to designate "those elusive, impalpable forms of social consciousness which are at once as evanescent as feelings suggests, but nevertheless display a significant configuration captured in the term structure".¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Eagleton, Terry, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), p48.

CHAPTER FOUR: ALISON FARRELL – EPIPHANY AND TRANSGRESSION IN MEMORIES OF THE PUNK SCENE

Introduction

This chapter analyses an interview with Alison Farrell about being a punk in both Belfast and Dungannon to suggest an initial way of conceptualising the punk scene as being constituted by forms of mobility and transgression. Taking part in the punk scene, I argue, gave young people a chance to move and meet across the sectarianised spaces and institutions described in the first and second chapters, and the forms of mobility (and constraint) their movement makes visible can help in developing an understanding of the spatial politics of Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s. Transgression – the crossing of conceptual or material boundaries – is a specific type of movement, and one that comes through especially vividly in Alison’s account of her initial engagement in the punk scene. So the argument here is that drawing on theories of mobility including but not limited to those of transgression will help us make sense of one aspect of the punk scene as a spatialised structure of feeling, in which the social experiences described are intimately related to an engagement with the sectarianised geography of Northern Ireland.

In partially moving the focus here from Belfast to Dungannon, although Alison’s narrative is not confined to either location but rather moves across each of them, it is important to bear in mind the definition of the punk scene provided in chapter one. This definition, drawing on the work of Andy Bennett on the scene perspective as “[constituting] a far broader and more dynamic series of social relationships than those considered in the context of subculture”, suggests that we can think of the punk scene as both a product of the institutions around which it cohered and the people and relationships that formed it.¹ What that means in terms of this interview is that the focus on Belfast throughout the last two chapters will be supplemented with an account of Alison’s memories of being a punk in Dungannon, a mid-sized town in County Tyrone some 40 miles away from the capital

¹ Bennett, Andy, ‘Consolidating the Music Scenes Perspective’, *Music in Society: The Sociological Agenda* 32, no. 3 (1 June 2004), p225.

city. It goes without saying that Northern Irish interest in punk was not confined to Belfast in the 1970s and that many smaller conurbations had their own punk venues and spaces, although these manifestations will not be the focus of my analysis here. Rather, I will highlight how Alison's account makes visible the relational geographies of the punk scene in Belfast, its connectedness to other parts of Northern Ireland and indeed other parts of the world and the importance of those connections.² This is also important in thinking more widely about the relationship between the rural and the urban in Northern Ireland, and about the ways in which Belfast was connected to the rest of the province during the period under consideration here, particularly in terms of sectarian geographies. Ash Amin describes the imperative to think relationally about cities as "the need to work with the multiple registers of urban formation" – considering Alison's movements between and across Dungannon and Belfast makes it possible to engage in some of this work.³

This chapter also considers the nature of narrative composure in Alison's account, describing two strategies that will be recur across my interview analyses – these are the epiphinal and the anecdotal, first described in chapter three. These strategies are analysed further in the following section.

The epiphinal and the anecdotal

Early encounters with punk are described by my interviewees as epiphanic, as generative of a moment of acute self-realisation in which they have a sudden realisation about themselves and about their society, related both to the moment of telling and the moment in the past where the realisation is positioned within the narrative. A further elucidation of this relationship (between self and society) comes from anecdotes, self-contained

² See for instance Allen, John, Doreen Massey and Allan Cochrane, *Rethinking the Region* (London: Routledge, 1998), in which the authors argue that regions should be "conceived as a series of open, discontinuous spaces constituted by social relationships which stretch across them in a variety of ways" (p9); the punk scene is being understood here in a similar way as a series of discontinuous spaces, not all of them in Belfast despite the appellation of the 'Belfast punk scene' used in the title of the thesis and elsewhere. A good example came in my interview with Brian Young, who revealed that he and Stephen Patrick Morrissey (later famous under the name of Morrissey as the lead singer of post-punk band The Smiths) had been pen-pals during the early days of punk in both Belfast and Manchester. See also Massey, Doreen, *For Space* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publishing, 2005).

³ Amin, Ash, 'Re-thinking the Urban Social', *City* 11, no. 1 (1 April 2007), p104.

stories that generally end with a punchline or a pithy summary. In Alison's narrative, the epiphanic moment of encountering the punk scene is related to transgression – epiphany and transgression are both ways of thinking about the passage between one state and another, or one self and another. The anecdotal form is different in that it presents a more settled or composed self at the centre of the story, and dramatizes this character's relationship to society through a narrative account.

Daniel James' analysis of anecdote in his life history interview with Doña María, a Peronist and union organiser in an Argentine meat-packing factory, is instructive here.⁴ Considering what Doña María's anecdotes about her role in the factory reveal about "the psychic and cultural framework within which union organisation and activism occurred in this period," James says: "Anecdotes represent the relationship of the individual to dominant social models and attitudes. They express in a synthesised form, on a local scale, the transgression or acceptance of hegemonic values."⁵ They can function as morality tales or fables – stories with a twist, or a sting in the tail that reveals something of the narrator and of the social relations they are describing. But unlike epiphanies, they rely on the evocation of a composed and sometimes archetypal sense of self, as in Luisa Passerini's description of how the 'born-rebel' form is used to narrate life experiences of conflict and contestation among working-class women in Turin, for instance as a way to explain and make sense of arguments with supervisors in the workplace.⁶ It is this interplay between a stable self and a fluid one, and the related interplay between the past and contemporary Northern Ireland, that these two narrative modes of the epiphanic and the anecdotal make visible.

In Alison's interview, her anecdotes are about mobility and identity, and how these two things are related. Other interviewees also use anecdotes to illustrate points about their identity and how that relates to what James calls 'social models and attitudes', but the difficulties and possibilities of movement are the recurrent focal point of Alison's account specifically. Tim Cresswell, recognising the productive but potentially disorientating

⁴ Peronism was a populist Argentine political movement that was initially mobilised by Juan Perón in the run-up his first of three stints as the President of Argentina in 1946.

⁵ James, Daniel, *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p178; p172.

⁶ Passerini, Luisa, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1984]), p27.

wideness of mobility as a theoretical lens, argues in his 2006 account of the concept that what connects different kinds of movement, from the cellular to the demographic, is meaning, or narrative. “Stories about mobility, stories that are frequently ideological, connect blood cells to street patterns, reproduction to space travel. Movement is rarely just movement; it carries with it the burden of meaning and it is this meaning that jumps scales”, he says.⁷ So we can chart a connection between mobility and anecdote, in the same way as we can between epiphany and transgression; in this interview, anecdotes are stories about mobility that invest movement with meaning.

The chapter analyses the epiphanic possibility Alison attributes to her first encounters with punk and proceed to an analysis of the anecdotes that follow this initial encounter. The final section will consider the relationship of these narratives to temporality and memory, and conclude by returning to the idea of punk as a structure of feeling.

“We weren’t like punks...” – setting the scene

My interview with Alison, in a busy café close to Belfast City Hall, began with a disavowal. She told me that when a friend had sent her my call for participants, she had been unsure if she qualified. She expanded on this doubt:

Well we weren't like punks, like, shaved heads and Mohicans as such, we were punks to what was a kind of ... we're from Dungannon [laughter] and punk wasn't big in Dungannon, it wasn't big at all, so there were a crowd of us that sort of hit that age at that time, and we all went into that together I suppose, so I sort of, he'd [her friend] seen the advert and said you should contact this, OK, and I said what about yourself, and he said no because he can't remember any of it! [laughter].⁸

⁷ Cresswell, Tim, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp6-7; see also Elliot, Anthony and John Urry, *Mobile Lives* (London: Routledge, 2010); Sheller, Mimi, and John Urry, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 38, no. 2 (1 February 2006), pp207-226.

⁸ Interview with Alison Farrell, 2015.

This admission is a helpful starting point for three reasons. Firstly, it reminds us of the loudness of a certain transnational cultural memory of punk, a memory encompassing “shaved heads and Mohicans”, the Sex Pistols, spitting, safety-pins and so on, one that makes divergent individual memories more difficult to express.⁹ Alison’s own memory differs from the dominant one because of her age – she became interested in punk in 1980, well after the period from 1976 to 1978 generally taken as the high watermark of British punk – and because she was in Northern Ireland rather than London, the epicentre and transmitter of this particular myth.¹⁰ As mentioned previously, after becoming popular slightly later in the province than in the rest of the United Kingdom, punk in Northern Ireland enjoyed a late flowering that would last up until 1982 or 1983. An interesting effect of this relatively delayed engagement with punk was that the boundary drawn between punk and post-punk in Britain was blurrier across the water.¹¹ The central English band in Alison’s account are Echo & the Bunnymen, Liverpoolians who are very much part of the post-punk scene Mark Fisher describes as marking a break from “lumpen punk R and R”, but most of the Northern Irish bands she mentions maintained a sound and an aesthetic indebted to the Clash and other exemplars of first wave punk.¹² This is a reminder of the need to maintain an awareness of geographical and temporal differentiations in the punk scene, but also a reminder of the transnational nature of punk as something that worked against the annexation of particular cultures into particular geographical sites. Furthermore, it shows how the signifiers associated with punk-ness shift in connotation in different contexts and under different constraints, a recurring theme in Alison’s interview.

Secondly, Alison’s emphasis on Dungannon is important in the context of mobility and transgression, presaging the importance of the movement between different locations

⁹ See, for instance, Robinson, Lucy. ‘Exhibition Review Punk’s 40th Anniversary—An Itchy Sort of Heritage’. *Twentieth Century British History*, 7 September 2017, Vol 39 No 2, pp309-317; this is also a useful text for thinking about how this friction can be productive rather than simply prescriptive.

¹⁰ The tension between punk as myth and punk as lived experience is comparable to the tension between personal memories of the ‘swinging 60s’ and the potent cultural memory of this period in Britain analysed here: Mills, Helena, ‘Using the Personal to Critique the Popular: Women’s Memories of 1960s Youth’, *Contemporary British History* 30, no. 4 (1 October 2016), pp463–483.

¹¹ See for example Fisher, Mark, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (London: Zero Books, 2014); Wilkinson, David, *Post-Punk, Politics and Pleasure in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); the classic account of the post-punk scene is Reynolds, Simon, *Rip it Up and Start Again: Post-Punk 1978-1984* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005).

¹² Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, p109.

(and the importance of movement within those locations) in her narrative. Dungannon is a small town in County Tyrone about 40 miles away from Belfast. The nearby village of Caledon staged a seminal moment in Northern Ireland's recent history when young Nationalist MP Austin Currie squatted a house there in 1967, to draw attention to discriminatory housing practices intended to maintain electoral dominance for Unionist politicians.¹³ Dungannon was also the destination of the first civil rights march in Northern Ireland, which left from Coalisland in County Tyrone and walked to Dungannon some weeks after Currie's protest. This march presaged future tensions after it was confronted and attacked by Ian Paisley's Ulster Protestant Volunteers, a pattern that would recur with later civil rights demonstrations.¹⁴ Along with Moy and Portadown, Dungannon formed a notorious 'murder triangle' in the 1970s, partly because of its status as a base of operations for loyalist and republican paramilitaries.¹⁵

Alison's narrative does not explicitly describe any of the violent incidents that occurred in Dungannon in this period, or the deeper history of discrimination and structural sectarianism that animated the protests of 1967 and 1968, but they exist as a frame throughout as well as a spectral presence informing the structure of feeling she describes. This brings us to the third relevant aspect of the quote, Alison's comment that although punk wasn't big in Dungannon, "there were a crowd of us that sort of hit that age at that time, and we all went into that together".¹⁶ The sense of collective and generational sociality hinted at here is an important part of how Alison composes her narrative, through reference to a group; the epiphinal moment is not individual but plural. This is emphasised by the way in which Alison describes finding out about the project, via a conversation with a friend who insists that her memory is better than his, making her a more productive interviewee – someone who can remember, but who is remembering not just for herself but on behalf of others. The following section will turn to the epiphinal moment of punk, and its relationship to transgression.

¹³ See Keenan-Thomson, Tara, 'From Co-op to Co-opt: Gender and Class in the Early Civil Rights Movement', *The Sixties* 2, no. 2 (1 December 2009), pp207–225, both for an account of Currie's strike and for an account of how discriminatory housing practices in Dungannon were challenged by a group of working-class, female activists in the 1960s. Keenan-Thomson argues that this activism was eventually co-opted by the middle-class and male-dominated Campaign for Social Justice, a co-option that culminated in Currie's attention-grabbing action.

¹⁴ Bourke, Richard, *Peace in Ireland: The War of Ideas* (London: Pimlico, 2012), p63.

¹⁵ Cadwallader, Anne, *Lethal Allies: British Collusion in Ireland* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2013).

¹⁶ AF, 2015.

Epiphany and transgression

After our discussion of how she found out about the project, Alison explained that she had become interested in the punk scene after she and some friends auditioned for a school play in lower-sixth (so when she was 16 or 17). The play represented a rare opportunity for the students in her all-girl, *de facto* Protestant school to mingle with the students of the all-boys school nearby. “So we auditioned for the school play and through that we met ... boys! And it just all sort of coincided that the boys that we met were all into, they had a garage band and that sort of thing, so we sort of fell into, obviously we were all into the music scene by that point,” she explained.¹⁷

Um, and that's how it's all sort of, how we got into that. And again it also was, one of the few things in Dungannon that crossed other divides. So not only did we meet boys for the first time but we also found that we met people from other schools which definitely didn't happen at the time in Dungannon. And it was quite hard to find somewhere that we could meet. So there was a café that was not even in a neutral place but a very neutral café so we all used to meet there, and then sort of any of the bands, you know, there was a couple of the bands formed around town and it didn't matter where they played everybody went to see them so we crossed religious divides, all sorts of divides. It was quite exciting.¹⁸

This is an epiphanic story about transgression – about crossing divides, in Alison’s words. Lynn Abrams, in the 2014 paper about epiphany in the oral history interview from which I am taking this concept, describes it as a narrative strategy mobilised by a narrator “attempting to align past and present selves, to make a smooth or coherent story from a disjointed or incoherent life”.¹⁹ In this movement between past and present it is a technique of composure, in the double sense given to this term in the work of Graham

¹⁷ AF, 2015; see chapter one for an account of the education system in Northern Ireland.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Abrams, Lynn, ‘Liberating the Female Self: Epiphanies, Conflict and Coherence in the Life Stories of Post-War British Women’, *Social History* 39, no. 1 (2 January 2014), p21.

Dawson and Alistair Thomson as relating both to the composition of a self and the composition of a narrative.²⁰ Specifically, the epiphanic mode is a way of incorporating a break or a change in the narrated self into the interview. Abrams says it allows us to identify “moments of acute self-recognition which occur both in the narrator’s life experience (as a significant event remembered, recounted and used to explain something) and in the moment of the oral history interview, expressed not just in the words said but in the ways in which those words are expressed”.²¹ In Alison’s narrative above, we have the school play and the subsequent friendships that emerge from her participation in the play, and the engagement with the punk scene these friendships lead to, as an exciting moment of self-recognition where she begins to question the structuring of her social world. For Abrams’ interviewees, a group of British women who grew up in the years following World War Two drawing on competing discourses of liberation and respectability to construct their identities, the epiphanic moments in the interview “enabled them to make a bridge in their own minds between two selves ... enabled women to *show* how they made the transition to a modern female selfhood that they now inhabit”.²² Similarly, Alison positions her past self as existing within competing discourses and institutions (school; religion; popular culture and punk) and negotiating a path through them to narrate her present, composed self.

This movement between past and present became more apparent near the end of the interview, when Alison returned to the way in which punk allowed her to experience space differently in Dungannon. She said:

Suddenly you had this new thing where you were neither Roman Catholic or Protestant you were this individual that listened to punk music and that suddenly became your label, you were the girl that was seen up town wearing her pyjamas – cool – that was better than being said that I was the girl that was up town that was a Protestant, in my view. And that's what I did. And I'm proud of it!²³

²⁰ Dawson, Graham, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (Hove: Psychology Press, 1994); Thomson, Alistair, *Anzac Memories: Living With the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, p35.

²³ AF, 2015.

Here we see a very explicit connection between the three moments of self-recognition in the narrative – the pre-punk Alison, who was implicitly conscious of herself as a Protestant and as someone interpellated as a Protestant; the punk Alison, who can reject this identification via the transgressive movement of being “seen up town wearing her pyjamas”, in a telling conflation of public and private; and the Alison who is telling the story and who is both marked by her past actions and affected by them – proud in the final story, and excited in the previous one. The shift is premised on the possibility punk offered to transgress the boundaries of identity – “suddenly you had this new thing where you were neither Roman Catholic or Protestant” – and to challenge the process of telling that positioned the young Alison as belonging to one part of the community. As Abrams explains, the epiphanic moment is related to both the past and the present, or the moment of telling. Alison’s vivid recollection of this sudden shift in possibilities upholds this interpretation. The long, excited sentence in which she explains how punk allowed her to resist interpellation as a Protestant was followed by two shorter, summative statements – “that’s what I did. And I’m proud of it!” – stamping the narrative with the imprimatur of composure.

This accounts for the epiphanic role of punk in Alison’s interview. Transgression is the specific movement, or the specific form of mobility, that renders punk epiphanic within the narrative by allowing Alison to cross boundaries and in doing so to challenge discourses of sectarianism and respectability. Tim Cresswell, in his 1996 book on transgression, is helpful here.²⁴ He uses three examples – the women’s protest camp at Greenham Common following the establishment of a base for nuclear weapons there in 1981; graffiti in New York; hippy festivals at Stonehenge – to draw out the idea of transgression as a practice “that serves to foreground the mapping of ideology onto space and place”.²⁵ So, for example, the moral panic around graffiti in New York in the late 1970s (and the subsequent incorporation of graffiti into the gallery system as an example of authentic or ‘folk’ art) show how place is invested with meaning via symbolic and

²⁴ Cresswell, Tim. 1996. *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p9.

material struggle – “the meaning of an act (graffiti) is framed within a discourse of metaphorical association (dirt, obscenity and so on)”.²⁶

My project is less interested in the discourses that interpret acts of transgression and more interested in how people experienced and remember those acts. But it is also interested in the symbolic order that the experience and memory of spatial activity reveal. In the context of Alison’s stories about Dungannon, two connected symbolic orders seem to come through – that of sectarianism and that of respectability.

Sectarianism and respectability in Dungannon

The twin structures of sectarianism and respectability are apparent in Alison’s initial description of the nascent punk scene in Dungannon. In the narrative quoted in full at the top of the previous section, she said: “And again it also was, one of the few things in Dungannon that crossed other divides. So not only did we meet boys for the first time but we also found that we met people from other schools which definitely didn't happen at the time in Dungannon.”²⁷ As the account of segregated education in the first chapter suggested, meeting people from ‘other schools’ is a circumlocutory description of meeting people from the other religious community, or Catholics in Alison’s case. Bearing that in mind, this narrative does several things. It claims that both Catholics and Protestants participated in the punk scene; it suggests that the punk scene allowed boys and girls to meet in relatively unconstrained circumstances; and by describing the exceptional – things that “definitely didn’t happen at that time in Dungannon” – it describes a perceived norm – segregation, the institutionalised maintenance of segregation through the education system, and spatial division. It is an account that is attentive to both the limits of spatial segregation and the limits to transgression as a spatial practice, in that the place where Alison and her friends met is described as an enclave, “a café that was not even in a neutral place but a very neutral café”. The narrative of transgression, ‘crossing divides’, questions as well as describes the normative world of spatial segregation in 1980s Dungannon.²⁸

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p60.

²⁷ AF, 2015.

²⁸ Cresswell, *In Place*, p9.

In a 2017 paper on the 1994 Loughinisland murders, Mark McGovern makes the important point that much of the existing work on sectarianism in Northern Ireland has focused on the two largest cities in the province, Belfast and Derry. It is necessary, he claims, to widen the scope of this research to consider the nature of division in rural areas. These divisions, which are not simply a product of the conflict but in many cases precede it, are “deeply rooted in a history of colonial conquest, appropriation and settlement, [and] have always been just as stark and real in many rural areas of the North, if often less visible to those unfamiliar with the signs, signals and local social knowledge of the sectarian habitus”.²⁹ It is important that (while, as I will suggest below, Alison’s narrative moves between Belfast and Dungannon and cannot be easily divided between the two spaces) the epiphinal transgression generated by her engagement with punk is both initially and primarily apparent in rural spaces, where she appears to feel the weight of both the telling process and of a network of familial relationships more heavily.

This emphasis on the borders in rural Northern Ireland is helpful partly because it acts as an important corrective to the over-emphasis on spectacular manifestations of sectarian violence and places the structuring role of sectarianism firmly in everyday life. Allen Feldman’s work on the surveillance of difference in Northern Ireland as a “scopic penetration that contaminates private lives and spaces” is useful here, but where Feldman concentrates on sectarian processes of telling in Belfast, and especially in interface areas of the city where violence was especially pronounced in the 1970s, Alison’s description of Dungannon is attentive not only to sectarian division but also to other manifestations of power and boundary-setting in Northern Ireland, partly in terms of gender and sexuality, a theme that will be returned to at the end of the interview.³⁰ This is especially apparent in her enthusiastic description of the do-it-yourself (DIY) culture of modifying clothes to produce a punk aesthetic, a culture that was particularly

²⁹ McGovern, Mark, “‘See No Evil’: Collusion in Northern Ireland”. *Race & Class* 58, no. 3 (1 January 2017), p55; for more work on rural sectarianism see Murtagh, Brendan, *Community and Conflict in Rural Ulster* (Coleraine, University of Ulster, 1999); Kelleher, William F, *The Troubles in Ballybogoin: Memory and Identity in Northern Ireland* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Donnan, Hastings, and Kirk Simpson, ‘Silence and Violence among Northern Ireland Border Protestants’, *Ethnos* 72, no. 1 (1 March 2007), pp5–28.

³⁰ Feldman, Allen, ‘Violence and Vision: The Prosthetics and Aesthetics of Terror’, *Public Culture* 10, no. 1 (1 January 1997), p27.

potent in Northern Ireland given the relative difficulty of buying punk clothing without going across the water to London or Manchester. She said:

We would've had evenings in where we just sat and fixed clothes, we got a doctor's coat, one of my friends was doing medical science and we got a doctor's coat, and tie-dyed it bright fluorescent pink and sewed a feather boa on to it ... you could not be seen dead ... with purple pixie boots, what was I trying to ... and a mini-skirt somewhere in the middle of it, but you know, I thought, I'm cool tonight. So, uh, you were getting jam-jams [pyjamas] and ripping them up...³¹

The free-wheeling, associative way Alison spoke about this process of DIY tailoring is suggestive, reflecting both the bricolage form of the process itself and the epiphinal excitement of dressing-up as transgressive performance; the somewhat bashful, ironic interjections (“what was I trying to ... you know, I thought, I’m cool tonight”) indicate the difficulty and the pleasure of describing this excitement after the fact. Another of my interviewees, John Callaghan from west Belfast, described the first wave of Belfast punks as “works of art”.³²

And I kind of got caught up in that for a bit of crack so the next week in school again shopping, my best mate Carson who was a fellow punk at the time, we're going to have to get into this, so what do we do, what do punks wear, went through the newspapers and everything. So we came up with the sliced t-shirt, this lovely white t-shirt, Adidas t-shirt, and I just sliced here and pinned it together, scribbled the names of a few of the bands on it. This is brilliant, this is mean! No hair gel or anything at the time, no way of spiking the hair up, you'd try and get it wet, so someone suggested using your father's Bryll Cream. Which didn't quite work but we tried it anyway, just messed the hair as much as possible.³³

³¹ AF, 2015.

³² Interview with John Callaghan, 2016.

³³ Ibid.

The potency of modified clothing as a vehicle for transgression was alluded to in Alison's narrative above of being known as the girl that was seen wearing pyjamas in town, and returned to throughout the interview. Clothing also provided a space for performing gender differently.

So when describing the importance of punk as creating a space for self-recognition, Alison said: "The music sort of crossed so many barriers and we were all finding out, we were all 17 or 18, we were all finding out an awful lot, you were forming your own views about what it was like to be in Northern Ireland at the time."³⁴ This was a response to my question about gender and being a girl in the punk scene, which Alison dismissed as a relatively unimportant factor in the self-realisation offered by punk.

The big thing that was happening around you is that there were shootings, you know, Dungannon was fairly badly hit. I mean all towns were, but that would've been a big thing, you know, so you're trying to get your head around what side's right and what side is wrong, and for somebody like Stiff Little Fingers to come on and sing *Barbed Wire Love* made you stop and think, there's an alternative – *Alternative Ulster*, you know – that sort of, that was the big big thing, more so than gender issues, but gender issues also came into that because you had like the Au Pairs and the Slits, Patti Smith, women were finding a place – Toyah was there, OK, she wasn't punk really but she was as punk as I was – you were finding there were females coming out who weren't like Bucks Fizz females, you could wear black leather and not be ... you know, you could be wearing black leather because you wanted to, you could wear ripped trousers, you could wear pyjamas, basically you could wear anything. Like I wore a tutu to a disco made out of a poncho.³⁵

What is interesting here is the movement between remembered violence, subjectivity and the politics of gender. Alison remembers the punk scene as allowing her to transgress the boundaries of sectarianism and the boundaries of respectable gender performance,

³⁴ AF, 2015.

³⁵ Ibid.

both in terms of wearing outrageous or unusual clothing and in terms of not using clothing as a means of attracting men – “you could wear black leather and not be ... you know, you could be wearing black leather because you wanted to”, she said. The Au Pairs, the Slits and Patti Smith provide models for this kind of transgression. This is again a communal process: “We would've had evenings in where we just sat and fixed clothes, we got a doctor's coat, one of my friends was doing medical science and we got a doctor's coat, and tie-died it bright fluorescent pink and sewed a feather boa on to it.”³⁶

This dynamic of transgression is expanded upon in Alison's account of travelling from Dungannon to Belfast to see Echo & the Bunnymen, who are the central band in her account much as the Stranglers are in Gareth's and Crass are in Petesy's. She said:

Yeah, most people you knew, there would've been a whole crowd from Dungannon that would've gone down that you'd have known, there was the ones that were like, really punk-y – we had a couple that got on to the local news for being, you know, they would carry a kettle like a handbag and had their hair all done, you know, we weren't quite that extreme, we were all Bunnymen freaks so we were different, we didn't fit into Dungannon but I don't think we were that outrageous. But I do know that two of my relatives would've walked across the street and pretended they didn't know me so maybe we were more outrageous than what we thought, I don't know.

F: So did it feel different, Belfast from Dungannon, in terms of...

A: You were more accepted down in Belfast, it was a lot cooler down in Belfast. You could sort of get away with wearing what you wanted in Belfast.³⁷

The kind of look performed by Alison here is not one that fits with the hegemonic memory of punk (as entailing a very specific image and style) and so can only be expressed with a

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

pre-emptive disclaimer; but this disclaimer is immediately undercut by the positioning of the look into a particular time and place, that of Dungannon in 1981, which is implicitly cast as somewhere that rigorously maintained the bounds of decorum through the boundaries of respectability – even if the ‘really punk-y’ crowd took this transgression further than Alison and her friends. The conversation here also suggests a subterranean moment of intersubjectivity, in which, as someone who is also from a small Northern Irish town, I share with Alison the recognition of just how minor a deviation from the norms of acceptability needs to be to make an unfavourable impression in small Northern Irish towns. This implicit description of the mechanisms of respectability-maintenance in Dungannon is made explicit when Alison, having suggested that her and her friends were not particularly outrageous compared to the newspaper-baiting antics of some of their peers, remembers that “two of my relatives would’ve walked across the street and pretended they didn’t know me”. The boundary being transgressed here is not one of sectarianism but one of what Beverley Skeggs calls respectability, a discourse that determines acceptable and unacceptable behaviour through classed and gendered processes of prescription and identification.³⁸ While (as Skeggs shows) this is a discourse that we can chart through Victorian England into contemporary England, it has a particular resonance in Northern Ireland given the gendered positioning of women during and after the conflict.

In a context where “the position of Northern Irish women has (...) been profoundly affected by (...) (para)militarism; the ideological dominance of constitutional debates; and the limited impact of feminist politics within the province”, Alison’s double transgression takes on a particular heft.³⁹ Her narrative insists on the primacy of transgressing sectarian boundaries, but the epiphanic capacity of this transgression is also related to Alison’s ability to perform her femininity in a different mode. What is also striking here is the association of Belfast with a relative cosmopolitanism, as a site where what Fran Tonkiss calls the ethics of indifference make it easier to perform one’s gender differently and to belong to a different kind of community, one that does not fit easily

³⁸ Skeggs, Beverley, *Formations of Class & Gender: Becoming Respectable* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publishing, 1997).

³⁹ Stapleton, Karyn, and John Wilson, ‘Conflicting Categories? Women, Conflict and Identity in Northern Ireland’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 11 (19 September 2014), p2073; see also Kitchin, Rob, and Karen Lysaght, ‘Sexual Citizenship in Belfast, Northern Ireland’, *Gender, Place & Culture* 11, no. 1 (1 March 2004), pp83–103 for a *longue durée* history of the management of sexuality in Northern Ireland.

along the Catholic-Protestant bifurcation described by Alison as formative of her early life in Dungannon.⁴⁰ If Alison's engagement with punk is the epiphanic hinge from which her narrative opens, going to university and renting a flat in south Belfast creates the possibility of mobilising her newly-minted punk identity in different ways.

From the country to the city

Alison was a punk in Dungannon before she was a punk in Belfast. Or perhaps more precisely, she was a punk in Dungannon at the same time as being a punk in Belfast, given the relative ease with which she was able to travel between the two locations, for instance by staying in her older boyfriend's flat in the city after going to gigs there. These plural and recursive trajectories are an important corrective to the simplistic rendering (visible in the title of my thesis, and elsewhere) of the 'Belfast punk scene' – the infrastructure of punk in Belfast made it an especially important site for the performance of punk identities, but those doing the performing often came from other parts of Northern Ireland and returned to their towns and villages after gigs or days out in the Cornmarket. This is evident in Alison's movement between Dungannon and Belfast. It was also apparent in a story John Callaghan told me about meeting punks from around the province.

A couple of times I remember around town just seeing three or four strangers – what are you doing here lads, where are youse from – Ballycastle, where's that – just you had something in common, they had the same thing, the same sense of being on the outside, you just hit it off straight away. It was easy, it was so easy to make friends in those days. And the whole thing in the middle of a bloody civil war! Went to school every morning – do anything at the weekend? – just arseing about town, who were you with, a couple of punks from Lisburn – you know, Prods – and nobody ever said anything, so much bitterness and sectarianism but you never got a bite. You know I just threw it out there, just to see! Never got a

⁴⁰ Tonkiss. Fran, 'The Ethics of Indifference: Community and Solitude in the City'. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6, no. 3 (1 September 2003), pp297–311.

bite at all – people expected that you would be behaving like that as punks, you know.⁴¹

John's description highlights three things. Firstly, as described, the need to think about the spatial politics of the punk scene in Belfast as not being solely concerned with the conditions of segregation described in chapter two, but also as incorporating other trajectories from outside of the city – "Ballycastle, where's that", he remembers himself saying. Secondly, the structure of feeling created by punk as a common interest – "the same sense of being on the outside" felt by young Protestants and Catholics. Lauren Berlant's description of structures of feeling as "affective residue that constitutes what is shared among strangers" is relevant here; John's touching memory that "it was so easy to make friends in those days" is a helpful marker of the intractable sociality that constituted a central part of punk's structure of feeling.⁴² Finally, the slightly bathetic deflation at the end of the narrative suggests something that will also be relevant to Alison's account. On the one hand, you have the "bloody civil war" and on the other hand, John's desire to shock his schoolmates by describing his day out with some 'Prods' from Lisburn is thwarted. This is an important reminder that a simplistic rendering of the relationship between punks and their society is impossible – the formula of punk as non-sectarian and Northern Irish people in general as sectarian does not hold together. But the main point I want to draw out from his story is that punk offered both the young people he met from Ballycastle and Lisburn, and him and his friends from a majority-Catholic enclave of west Belfast, a different sense of geography, of the possibility for movement, a possibility that "is both meaningful and laden with power".⁴³

Mobility in and out of Belfast

This possibility for movement is also apparent in Alison's narrative. Alison explained that she felt more comfortable marking herself out as different in Belfast. This is clear in the quote above where she suggests that "you were more accepted down in Belfast, it was a lot cooler down in Belfast. You could sort of get away with wearing what you wanted in

⁴¹ JC, 2016.

⁴² Berlant, Lauren, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p194.

⁴³ Cresswell, *On the Move*, p10.

Belfast”.⁴⁴ This was a somewhat startling narrative for me, given the conditions of segregation and violence I described in the second chapter, and a salutary reminder not to reify those conditions and bear in mind their uneven distribution across the city and across the people of the city. This aspect of her narrative was further borne out when she dismissed my suggestion that passing through the checkpoints set up around the city centre would have been a frightening or discomfiting experience. “That was never, you know, I lived on the Lisburn Road. I left Dungannon in ‘82 and came down to Belfast. And lived up the Lisburn Road and there was never issues as long as you were civil and polite I always thought”, she said.⁴⁵ This is to some extent a marker of her position as a Protestant university student. Her experiences, as she recognises at points in the narrative, are those of someone who lived in the relatively safe and relatively non-sectarian south Belfast area around the Lisburn road, which was a popular residential area for students at the nearby Queen’s University and remains something of an aberration in the overall geography of the city because of its transient student population and mixture of Protestant and Catholic residents.

But in spite of this evocation of Belfast as a safe place as long as you kept your head down and adhered to some norms of polite behaviour (even while challenging others), Alison’s anecdotes about mobility and movement suggest a more anxious and equivocal sense of the relationship between power, space and violence. The following section, then, will analyse three anecdotes about movement and mobility in which Alison colours in the shift in self-recognition brought about by the epiphanic, transgressive possibilities opened up by her participation in the punk scene. These anecdotes help to develop the epiphanic moment but they also trouble its too-neat distinction between one self and another, by suggesting both the limits to transgression as a spatial practice and the limits to punk-ness as a non-sectarian identity.

I will consider the three anecdotes in sequence. The first involves a trip to Blacklion, a small border town; the second an encounter with some policemen on the motorway out of Belfast; the third, a journey to London to see Echo and the Bunnymen. Following Cresswell, the analysis will focus on the “burden of meaning” carried by each of these

⁴⁴ AF, 2015.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

stories about movement; following James, the relationship between memory and composure evident in the anecdote form will also be considered.

A cottage in Blacklion

The first anecdote Alison told me about mobility described her and some friends spending a weekend in Blacklion, a border village on the southern side of the line separating County Cavan, in the Republic of Ireland, from County Fermanagh, in the north of Ireland.⁴⁶ The border location is important here for the double-edged inflection of the narrative. On the one hand – in terms of showing the narrator’s relationship to established values – Alison’s story of her and her friends drunkenly criss-crossing the border line renders the existence of the line somewhat absurd, a tactic that is a staple of stories about border life and (for instance) the minor acts of smuggling many people living on the border undertook.⁴⁷ But on the other hand, the presence of an army patrol and the account of their bemused encounter with a group of out-of-place punks gestures towards the darker edge of the narrative and of the militarisation of the borderlands, as a site where everyday life “was shaped by the heavy military presence and the high level of paramilitary violence” that existed in this area throughout the 1970s and 1980s.⁴⁸

Alison said:

So, we all spent a weekend in this house, it was a pump with running water and we had a couple of radios – so we were going to listen to the radio – and candles. And that was it. And yet if you look at it now you’ve got Blacklion on the border there [indicates on the table] and we were staying somewhere about there, so you crossed the border about 20 times...⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See Edwards, Rodney, ‘Brexit: Mixed feelings in border villages of Blacklion and Belcoo’, *The Irish Times*, June 2016, accessed online: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/uk/brexit-mixed-feelings-in-border-villages-of-blacklion-and-belcoo-1.2685930>, 26/3/18, for the reflections of some residents of both villages on the strangeness of being connected across a border and the possible difficulties that Britain’s departure from the European Union could create for the economic and social connections between the two small villages.

⁴⁷ Leary, Peter, *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border, 1922-1972*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), especially chapter three.

⁴⁸ Nash, Catherine, and Bryonie Reid, ‘Border Crossings: New Approaches to the Irish Border’, *Irish Studies Review* 18, no. 3 (1 August 2010), p276.

⁴⁹ AF, 2015.

The actual border being transgressed here is suggestive of a particular politics of place, one that combines a performative awareness of the artificiality of the split between the north and the south of Ireland with an equally performative bravado. This is maintained throughout the story, which continued with Alison and her drunk friends being stopped on the way back from the pub by an army patrol.

It was sort of like, have you got any proof of identification ... my handbag was like from one end of the street to another ... 'No, we haven't' ... and then go through what's your name again, where are you from, and nobody knew we were there anyway so it was hilarious. But they let us go, we weren't arrested.⁵⁰

How does this narrative function to “represent the relationship of the individual to dominant social models and attitudes”, in James’ terms?⁵¹ On one level, it suggests that punk as a licence for mobility had definite limits – “I couldn't find ID because I was completely out of my tree, we looked all punk-y and they weren't used to sort of punk-y type people there” – and loses its effect in *Blacklion*, in an echo of the idea that the boundaries place on behaviour and movement are more sharply-defined in rural parts of Northern Ireland, at least in Alison’s account. But in terms of composure, it turns a relatively frightening memory into a comic story. In terms of mobility, the story takes what could be a bald statement of the geography of fear and constraint that operated in the border region of Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s, and colours it in through a comic account of youthful transgression. They are not arrested, but in raising that as a foreclosed possibility at the end of the account Alison gives us a transitory sense of the pervasive anxiety of everyday life and of mobility in Northern Ireland in this period – especially of “delinquent mobility” that refuses the imposition of the static, or that attempts to move in ways that the state is uncomfortable with because of its fluidity and intractability.⁵²

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ James, *Doña María*, p172.

⁵² de Certeau, Michel, *The Practice of Everyday Life: Volume One*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988), p130.

Driving to Portrush

This entangling of anxiety and humour, typical of the form of anecdote-driven narrative composure described by James, is also present in Alison’s account of being stopped by the police when driving to Portrush from Belfast. Portrush is a seaside resort town in County Antrim, closer to Derry than it is to Belfast. An encounter with the police would have been frightening anyway – Alison noted in passing that she was far more frightened of the police than of the army, although unfortunately we did not discuss why that would be the case.⁵³ In this instance the situation was freighted with further anxiety because they had some freshly-picked mushrooms of indeterminate status in the back of the car, although Alison was at pains to point out that they turned out to not in fact be hallucinogenic.

The police put their head in you know, where are you going, where are you from, all that, so my friend P, so she said [her full name], Dungannon, address, and asked me, Alison Farrell, Dungannon, gave my address, put your head in to the back and B said that his name was ... used to play for Liverpool ... really famous ... Kenny Dalglish! We sat in the front sort of going why the fuck did he just do this. So they asked C his name and he said Jean-Jacques Burnell ... what the fuck are these two at, because the last thing we wanted was to be taken out of the car, we just wanted to get on our way and make some mushroom soup.⁵⁴

After the boys wind the police up some more – “So, 'where are you from Mr Dalglish', and he said 'Oh I'm from Anfield Road, Liverpool' ... and the more that this went on the more they did the whole winding up thing...” – they’re allowed to go on their way. Alison deflates the animation she displayed in recounting this story by summarising the situation as a “close shave”.⁵⁵ Again, the overall tone is comic. At the level of anecdote we have both an act that works against the state’s attempts to constrain particular forms of

⁵³ See chapter one for an account of police harassment of young people in Northern Ireland.

⁵⁴ AF, 2015. I have abbreviated the names of Alison’s friends in this account. Kenny Dalglish was a celebrated centre-forward who played football for Liverpool and Scotland; Jean-Jacques Burnell was a member of the Stranglers; Anfield is the home stadium of Liverpool FC.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

mobility and the sublimating of potentially disruptive narrative elements such as fear or danger into a punchline that emphasises the limits to these constraints and helps sustain the essentially positive mood of Alison's overall story of punk as epiphany. In terms of the performance of the story, there is a sense that this was a frightening experience, and it is notable that in this story (coming after the previous one) there is a sense of the police as a malign and frightening force – “we were stopped by the police – that was worse, you hated being stopped by the police”.⁵⁶

In terms of mobility these two stories describe Alison and her friends on the move – to rural Blacklion, on the motorway to Portrush – and in describing that trajectory show the rules and practices of surveillance that mark out its accepted boundaries. “While the bounded territories of planners impose structure and order on the world, the ability to move through, within, and between these spaces constitutes a kind of almost-free will,” suggests Cresswell.⁵⁷ That final clause is important – the moving figures in Alison's stories are only almost-free, pushing against the bounds of accepted mobility in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s while still constrained by them. This seems like an important element of the structure of feeling we are looking for. Ben Highmore, writing about the post-punk scene in London in 1981, describes the atmosphere as “a solid air of energy, anxiety and something else, something that also seemed to be erupting and making holes in reality” – this interplay between energy, anxiety and the possibility of making holes in reality is comparable to what is going on in Alison's anecdotes about mobility.⁵⁸

Hitch-hiking to London

A final story about hitch-hiking from Belfast to London (via ferry) offers another illustration of punk's status in Alison's narrative as a metaphorical passport offering licence for new kinds of mobility. “We got over ... we hitched down to the ferry in Larne and then we hitched from Stranraer the whole way down to see the Bunnymen gig,” she said.⁵⁹ They then waited outside the BBC studios to meet the DJ John Peel, whose evening

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Cresswell, *On the Move*, 2006, p213.

⁵⁸ Ben Highmore, *Cultural Feelings: Mood, Mediation and Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 2017), p131.

⁵⁹ AF, 2015.

show on Radio One was a fixture of and important taste-maker in the punk and post-punk scenes. Hitch-hiking is a form of transgressive mobility *par excellence*, one that conjures up a particular cultural imaginary that (as in the stories above) involves both anxiety and freedom. This is not really drawn out in the story, though, which was a short one and mainly concentrates on the excitement of meeting Peel.

She said:

I can remember the night he played Billy Bragg and you sat up and went [sits bolt upright] what was that, you know! It was such an influential part of your night because there wasn't social media or stuff, you listened to John Peel to know what was going on [...] And it was sort of ... you knew that you weren't just this little isolated dot in Belfast anymore, John Peel knows who I am! Not.⁶⁰

The mobility attested to here is slightly different than that of the previous two narratives, in that it is more poetic or metaphorical than material or spatial. Existing as part of a transnational imagined community of punks and post-punks – a feeling that is heightened by having actually met John Peel when visiting London – allows Alison to exist in a structure of feeling that extends outside of Northern Ireland, one that means she isn't just “this little isolated dot in Belfast”. This is mobility as the possibility of joining yourself up with other parts of the world – London, Manchester, New York – and of feeling that possibility as freeing, even while remaining bounded by the material and social constraints of life in Belfast in 1982.

Punk as structure of feeling in Alison's narrative

Through Alison's account, then, we can sense something of the structure of feeling constituted by the punk scene in Belfast. It is equivocal, ambivalent, describing the capacity punk offered her to transgress the boundaries of respectability and transgression, and the new types of mobility this transgression made possible, but also

⁶⁰ Ibid.

describing the existence of those boundaries and the anxious awareness of violence that exist alongside the possibility for self-invention and freedom. This anxious, knotted sense of imaginative freedom is a central component of what is being described here as punk's structure of feeling.⁶¹

The summative moments from near the end of the interview reinforce this claim. Here, Alison both sees her teenage self from the perspective of herself as an adult, and also attempts to relate the experiences of her teenage self to the experiences of her daughter, in a complicated engagement with temporality that is typical of the oral history interview as a form and suggestive of the ways in which these narratives can help us think about the relationship of the past to the present. First, she said:

Our parents were very good ... tolerant, yes ... and again had a lot to cope with very quickly. Now I'm a parent, and looking back they had to cope with a boyfriend, they had to cope with a change in clothes, a change in attitude, this crazy thing about writing quotes all over the bedroom, um, you know, having been sort of going to an all-girls school and being quite conservative I suppose and suddenly going in to wearing these outrageous clothes, having blue hair at times, they coped with it, and they coped quite well. My mum was never keen on me staying in Belfast but I think that was more to do with boyfriends than security. I think so. [Laughter] And I know certainly if my daughters did a quarter of the things I know I did, we would not be...⁶²

This is a complicated narrative in that it works across three dimensions – Alison sees her parents' tolerant response to her adolescent mobility and transgression through the lens of her relationship with her daughter, while admitting that she might not be as tolerant of such transgressions on the part of her daughter. This account involves a kind of boundary-marking between then and now, one that is performed alongside a subtle awareness of the artificial nature of those boundaries. As in the stories discussed above,

⁶¹ See Ngai, Sianne, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), p3, for an account of how to read "difficult emotions" as "unusually knotted or condensed 'interpretations of predicaments' – that is, as signs that render social problems visible and affective.

⁶² AF, 2015.

Alison's dissection of parental relationships links the imposed structures of respectability with the way in which violence and the threat of violence shaped everyday life in Northern Ireland – “my mum was never keen on me staying in Belfast but I think that was more to do with boyfriends than security. I think so.”⁶³

A final example of this triangulation between past, present and future came near the end of the interview, when we discussed the Terri Hooley biopic *Good Vibrations*.⁶⁴ In many of my interviews, as the following two chapters will discuss, the film functioned as an exemplary site of memory. Interviewees responded to it in complex ways, often combining a thrill of recognition with a less easily-expressed feeling of uneasiness, a sense that the narrative composure of the film tended towards an elision of the messiness of their own stories.⁶⁵ In Alison's case, this was drawn out in a particularly interesting way because the film functioned as a way to discuss the past with one of her two daughters. The quote is a long one but, because of its complexity, worth considering in full.

But watching the film [...] [one of my daughters] watched it and found it hilarious and she wanted to talk about the Miami Showband [shooting], and explaining to her ... she's interested enough in history to know that it was wrong and you know, 'Can you remember that mummy?', and there are several instances that I remember that made me sit in my bedroom and cry my heart out, you know, you could not come through the Troubles and not cry, you know, you just, you could not be human. And there are still incidences that haunt me for want of a better word, I suppose music sort of helped, you know, forget about it. So we talked about the Miami Showband and I said you've got to understand [...] , you know, Dungannon was so different and Northern Ireland was so different and this brought us all

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ D'sa, Lisa Barros and Glen Leyburn, *Good Vibrations* (London: Universal Pictures UK, 2012).

⁶⁵ So, for instance, Gareth was proud that he was asked to provide some music for the film but critical of its too-neat narrative; Petesy, similarly, was pleased to have had a small part in the film but questioned its focus on Terri Hooley rather than on the grass-roots formation of the scene; John said: “I found it really emotional to be honest. Just right at the end they showed pictures. I knew a couple of people in it, not great friends but just part of the big fraternity, a couple of them are dead, you know what I mean, Jesus Christ was that really 30-odd years ago.” (GM, 2015; PB, 2016; JC, 2016).

together. It brought us to a safe place, now she would be quite you know, quite a few of her friends, I think young people have this weird thing about sexuality anyway, I think you have to sort of ... this fluidity about sexuality ... but her friends tend to be fluid more one way than the other [I think this means that her friends are mostly gay]. But I don't know, they just don't seem to have this thing about saying if they're heterosexual or homosexual, they just sort of fluid about it all the time, which I think is cool, but I sort of say ... your friends, you know, everybody accepts that now ... growing up you were Roman Catholic or you were Protestant, that was it, it didn't matter, that was it bottom line.⁶⁶

This is a dense story, bringing together the various narrative strands that have been unspooled throughout Alison's interview – it was one of our final exchanges. It suggests, firstly, the capacity of *Good Vibrations* to act as a prompt for the transmission of intergenerational memory, bridging the years between mother and daughter by making Northern Ireland's history tangible, if not quite comprehensible. Watching the film together creates a space for what Annette Kuhn calls memory work. The film itself is not a repository of memory in the same way that a photograph album is, for instance, although it does finish with a collage of photographs of the punk scene that prompted emotional recollections from some of my interviewees, as in John's account in the footnote on the previous page. But its status as “an instrument of social performance” that sanctions particular “kinds of talk [and] modes of telling” is similar to that of the book of old family snapshots described by Kuhn.⁶⁷

Alison and her daughter talked about the Miami Showband Massacre, a 1975 loyalist killing in which three musicians were shot by the UVF, possibly with the collusion of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.⁶⁸ The space opened up by watching the film makes the violent past sayable, but it does not make it comprehensible – Alison says “we talked about the Miami Showband and I said you've got to understand [...], you know, Dungannon was so

⁶⁶ AF, 2015.

⁶⁷ Kuhn, Annette, 'Memory Texts and Memory Work: Performances of Memory in and with Visual Media', *Memory Studies* 3, no. 4 (2 August 2010), p304; see also Kuhn, Annette, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 2002).

⁶⁸ Travers, Stephen and Neil Fetherstonhaugh, *The Miami Showband Massacre: A Survivor's Search for the Truth* (London: Hodder Headline, 2007).

different and Northern Ireland was so different". The incommensurable gap between past and present is reaffirmed here in both a positive and a negative way; that is, Alison is insistent that there is a fundamental difference between past and present, but cannot find a way to express to her daughter the contours of that fundamentally different period.

This flash of discomposure is heightened through Alison's admission that "there are several instances that I remember that made me sit in my bedroom and cry my heart out, you know, you could not come through the Troubles and not cry, you know, you just, you could not be human". We see here two limits – both of the punk scene's tactics, transgressions and mobilities as modes of dealing with the difficulty of everyday life in Northern Ireland, of bringing Alison and her friends to a "safe space", and of the epiphal role punk plays in structuring the self as presented in the interview, as Alison accedes to the unsettling presence of memories that do not fit within this narrative strategy. Music, she suggests, allowed her to forget about the material conditions of existence in 1970s and 1980s Northern Ireland, but remembered violence exists at the margins of the story and the structure of feeling within the story.

Finally, there is an apparent digression at the end of the narrative as Alison describes changing attitudes to sexuality among young people in Northern Ireland, before making an apparently oblique comparison to her own childhood – "growing up you were Roman Catholic or you were Protestant, that was it, it didn't matter, that was it bottom line". In the moment of the interview I found myself somewhat blindsided by this change of tack, and did not quite grasp Alison's meaning. On reflection, this seems like a meaningful anacoluthon, a "breakdown of grammar or syntax that is often mistakenly treated as though its manifestation reveals nothing about language".⁶⁹ Alison is making a connection here between her daughters' friends' desire not to be placed into a binary category of sexuality (straight/gay) and her own desire not to be read as a Protestant, or as 'not-a-Catholic'. This also serves to draw together the different boundaries she sees herself as transgressing as a young woman – those of sectarianism but also those of respectability. Earlier in the interview, she had described going to the Orpheus, a bar frequented by punks but better-known as a venue for Belfast's small gay scene. Alison said:

⁶⁹ Mieszkowski, Jan, 'Who's Afraid of Anacoluthon?', *MLN* 124, no. 3 (2009), p648.

And again, it wasn't even to do with Two of my friends were gay at the time, well, they still are, but it was sort of again just, crossing all boundaries. Like the smell of poppers as you walked in would have absolutely blown your head off, it was disgusting, um, yeah, so, it was sort of like...⁷⁰

Here and in the conversation with her daughter remembered above, we get a sense of the complexity of punk as structure of feeling and its relationship to Northern Ireland then and now.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed an interview with Alison Farrell to argue she remembers her engagement in the punk scene as an epiphanic moment. For Alison, this epiphany relates to how being a punk changed her relationship to sectarianised space in Dungannon and Belfast. In her narrative, developing a punk identity within these spaces entailed a newfound capacity for transgression. This capacity does not erase the architecture of surveillance and control she describes, or the “sediment of history” that makes sectarianism manifest in everyday life, but it does allow her to negotiate the boundaries in a new and exciting way.⁷¹ It is notable, also, that the idea of respectability and discourses around respectable behaviour are generative of boundaries here, rather than just the sectarian divide; as discussed in chapter one, one facet of the structure of feeling within the punk scene can be understood as a rejection of traditionalism as well as a rejection of sectarianism.

After outlining the epiphanic moment in the narrative, I drew out three of Alison’s memories about mobility and the punk scene. In these – one about going to a town called Blacklion on the border between Cavan and Fermanagh, one about getting stopped by the police while driving and one about visiting London to see Echo & The Bunnymen. I described these memories as anecdotes, suggesting that Daniel James’ theorisation of the

⁷⁰ AF, 2015.

⁷¹ Burton, Frank, *The Politics of Legitimacy: Struggles in a Belfast Community* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p49.

anecdote as a way of achieving narrative composure and of relating individual narratives to social discourses is helpful in understanding what these memories suggest about Alison's description and memory of punk in Northern Ireland. Alison's memories of movement, I argued, show that the capacity for transgression generated by her engagement with the punk scene did not entirely elide the anxious and troubling aspects of mobility the anecdotes reveal.

In conclusion, I considered two of the summative moments in the interview, in which Alison described her parents' response to punk and her own discussions with her children about Northern Ireland's violent history. These reflective and thoughtful considerations, I suggested, bring the structure of feeling of the Belfast punk scene forward into Alison's sense of contemporary Northern Ireland and the way in which it is still shaped by elements of the past.

CHAPTER FIVE: GARETH MULLAN – HABITUS AND STORYTELLING IN MEMORIES OF THE PUNK SCENE

Introduction

I think it was because it definitely affected the way I look at things. I don't, you know, you don't pre-judge as much. I think, not that I ever was that bad, it's hard to explain. Like there's so much creative stuff went on, not that I was in any way part of that, but all the all together it was a whole mish-mash of things coming together and the way you look at life and the way you look at things, it definitely helped my political views not to be as judgemental and you know don't judge a book by the cover, get to know someone before you brandish them, but I was already a wee bit like that anyway to be honest but it just sort of underlined it and strengthened that aspect.¹

My interview with Gareth Mullan took place in his flat in south Belfast. His flat is very close to the house in which he grew up, just off the Upper Lisburn Road towards Balmoral and Musgrave Park Hospital. The first thing I noticed in his tidy, sparsely-furnished living room was a long glass cabinet underneath the television, packed neatly with hundreds of records; the second was a bookshelf, similarly packed with books. I recognised some of the spines, particularly the few books about punk in Northern Ireland that I was also familiar with – Terri Hooley's autobiography, the collaborative A-Z of Northern Irish punk, *It Makes You Want to Spit* – and others about punk in England. During my initial email conversation with him, Gareth had expressed doubts about his usefulness for the project, and more specifically about the historicity of his experience of the punk scene. He said that he had only been a fan, someone who attended gigs and enjoyed himself. Furthermore, he suggested that the narratives of people who played a more public role in the creation of the scene (by recording music or making fanzines, for instance) would have more innate historical value. This tendency to undervalue the historicity of one's experiences has been remarked upon as an important factor in shaping oral histories,

¹ Interview with Gareth Mullan, 2015.

particularly through the ways in which “class, race and ethnicity ... create significant differences in how we remember and tell our lives”.²

In Gareth’s case, this uncertainty led to a somewhat self-critical narrative about his young self, which emphasised his relative passivity as a young man caught up in the punk scene. This narrative was counterbalanced, though, by a sense of his older self’s role as collector and storyteller – as someone who was there and who understands punk in Northern Ireland as part of what is being described here as a particular structure of feeling. Although questions of transgression and mobility both figure in Gareth’s account, they are less prominent than they are in Alison’s – rather, he concentrates on the elements of cultural (or, following Sarah Thornton’s reading of Bourdieu) subcultural capital developed by his involvement in the punk scene.³ But what ultimately comes from the narrative as understood here is a story about the development of a set of dispositions within a particular habitus, more than a story about the accumulation of cultural or subcultural capital, and it is this lens that will be used to analyse the interview.

The chapter is divided into two sections, relating to the two narrative strands described above. It first concentrates on Gareth’s early life and his youthful engagement in the punk scene, before moving on to his account of how he relates to the punk scene now, especially as a collector of records and other paraphernalia. The logic here is not chronological. Rather, the two sections are intended to inform one another. The first will show how Gareth’s identification of himself as punk relates to his feeling of displacement and uncertainty as a young man from a working-class background going to a middle-class school, and how this can be made sense of through Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of the “embodied history” that generates an individual’s habitus. Gareth describes his involvement in the punk scene as changing his modes of thought and his modes of behaviour, from the level of gesture and stance to the level of attitudes, expectations and behaviour.⁴ An example of the effect of punk on Gareth is apparent in the quote that opens

² Sangster, Joan, ‘Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Practice of Oral History’, in *The Oral History Reader*, Alistair Thomson and Robert Perks (eds.) (London: Routledge, 2003), p89.

³ Thornton, Sarah, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1996); Bourdieu uses the concept of capital most productively in Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 2010).

⁴ Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p56.

the chapter: “It was a whole mish-mash of things coming together and the way you look at life and the way you look at things ... I was already a wee bit like that anyway to be honest but it just sort of underlined it and strengthened that aspect.”⁵ Engaging in the punk scene, Gareth suggested, changed the way in which he perceived Belfast and Northern Ireland during the conflict, encouraging him to look at things in a different light.⁶

In following this strand of Gareth’s story, I will draw on the work of sociologists and anthropologists who use Bourdieu to think about how this process functions in groups that are smaller than the national, class-based groups that tend to interest Bourdieu himself – so among green activists in New York who take food from skips in order to reduce their environmental impact, or among boxers in a small gym in an impoverished neighbourhood of Chicago, for example.⁷ This work will allow me to suggest that Gareth’s account of his immersion into punk generated a different set of dispositions that helped resolve the out-of-placeness he felt as a younger man.

The second section of the chapter will consider the tension created by using Bourdieu’s concept of habitus in an oral history project. Habitus is not just embodied history, according to Bourdieu’s use of the concept – it is “embodied history, internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history”.⁸ In charting Gareth’s understanding of his own role as a historian of the punk scene and how this allows him to make sense of his youthful experiences, this section will unpack Bourdieu’s argument about forgotten history and show how Gareth is able to narrate aspects of his past.⁹ It will suggest that as

⁵ GM, 2015.

⁶ See Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) pp60-64, for an account of how a habitus is the product of both objective conditions and the individual life-course of each person, and for an account of how the habitus is maintained through its role in determining actions and strategies that are decided upon based on one’s past experiences.

⁷ The two texts referred to here are Barnard, Alex V, ‘Making the City “Second Nature”: Freegan “Dumpster Divers” and the Materiality of Morality’, *American Journal of Sociology* 121, no. 4 (1 January 2016), pp1017–1050 and Wacquant, Loic, *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁸ Bourdieu, *The Logic*, p56.

⁹ Despite the emphasis in *The Logic of Practice* on habitus as something that can only be observed (rather than described, or narrated, by those within it), there is something of an ambivalence in Bourdieu’s overall body of work to the use of interview material. He relies especially heavily on this kind of material in his sprawling co-produced book on the experience of poverty, *The Weight of the World* – Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, trans. Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods and Mathieu Copeland (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993). For a helpful account of this

a form of historical practice, Gareth's memorialising of the punk scene serves both a private and a public purpose – that is, it is both a form of self-representation and a way of representing the material and social processes of the recent past. Again, Lynn Abrams' notion of epiphany is useful here, but arguably the epiphanic moments occur at two different points in this narrative – not only with Gareth's initial involvement in the punk scene, but also with the process of memorialising, collecting and publicising the scene, and with charting the antecedents of the scene, that Gareth discovers as he gets older.¹⁰ Catherine Nash's essay on local historical practices in Northern Ireland argues that they “suggest a more complex picture of historical knowledge, interest and practice than that contained within the image of two violently destructive, intense and permanently irreconcilable perspectives on the past”.¹¹ It is in this context that Gareth's account has a specifically public-facing affect, as a form of local history.

The history-making practices described by Nash above, and the history-making practices described by Henry Glassie in his account of folklore in the rural Fermanagh village of Ballymenone, suggest that there are non-elite and extra-state practices of remembering and narrativising history that complicate Bourdieu's schema of habitus as embodied history.¹² Like oral history, this kind of subaltern public history – although it should not be understood as operating outside of assemblages of power and discourse – does allow individuals to produce reflexive accounts of the way in which they work in history and history works in them, even if the subterranean, dispositional layers of habitus this generates are not always explicitly present within narrative accounts of the past. This relationship will be discussed in more detail below.

Field, habitus and dispositions

ambivalence see Barrett, Timothy, 'Storying Bourdieu: Fragments Toward a Bourdieusian Approach to "Life Histories"', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 14, no. 5 (9 December 2015); for an exemplary use of Bourdieu alongside critical ethnographic research see Leaney, Sarah, *Located Lives: An Ethnographic Representation of People and Place on a British Council Estate* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, May 2016).

¹⁰ Abrams, Lynn, 'Liberating the Female Self: Epiphanies, Conflict and Coherence in the Life Stories of Post-War British Women', *Social History* 39, no. 1 (2 January 2014), pp14–35.

¹¹ Nash, Catherine, 'Local Histories in Northern Ireland', *History Workshop Journal* 60, no. 1 (1 October 2005), p49.

¹² Glassie, Henry, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus is an account of how individuals internalise their cultural, social and material worlds in ways that structure their perception and appreciation of those worlds. The habitus is the corpus of embodied and conceptual behaviours and attitudes (which Bourdieu calls dispositions) that are generated through this interaction – that is, the interaction between individual lifecourse and objective structures and conditions. This process takes place across certain fields – so education, for example, but also the family, the workplace and so on.

Loïc Wacquant's 2016 genealogy of habitus emphasises its origin in Bourdieu's early work on colonial Algeria and rural, post-war France.¹³ Concentrating on the gestation of Bourdieu's project in conflictual spaces and histories serves a purpose in Wacquant's pugnacious account and defence of the concept. He insists that habitus should not be understood as exclusively a theory of the reproduction of power in social fields, and that it is not a steel cage in which actors are locked in cycles of behaviour and disposition which cannot be broken.¹⁴ Elaborating, Wacquant states: "Habitus is never the replica of a single social structure, since it is a multilayered and dynamic set of schemata that records, stores and prolongs the influence of the diverse set of environments successively traversed during one's existence."¹⁵ In his reading, it is a way of thinking about the social in the individual and the individual in the social, "the ways in which the sociosymbolic structures of society become deposited inside persons in the form of lasting *dispositions*."¹⁶ Because the depositing of this sociosymbolic residue takes place over time, it is an intimately historical process that produces (and is produced by) both individual and collective practices. Bourdieu explains that it "ensures the active presence of past experiences, which ... tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms".¹⁷ Because it encompasses both the social and the individual it is layered with both the specific and the general. One can speak coherently of a masculine habitus, but also of a habitus correlating

¹³ Wacquant, Loïc, 'A Concise Genealogy and Anatomy of Habitus', *The Sociological Review* 64, no. 1 (25 February 2016), pp64–72.

¹⁴ See, for instance, Richard Jenkins, who argues: "Given the close, reproductive link between the subjectivities of the habitus and the objectivity of the social world it is difficult not to perceive them as bound together in a closed feedback loop, each confirming the other." Jenkins, Richard, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London: Routledge, 2002), p82.

¹⁵ Wacquant, 'A Concise Genealogy', p68.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p65.

¹⁷ Bourdieu, *The Logic*, p54.

with a specific institution – a carceral habitus, or an educational habitus. Each of these entails a set of dispositions, performed within a particular field.

So dispositions are the embodied way in which we engage with the world, both physically and through thought, planning and perception; the habitus is the sum of these dispositions; the field is the setting in which these engagements take place. To have a habitus is to know the rules of the game intuitively – to understand how to act in certain situations in the ‘correct’ way. Some fields are more autonomous than others – so for instance “in much of Bourdieu’s research ... the intellectual field of university education [in France] is conceptualised as a field with a high degree of autonomy in that it generates its own values and behavioural imperatives that are relatively independent from forces emerging from the economic and political fields”.¹⁸ In Gareth’s narrative, he develops a habitus through the ways in which being a punk changes his dispositions within the field of the punk scene. Importantly, this emerges alongside his experience of going from a working-class childhood to a middle-class school and the subjective discomfort this movement creates – in Bourdieusian terms, the emergence of a habitus *clivé* or cleft habitus in which someone feels discomfited following a jarring experience of social mobility.¹⁹

Community, place and school

Gareth describes himself as Belfast “born and bred”, and specifically as being from the intersection of three small residential areas off the Upper Lisburn Road in the south of the city – Priory Park, Sicily Park and Locksley Park.²⁰ His account of this area in the early

¹⁸ Naidoo, Rajani, ‘Fields and Institutional Strategy: Bourdieu on the Relationship between Higher Education, Inequality and Society’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25, no. 4 (1 September 2004), pp457–471. The field or *champ* is the least satisfying aspect of this triptych of ideas for me – particularly in light of the work done in chapter two of this thesis, it is difficult to ascertain the distinction between conceptual fields (as in the example of the university sector, which is not one site but a heterogeneous bundle of sites with a shared superstructure and ethos) and spatial fields (so, for example, the boxing gym in Wacqaunt’s work, which is a very specific place and importantly situated in an impoverished, majority-black neighbourhood of Chicago). In the context of Gareth’s narrative, ‘the punk scene’ is given a certain conceptual and spatial unity that means it works as field in the context of Bourdieu’s work; this seems to hold the three terms together sufficiently for the analysis to cohere.

¹⁹ Friedman, Sam, ‘Habitus Clivé and the Emotional Imprint of Social Mobility’, *The Sociological Review* 64, no. 1 (1 February 2016), pp129–147.

²⁰ GM, 2015.

to mid-70s intertwines questions of class and sectarianism. The houses he grew up in were terraces, with his parents' house bordered on one side by his grandparents, and on the other by his great-aunt and great-uncle. He describes them as "wee, as I say two-up two-down, one fireplace, poor compared to the rest of the people on the street".²¹ Despite this initial suggestion of class anxiety – which will become explicit in his recounting of his school experiences – the area is nevertheless "a wee bit of an oasis ... a little bit of an oasis of mixed community, my next-door neighbours were Catholic, you know Protestants and Catholics we had bonfires on the street and we all collected, you know we were all kids playing together".²² This sense of separateness and its concomitant sense of hostile outskirts which are "sectarian, you know, hardcore, Taughmona, White City" serves as a narrative preparation for his baptism into the punk scene – "there was no real sectarian upbringing for me because we had Protestant and Catholic friends, so the whole punk thing was just natural for me then, in that way".²³ In this sense, the habitus of punk is linked to his childhood experiences and an aversion to sectarianism is narrated as a natural, domestically-inculcated disposition for Gareth. But the account also works as a temporal marker within the interview for the shift that comes about through going to school, which has both negative and positive effects.

Firstly, education bursts the prelapsarian bubble of childhood presented in this part of the narrative.²⁴

It's just that I was isolated from it [the violence going on in neighbouring areas], but then it all, when it did blow up bigstyle and we all got a bit older I mean my Catholic friends went to a Catholic school and I went to a Protestant school and you just never saw each other. I don't mean you never saw each other again, you saw each other at night and stuff, playing football in the street, but it was different then.²⁵

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ It's worth noting here that this sharp dichotomy between a pre-conflict and post-conflict Belfast is something of a narrative trope in autobiographical accounts of the conflict.

²⁵ GM, 2015.

This difference is apparent in the enforced codification of segregated education and in the increased political awareness of his adolescence, both of which contribute to the end of innocence described in Gareth's account of his early childhood.

Whenever you were introducing friends from school to your friends from home, you felt a wee bit, well I felt a wee bit intimidated by some of their friends. And I don't know whether they felt the same but it was a peer pressure thing, you know you had to ... it's not that you had to ... again, I was too young to be in one of the Tartan Gangs.²⁶

Having been too young to take part in the street violence of the early 70s, Gareth's separateness from the sectarian nexus of south Belfast is confirmed when he goes to Methody after primary school, making him only the second person on his street to go to a grammar school. If Finaghy Primary is the site where Gareth's sense of himself as a Protestant is confirmed, Methody becomes the site in the narrative where his sense of himself as working-class is confirmed, and where that difference becomes a spur towards in the generation of punk-ness as habitus.

Methody and feeling out of place

"Methody wouldn't be called, it wasn't a hard school by any means. But for me as you know real working-class family going into, I was a fish out of water ... Going into Methody was just a total culture shock for me."²⁷ Methody (or Methodist College Belfast, as it is formally but not popularly named) is an interdenominational and coeducational school,

²⁶ GM, 2015. See Gareth Mulvenna's comprehensive 2016 account of the formation, attitudes and politicisation of the Tartan Gangs for more details on this youth subculture. The gangs, associated with their residential areas and composed of working-class Protestants, had their roots in street violence and football hooliganism. In Mulvenna's account, this concoction – relatively familiar to young people in British cities in the '70s – is rendered distinct from its British counterparts from 1972 onwards, as it becomes instrumentalised as a tool of loyalist violence through association with paramilitary groups, mainly the Ulster Defence Association, the Ulster Volunteer Force, and the Red Hand Commandoes. Mulvenna, Gareth, *Tartan Gangs and Paramilitaries: The Loyalist Backlash* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).

²⁷ GM, 2016; there is a neat aleatory connection here between Gareth's phrasing and Bourdieu and Wacquant's 1992 account of habitus – "when habitus encounters a social world of which it is a product, it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted". See Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p127.

founded in 1865. It is on the south side of the city close to Queen's University Belfast, with a leafy, Edwardian campus and a prestigious reputation for both sporting and academic achievements. Gareth's sense of disorientation in this environment manifested itself through a feeling that there were a new set of codes in place that he did not understand, exemplified by the fact that rugby, rather than football, was the primary sporting activity encouraged among the students.²⁸

A wee bit of class, you know you definitely noticed that ... well I felt that I was a wee bit, who are all these kids, I felt poorer than them, I felt – I didn't know rugby! – it's a big rugby school. [This is] a wee bit Americanised but it was like a jock culture ... Going into there I just didn't have a clue. I really did feel like a fish out of water.²⁹

The repeated simile here – a fish out of water – recalls the bucolic description of pre-school childhood in north Belfast as a small, isolated pond that existed outside of the sectarian flows elsewhere in the city. It also emphasises Gareth's understanding of his own passivity as a teenager, one that is contrasted in the narrative with his engagement with the history of the punk scene as an adult.

The dislocation and disorientation of being educated in a middle-class institution as a working-class person has been much-discussed, although not in the specific context of Northern Ireland. A classic text remains Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, which anatomises the experience of the 'scholarship boy', existing "at the friction-point of two cultures" and not entirely comfortable within either.³⁰ This may be a slightly ironic evocation in this context, however, given Hoggart's critique of 'Americanised' working-class culture's vapidness and the role that punk plays in Gareth's narrative. Gareth says: "And I just didn't click in there [Methody] either and I think that's also, that's what sort of dropped me into the punk thing. It was like the disenfranchised youth, the outsider,

²⁸ See chapter one for an account of the role of sport in Northern Irish society; briefly, rugby is a largely middle-class and Protestant sport where football is popular with working-class Protestants and Catholics.

²⁹ GM, 2015.

³⁰ Hoggart, Richard, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Penguin, 2009 [1957]), p243. For an overview of this literature see LeMahieu, D. L., "Scholarship Boys" in *Twilight: The Memoirs of Six Humanists in Post-Industrial Britain*, *Journal of British Studies* 53, no. 4 (2014), pp1011–1031; for a Northern Irish example of the genre see Boyd, John, *Out of My Class* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1985).

always felt that, you know.”³¹ There is something here of the adoption of readymade archetypes in narrativising experience, analysed by Luisa Passerini in her early work on popular memory and Italian fascism. The figure of punk as outsider is comparable to the ‘born rebel’ stereotype Passerini identifies in some of her interviewees’ narratives.³² In her work, the specifically gendered element of this stereotype is crucial, because it serves “as a means of expressing problems of identity in the context of a social order oppressive of women, [and] also of transmitting awareness of oppression and a sense of otherness”.³³ In Gareth’s narrative, the archetype is redolent of a male tradition of outsiders – from James Dean to Joe Strummer – but it also expresses a problem of identity, and the complicated nexus of relations formed by class, religious background and gender in 1970s Belfast.

Another way of thinking about the relationship between these identities and the institutions that they are connected to and moulded by comes from Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, particularly as elucidated by his former student Loïc Wacquant in *Body & Soul*.³⁴ Both Alison and Gareth identify school as a locus of power, as an institution that inhibits forms of identity and inculcates other forms of identity – for Alison this is related to respectability and the family as well as to her Protestantism, while for Gareth the unease caused by school is related to class, as described above. Punk is epiphanic in both narratives. Where their accounts differ is the way in which they resist this inculcation. In her interview, Alison widens her boundaries through a series of movements, from the country to the city, and from respectability to punk-ness, which entail the crossing of symbolic and material borders. Gareth, on the other hand, presents his epiphany as entailing a form of self-work – as the adoption of a set of generative practices within a social context that form a habitus, one that continues to influence his sense of himself in the present, or at least for the duration of the interview. Thinking about these two narrative strands (punk as transgression; punk as formative of a habitus) together – that is, not comparing or contrasting them, but keeping both in mind – is useful, in that it helps understand punk in Belfast as a set of practices and cultural forms that were

³¹ GM, 2015.

³² Passerini, Luisa, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1987]), p25.

³³ *Ibid.*, p26.

³⁴ Wacquant, *Body & Soul*.

simultaneously reactive and generative, imbricated in power and reaching towards resistance. Importantly, both transgression and habitus are affective, embodied, spatial concepts, frames of understanding that help us think about the body in space, as well as about the temporal and narrative techniques used in Alison and Gareth's interviews.

Punk, sectarianism and habitus

Gareth was 16 when he got into punk, meaning he'd been a student at Methody for around four years. He said:

I know a definitive moment was seeing the Stranglers on Top of the Pops. *Go Buddy Go*, and the next day the whole school was talking about it. There was a group of – by that stage you know you'd made alliances in school and again it was the outsider, you know, not the rugby playing ones.³⁵

His self-identification as an outsider is repeated here, but immediately transformed into a self-identification that has a positive rather than a negative connotation, through the definitive moment of seeing the Stranglers play on television and being able to discuss the performance in school. So, seeing a punk band on Top of the Pops (a band, the Stranglers, that would go on to prove the foundation upon which his identity as a punk was built and that he remained extremely invested in) is the first move towards establishing himself as comfortable within the school. Beverley Skeggs, calling for a use of Bourdieu that goes beyond the dichotomy between dominant (middle-class) values and residual (working-class) values to recognise that the latter does not solely create a habitus predicated on lack or exclusion, is useful here. She says:

We also need to be able to understand the habitus of recalcitrance, of non-belonging, of no-caring, those who refuse to make a virtue out of necessity, the [fuck] off and 'so what' of utterances, the radical emptiness of the habitus.³⁶

³⁵ GM, 2015.

³⁶ Skeggs, Beverley, 'Exchange, Value and Affect: Bourdieu and "the Self"', *The Sociological Review* 52, no. s2 (6 April 2005), p89.

Gareth's newfound capacity to find pleasure rather than pain in being an outsider marks the development in his narrative of a different kind of habitus.

The second move involves an encounter with what Gareth calls "a higher echelon of society", when an encounter with another schoolboy allows him and some other friends to form a band, albeit somewhat half-heartedly.³⁷

They lived in a big house that had big attic rooms, he had two brothers and each of them had an attic room, and he had an attic room – he was allowed to bring his mates in [...] We used to go get a carryout [Northern Irish slang for drinks bought from an off-licence] and go up to his bedroom and then that became all the punk pictures round it and listening to records up in there [...] I think we did try to form a band [...] so that was quite funny, we actually had a name and all as well. We called ourselves Bacteria.³⁸

In a low-key way, this account speaks to the complicated class composition of punk, one that is not apparent in, for instance, Dick Hebdige's classic text *The Meaning of Style*.³⁹ On a macro level, facilitators of the punk scene – Terri Hooley in Belfast, Malcom McLaren in London – used capital, nous and contacts to arrange gigs and help create the beginnings of a cultural infrastructure, the conditions of possibility; on a micro level, bands needed money for instruments and space to practice, something more readily available for middle class adolescents. On the narrative level, it is the second stage in Gareth's engagement with a punk habitus, in which his discomfort with the "higher echelon of society" he encounters at Methody is replaced by a sense of sociality engendered through shared dispositions and the material ephemera of punk – records and pictures torn out of music magazines.

The band never makes it out of the bedroom or the garage, but Gareth's affiliation is confirmed when he plans to go to the Stranglers gig at the Ulster Hall in 1977, asking his

³⁷ GM, 2015.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Hebdige, Dick, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979).

mum to help him buy some suitable clothes – namely, drainpipe corduroy jeans. Our discussion of clothing led into another digression on the duality between school and the outside world, and the fuzzy line between those two fields.

Talking about the way you dressed as well, because you were at a grammar school there was that bit of a, you sort of nearly had to have two, you know, I couldn't dress like a punk at school, getting detention and everything. [F: You've got to wear a blazer and that?] [Inaudible] ... college socks, but you did have your own sort of private wee, you'd put your tie straight instead of having the big [makes knotting gesture around his neck to indicate the top knot in a tie], and wearing DMs and you know...⁴⁰

The performance of habitus isn't always overt – unlike, for instance, the rebellious young men in Paul Willis's study of adolescent resistance *Learning to Labour*, Gareth attempts to keep his punk-ness simultaneously present and private in school, performed but in a minor key.⁴¹ Alex Barnard, in his 2016 account of habitus among freegans in New York, describes how their engagement with the material world (through finding food in dumpsters or turning discarded items into useful ones) “[gives them] a sense of place in the urban environment even as it deepened their sense of being out of place in their [non-freegan] social milieu”.⁴² Similarly, Michael O'Regan in his ethnography of habitus and clothing among backpackers in Nepal describes how “dress becomes a demonstration of belonging, of travel experiences, of confidence and authority as well as a useful vehicle to demonstrate distinction.”⁴³ This dynamic between being in-place and out-of-place, and the way it relates to both the formal rules of school and the informal rules of the punk habitus, is a clear indication of the way punk functions in Gareth's narrative as something that allows him to negotiate discomfiting and unfamiliar spaces.

From favourite bands to clothes and gigs, we moved on to records, the crucial final component of sealing his position within a punk habitus in Gareth's account.

⁴⁰ GM, 2015.

⁴¹ Willis, Paul, *Learning to Labour: How Working-Class Kids get Working-Class Jobs* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2000).

⁴² Barnard, 'Making the City', 2016, p1040.

⁴³ O'Regan, Michael, 'A Backpacker Habitus: The Body and Dress, Embodiment and the Self', *Annals of Leisure Research* 19, no. 3 (2 July 2016), p343.

You started going into Good Vibes and they had the singles, the punk singles up and imports [...] started going in there because of second-hand records and you were seeing, excuse me, seeing the people, and then Big Time was out, and it was playing in the shop, what the fuck's that, you know, Rudi, oh my god that's, ahh brilliant, you know. And then you were starting to get into the local scene, the Outcasts [...] You know you were just sort of learning these things as you went along.⁴⁴

Here we have a foregrounding of the educational or didactic element of punk fandom, the way in which familiarity with the scene is developed in an apparently aleatory way through chance encounters and overheard records, 'learning things as you went along'. The fact that buying records occupies a central place in Gareth's account is an important way of centring his narrative and generating continuity of self within the narrative – as explained above, Gareth remains a collector of records and other documents of the punk scene, even buying back some of the albums he had originally owned but sold as a younger man. Crucially, though, this story entails him not just learning more about the British or local punk scene as a development of cultural capital, but shows a way learning about how to behave within that scene, the dispositions, attitudes and interactions that come together to form a punk habitus.⁴⁵ If record shops are a site where this is formed and friendships create a space for another way of practicing this habitus, it is at gigs where it finds its ideal field and the space for its most obvious expression, as Gareth goes on to explain.

His first concert (the Stranglers, who played Belfast in September 1978 after having a planned gig in September 1977 cancelled) is another epiphanic moment in the narrative, even though he makes a deal with his mother that if he is to be allowed to stay out after eleven he and his friends have to sit in the balcony of the Ulster Hall rather than stand

⁴⁴ GM, 2015.

⁴⁵ Arguably, this also points to one of the problems with Sarah Thornton's attractively cynical mobilisation of Bourdieu's work to analyse the mechanisms of distinction she perceives in '90s club culture, in which "the social logic of these distinctions is such that it makes sense to discuss them as forms of subcultural capital, or means by which young people negotiate and accumulate status within their social worlds" – see Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 1995, p249. The economic metaphors she shares with Bourdieu only go so far, because culture is experienced and not simply accumulated.

with the crowd in front of the stage.⁴⁶ In the event, this proves to be an ideal vantage point for the gig.

The whole façade of the Ulster Hall was just cracking, the plaster was falling down on to the ones below, it was just so amazing, it really was, and then the stage got invaded at the end – there’s a picture in [Belfast punk anthology] *It Makes You Want to Spit* of Burnell playing among all these kids. And I mean I’m looking at it thinking I’m young to be here and there’s fucking wee kids up on the stage!⁴⁷

The idea of punk as claiming of space – the different relationship punk allowed young people to have with space – is apparent here in the cracking façade of the somewhat dilapidated monument to middle-class, Protestant tastefulness that is the Ulster Hall; this facet of the punk scene’s spatial structure of feeling will be considered further in chapter six. Gareth’s ability to negotiate with parental authority as he attempts to navigate constraints on his mobility echo Alison’s account of mobility and transgression as made possible by her involvement in punk. Temporally, this anecdote makes interesting use of the photograph of the gig, seen years afterwards when the book is published in 2002, as a punctum that opens a way into thinking about age and adolescence. Several times throughout the interview, Gareth alludes to his feeling of being too young for the punk scene as a feeling that has been challenged or at least reassessed through his adult awareness of how many very young people were involved in the scene. This willingness to interrogate his former self from his adult position is an interesting facet of his engagement in a kind of historical practice around punk, which will be discussed further below.

For this section, however, of most interest is the relationship of this narrative to a punk habitus, which in the first account of gig-going relates to the broadly anarchic attitude of young punks to authority and regulation. How this attitude is negotiated within sectarian

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid. See O’Neill, Sean and Guy Trelford (eds.), *It Makes You Want to Spit: The Definitive Guide to Punk in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Reekus Music, 2003).

frames of identity is a further concern, one that becomes more apparent in Gareth's next anecdote about going to concerts at the Harp Bar.

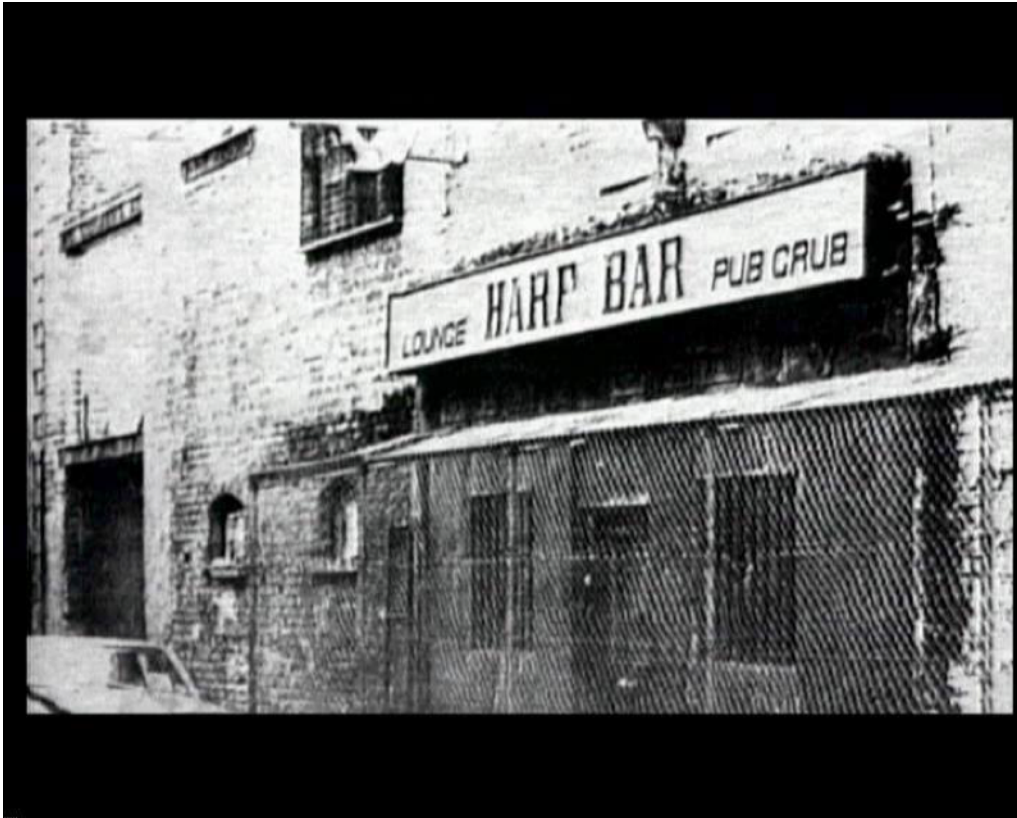
He said:

We used to go down [to the Harp] sometimes on a Saturday afternoon when they had a punk disco. [...] And you'd go up these stairs into this dark room, you just saw there was faces that you knew about but you didn't know to talk to them, you know? But you never felt intimidated or anything because you were all there for the music. And again the whole thing about the Protestant-Catholic thing and punk breaking all that down and music being the first interest.⁴⁸

This story is a good example of punk as an embodied habitus, as something that works on the body. Nick Crossley, in his analysis of Bourdieu's work on the physical aspects of the habitus, explains that "the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body – ways of walking or blowing one's nose, ways of eating or talking ... [reveal] the most fundamental principles of construction and evaluation of the social world."⁴⁹ The adoption of the embodied, felt dispositions of punk means Gareth can walk "up these stairs into a dark room" and not feel intimidated, with the assumption of shared interests and attitudes breaking down the Protestant-Catholic dichotomy that might have made meeting strangers in Belfast in the 1970s particularly intimidating.

⁴⁸ GM, 2015.

⁴⁹ Crossley, Nick, *The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire* (London: Sage, 2001, p6); see also Wainwright, SP, and BS Turner, 'Reflections on Embodiment and Vulnerability', *Medical Humanities* 29, no. 1 (1 June 2003).



The Harp Bar, early 80s. Picture by Thomas Ian Murdock.

However, the vivid description of a step into the dark and the unknown being made easier by a mutual interest in the punk scene was followed by a long pause on Gareth's part, as he gathered himself for an extended analysis of the relationship between punk and sectarianism. Although the fact of a mutual interest in punk helps dissuade any feeling of intimidation, it does not make the possibility of intimidation disappear. Gareth's analysis here complicates the too-easy evocation of punk's role in 'breaking all that down', while maintaining that it did do so, to an extent.

That's probably true but you still knew by people's names, if you got talking to them ... it's not that you cared. I always felt that I liked to know in case I insulted anybody. Indirectly talked about something I shouldn't have been talking about and upset someone you know. So I just liked to know...⁵⁰

In this account, punk in Belfast is not exactly about transgression (or resistance, in the sense of being an attempt to resolve the contradictions in the wider culture through a

⁵⁰ GM, 2015.

symbolic or material development of an alternative culture). Instead, it is a set of practices that allow its practitioners to negotiate the boundaries of Northern Irish social life in a safe way, but largely through acts of camouflage, concealment and avoidance rather than through acts aimed at countering sectarian narratives or producing alternative narratives. Gareth added:

That was just part of it but it didn't matter. And then those ... (deep breath) ... I don't know whether punk really opened up the city centre as such but it certainly might have been a wee trickle in the dam. Cracked it open you know. But very rarely would I, like after, at night I wouldn't have gone into the city centre at all.⁵¹

Again, punk's resistant capacity is partial, and bounded by the sectarian norms apparent in other fields and other spaces outside of its effective orbit.

The spatial limits of punk as a practice – its usefulness, as habitus, being confined to certain fields – is not exclusive to this moment. Gareth's analysis here forms part of several narratives throughout the interview that aim to position punk as inherently limited by the spatial, social and historical conditions in which it was formed in mid-70s Belfast. But this limiting gesture comes alongside a more expansive understanding of the ways in which punk allowed Gareth to access new forms of experience and friendship, without dislodging him from the discursive, knowledge-producing 'telling' practice that reads certain names and certain bodies as Catholic or Protestant.

When you did go into town on an afternoon when the town was open – cos you would go down to the Smithfield Market [...] you know there definitely was, you could see people, there was always wee cliques of other punk people. And you acknowledged [one another] ... you know I never really got any people shouting, any wee women coming over ... but you definitely did feel a sort of side-step apart from everybody else. And it felt good!⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

This positive sense of being an outsider is forged in opposition to other groups perceived as being more invested in the territorial and sectarian culture of Belfast, although Gareth does reflect that these groups might also have enjoyed the same affective sense of togetherness he enjoyed in the punk scene. “It was sort of a gang culture with them, more like an anti-gang culture with us but we were ganging together for protection. Because we were the outsiders, not the norm.”⁵³ This set of group dispositions is spatially bounded, as has been suggested, but not temporally bounded, as Gareth concluded in discussing the effect that punk has had on his life since he encountered it as a teenager.

You don’t pre-judge as much, I think, not that I ever was that bad, it’s sorta hard to explain [...] it was a whole mish-mash of things coming together and the way you look at life and the way you look at things, it definitely helped my political views not to be as judgemental and you know don’t judge a book by the cover [...] I was already a wee bit like that anyway to be honest but it just sort of underlined it and strengthened that aspect.⁵⁴

His assessment here, taken along with the various fragmentary narratives presented above, suggest an understanding of the punk habitus as entailing several modes of behaviour. These cohere around a deliberate practice of avoidance – not saying certain things, not asking certain questions, not performing one’s identity in certain ways – and a more positive practice of non-judgement that requires a repetitive, reflexive questioning of one’s own political and social background. In Wacquant’s description of the Chicago boxing gym, pugilistic habitus is predicated on:

Respect for the heritage received [through the training process] and on the notion, accepted by all as tacit condition for admission into the specific universe, that everyone must pay with his person, not take shortcuts ... the refusal to rationalise training ... is anchored in *ethical dispositions* whose internalisation is the hidden face of the learning of gestural technique.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Wacquant, *Body & Soul*, p125.

It is punk as a site for the inculcation of ethical dispositions that comes through mostly clearly in Gareth's narrative taken as a whole.

The limits of habitus and historical reflection

This is tempered throughout, however, with an understanding of limits that both positions punk as one cultural field within many competing fields, and foregrounds Gareth's sense of himself as adopting multiple identities and moving between different spaces as an adolescent. These limits are shown in different ways throughout the interview, including an interesting digression on the way in which punk's semiotic content changed when transplanted from England to Northern Ireland – wearing a t-shirt copy of Jamie Reed's famous Sex Pistols album cover, Gareth points out, could be read as an anti-monarchy and thus explicitly republican statement in Belfast, rather than as expressing a diffuse anti-authoritarian or anarchic politics. But they are most apparent in a dramatically-recounted story about an encounter after a gig in 1979. The gig is at the Ulster Hall, Siouxsie and the Banshees with local support from the Outcasts, and runs much later than planned because the English band's equipment is misplaced somewhere on the journey. Gareth leaves before the Outcasts come on, but his friend decides to stay.

So I was left one o'clock at night in Belfast walking up Bedford Street towards Shaftesbury Square on to the Lisburn Road, and I had parked my wee moped at his house – he lived up just past the city hospital – so I was walking up to there to pick up my bike to head on home, and these two guys were walking down the side of the street. And I mean there's nobody else about, no cars, streets are quiet and you're sort of – you're wary. And I started speeding up a wee bit and they started crossing the road. So I sped up a wee bit more and they curved to meet me. So I said when they hit the white lines in the middle of the road, I'm taking off. And I ran and they tried to catch me, I just ran and ran and ran, I ran right the way up on to the Lisburn Road up past the Samaritans there, and stopped and looked around, there was nobody about and I was going thank god, absolutely wrecked you know, lactic acid building up, couldn't get a breath, walking along and the next thing I hear this dum-dum-dum-dum [indicating

footsteps], looked round and they're running after me again. [Performatively deep intake of breath to suggest how shocked he was, or perhaps how winded he was.] And I had to take off again, I just, you know, and again it was just that fear – flight or fight and it was flight for me! I ran and they chased me all the way up to my mate's house, I got into the door and luckily his mum had left the door on the latch. So I turned round and closed it, went round the back, got onto my moped and wheeled it out, and they were waiting for me. So I just started up and tore out, then by the time I got home of course, I nearly wished they had of caught me cos my ma went through me for a shortcut.⁵⁶

Reflecting on the event, he added: “And then I since found out that there was sort of an offshoot of the paramilitaries called The Friendly Society that decided to beat up on punks, I'm sort of wondering were they part of that.”⁵⁷

In the interview, this anecdote directly precedes a discussion of the divisive elements of punk culture as interpreted in a Northern Irish context, prefacing Gareth's attempt to set some limits on its potentially emancipatory habitus and praxis. The evocation of familial (or specifically maternal) authority – something that looms large throughout Gareth's account of his adolescence – is ironically juxtaposed with the threat of street violence; this might suggest that punk, here, helps Gareth evade certain domestic concerns but is unable to extricate him from the material threat of paramilitary (or simply indiscriminate) violence. The performance of this story was especially animated on Gareth's part, as I have attempted to indicate in the brackets within the text, and the vividness with which he recalled and recounted this frightening event is an important counterpart to the equal vividness with which he recounted his early encounters with punk gigs and records. At the level of narrative, it is the clearest attempt made to suggest that the punk habitus Gareth describes, and the practices he adopts within that habitus, are confined to certain sites (school, gigs, certain bars, the relatively-safe town centre) and not applicable to others; indeed, as his digression on a paramilitary society that targeted young punks suggests, in particular places looking and dressing like a punk

⁵⁶ GM, 2015.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

could put one at risk of violence. Gareth's revision of this narrative through facts received after the event (that is, from understanding it as random street violence to understanding it as potentially driven by a specific paramilitary animus against punks) is also a typical of the approach used throughout his interview, suggesting his reflexive (and historical) desire to understand the past through an accretion of facts and objects as well as through memory. It is to this specifically historical approach that I will now turn.

'I wanna see some history' – historical practice in Gareth's interview

The start of my interview with Gareth was enlivened by an account of his meeting the lead singer of Rudi, Brian Young, who Gareth interviewed for a Stranglers fanzine and webzine that he occasionally writes for. Rudi's single *Big Time* was the first record produced by Terri Hooley's Belfast-based Good Vibrations label, and the band's fitful success in comparison to contemporaries like Stiff Little Fingers and the Undertones have made them perennial favourites of the Belfast scene, as a band that never received the plaudits or exposure they deserved in their heyday.⁵⁸ Gareth described his excitement at meeting a former hero (and his surprise at realising they both now work for Belfast City Council), then discussed Brian's new band, a rockabilly group called the Sabrejets. This led to a further digression on the increasing diversity of Gareth's music interests as he gets older and grows more engaged in the antecedents and offshoots of the punk scene.

I swear to God, you know, you can sort of again it's the punk rock sort of thing, initially it was the year zero, everything else before then doesn't exist, but you sort of see as you get older and you get into music and you're sort of finding out the Damned were doing *Ballroom Blitz* by the Sweet and when I was a kid listening to glam rock, you know, that was sort of, they're doing that, and they're doing the Beatles, *Help*, there's all these interconnections when bands are doing cover versions, you sort of then delve back and get into the nuggets stuff...⁵⁹

⁵⁸ See the introduction for parts of my interview with Brian Young, Rudi's lead singer.

⁵⁹ GM, 2015.

As I suggested above, the epiphanic moment in Gareth's narrative is bifurcated. There is, typically for my group of interviewees, his initial encounter with punk as the impetus for the formation of a punk identity; then, more subtly, there is his current positioning as someone with an investment in and memory of the punk scene, which he contrasts with his passivity as a younger man. This theme is present throughout, but comes out most clearly near the end of the interview in a discussion about the recent Terri Hooley biopic *Good Vibrations*. Gareth described how he managed to get tickets to the premiere and the afterparty of the film.

I don't want to be blowing smoke up my own arse here but I got tickets for the premiere to be shown, because there was a track on the ... a soundtrack, or a track on the soundtrack! By the Animals, called *I'm an Outcast*. And I think it was on Facebook was probably where I got to hear about it, they needed a different format of it. And I was able to do it. Now I'm the worst technical person in the world but there's a lot of sort of bootleg stuff ... illegally downloaded probably [laughter] ... and I just happened to have this app I suppose you would call it that changes it from what it was to what they wanted it to be. And they said if you can forward that you'll get a ticket to the premiere so I did.⁶⁰

This anecdote is couched in self-deprecation and humour, but it suggests Gareth's sense of connection to the film, and to the history of the punk scene that the film narrates, as well as indicating the ways in which 'retro' cultural documents and moments can allow for a re-engagement with the past. In *Theatres of Memory*, Raphael Samuel argues for understanding micro-historical practices (in the context of punk, searching for bootlegged concert records or collecting records, zines and other documents could all fit into this category) as both useful ways of understanding the perceptions of the past that exist in everyday life, and as forms of historical understanding in their own right. It seems possible, in his reading, that this kind of para-historical work has "prepared the way for

⁶⁰ Ibid.

a whole new family of alternative histories, which take as their starting point the bric-a-brac of material culture.”⁶¹

In Gareth’s account, his near-lifelong gathering-up of this flotsam and jetsam moves him into a different relationship with the punk scene much as his interview with Brian Young does. It also generates a space for a critique of the film itself.

So, um, again, it's [the film] taken on a life of its own. There's a lot of the film I really like but a lot of it is poetic license used ... I actually went to school, went to Methody with the writer of it Glenn Patterson and went to Finaghy primary with him as well.⁶²

Patterson, a well-known Northern Irish novelist, journalist and screenwriter, is more a spectator of than a participant in the punk scene as described by Gareth, and this distanced engagement with the scene is one factor in the lack of authenticity Gareth reads into *Good Vibrations*. This doesn’t entail dismissing the film entirely. Instead it creates the space for a nuanced critique that understands the interplay between facticity, authenticity and narrative. He describes several key scenes from the film – the Undertones playing to a near-empty town hall in Omagh, a depiction of a particularly debauched young punk called Fines in the film and Wee Gordy in reality – as being based on actual events and actual people. “There's a lot of truth in it but there's also a lot of the legend, the rose-tinted glasses, the story fluffed out a wee bit to make it sound – that's my impression.”⁶³ Gareth does not suggest that his lived experience is more genuine, or more real, than the one proposed by the film, however.

But again you can understand, it's a film, you know, so if you're going to – again you could talk to three different people and get three different stories about the same thing that happened, so who's to say that I'm right and that's not right, this is just my impression. I think it's a very good, a very good film, but I do think there's an awful lot of rose-tinted glasses looking

⁶¹ Samuel, Raphael, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 2012 [1994]), p114.

⁶² GM, 2015.

⁶³ Ibid.

back on the ... what it was like, and I'm probably adding to it by talking here! You know, the revisionist thing, as I said it's middle-aged men reliving their youth.⁶⁴

There is a bathetic deflation at the end of this point, deflecting any sense of self-importance, but the thrust of the argument is that the film needs to be understood as one narrative within a polyphonic, multiple set of narratives, narratives that are not fixed but instead open to revision and to interpretation.

This act (of positioning his narrative as one of those that can help historicise and understand the Belfast punk scene) helps complete the transition described at the start of this piece – that is, Gareth's transition towards understanding his own experience as historical, which is also a transition between the younger and older selves presented in the interview. He explained:

Um and I just didn't have the, an inkling, I knew I couldn't be in a band because I wasn't good enough but I didn't even think about starting a fanzine! Didn't even think about, I could've been a Don Letts [celebrated documenter of the London punk scene as a DJ and filmmaker] but I never even thought about doing that it was just, yeahhh, party time, have a drink, go and watch a band, you know, and just go with the flow rather than being creative.⁶⁵

This passivity is countered in two ways through the older self that is being presented in the narrative. Firstly, in the performance of the narrative itself, and in the various punk dispositions he ascribes to himself within that narrative. Secondly, in his role as a collector. These narrative strategies will be considered in turn.

The durability of his punk dispositions (their capacity to be retained outside of the specific field of the Belfast punk scene) is particularly apparent in this closing comment.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

And you know when you're going, I went away to university and like I did a science degree, not one bit creative at all, but when I was there I took that – it was still part of me there. And when I'm going over to see the Stranglers in England ... you can take the Belfast out of the boy but you, or, you can take the boy out of Belfast but you can't take Belfast out of the boy.⁶⁶

This is the clearest statement in the interview of the way in which the punk habitus retains an affective and embodied capacity throughout Gareth's life – it was still part of him at university, and it is still part of him when he goes to Stranglers reunion gigs 30 years later. The initially muddled syntax of the final clause is suggestive of the deliberate muddling of self, subculture and city in this account, the ways in which the material components of life in Belfast, engaged with through Gareth's identification of himself as a punk, have formed his understanding of himself as a person. Bourdieu's concept of habitus as embodied history is immediately relatable to this account of the self – however, the Bourdieusian understanding of this history as folding itself upon people unconsciously and without their active reflection is somewhat complicated by Gareth's reflexive understanding of the way in which he carries with him both the dispositions generated through punk and the dispositions generated through his youth and adolescence in south Belfast.

Storytelling and local history

This sense of narrating history from experience given here is instead redolent of the anthropologist Henry Glassie's account of storytelling in the Fermanagh townland of Ballymenone.⁶⁷ Glassie's account suggests a way of thinking about Gareth's historical practice that extends Samuel's schema, in that Samuel focuses more on the structures that allow for an engagement with (for instance) the retro than on the ways in which what comes into the structures are actively mediated, engaged with and used (ironically, earnestly, critically, and so on). It is also a way of recalibrating Bourdieu's concept of history, by making history something that happens on the level of everyday experience and something that is both understood and narrated on the level of everyday experience

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Glassie, *Passing The Time*.

– an understanding of historical reflexivity that is arguably more present in Wacquant’s account of Bourdieu than in Bourdieu’s work itself, at least in its earlier forms.

For Glassie, the stories told at *ceilidhs* (an Irish word for social gatherings, usually featuring music) are irreducible to the status of objects under the lens of academic analysis, and in fact are themselves simultaneously acts of analysis and acts of performance as well as forms of historical practice. “Stories preserve actions and quotations; their wholeness requires memory as well as skill. While existing for themselves as confections of the speaker’s craft, stories connect the transitory to the immutable through the fragile self.”⁶⁸ The performance of these selves requires both skill and experience on the part of the teller: “Books can preserve the unmemorable, but the history that owes its existence to an oral dynamic, to limited memory, and to the intricacies of the social contract, cannot be boring.”⁶⁹ The stories do not only rely on their position within this social contract, they performatively reinscribe it – they can bring groups together, although they can also underline the distinction between communities. Tilly’s reading of Glassie argues that “Ballymenone’s stories, with their partial division into Protestant and Catholic stories in this mixed village, provide bolsters for political identity, but they also provide the means of surmounting political barriers”.⁷⁰

There are important limits to demarcate here. Firstly, to the claim that Tilly makes on Glassie’s behalf – do stories provide the means to surmount political barriers, or do they simply allow the storytellers new means to understand those barriers? If they do allow the barriers to be surmounted, is that a collective process? Does this process only function in the kind of small-scale rural communities described in *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*, or can it be extrapolated to the more atomised and modernised urban spaces of Northern Ireland? In a culture of storytelling that, as Glassie recognises, is almost exclusively male, does this indicate a particularly gendered conception of the relationship between narrative and peacemaking?

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p48.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p109.

⁷⁰ Tilly, Charles, *Stories, Identity, and Political Change* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002, p10).

Secondly, there are limits to the way in which Glassie's attractively generous understanding of storytelling as a specifically folkloric practice can be extended to the practices being discussed here – both the oral history interview and the ways in which Gareth tells his story outside of the interview, either in conversation with fellow aficionados of the scene (like Brian Young) and on websites or in zines. But without collapsing these into one structure – one story – it is possible to discern a number of interesting points of connection. Stories, for the folk historians Glassie speaks to in Ballymenone, are intimately connected to place. It is place that allows for the telling of stories that are not temporally connected; it is also place that allows for an understanding of continuity and change within the narratives.⁷¹ This relationship between place and stories is apparent in several places in Gareth's account, where punk acts as a mediation between his sense of self and his sense of place, as described above; punk also allows him to narrate place in a particular way, drawing on his embodied and fundamentally historical knowledge.

Glassie's storytellers are also imbricated in the social world in a particular way, forming as well as describing it. History, in these stories, suggests ways of living that connect the past and the present.⁷² For Glassie, it “expands through enlarging circles of identity from the self through the gathering of active participants to a wide imagined collective”.⁷³ This dynamic, which incorporates both sameness and difference without attempting to fix it within a particular structure, is also apparent in Gareth's storytelling, as a further facet of his historical practice. Its failure to completely resolve the tensions of broader society is apparent in this account.

Definitely, and it's the whole thing, what was it Joe Strummer said about it if there's any place that punk should have been it was Northern Ireland. Because it was anarchy when you think about it, the things that were going on, and then the Damned broke up and became the Doomed, and they were playing the Pound, on that Bloody Monday – well there were bomb scares, there was bombs everywhere –and I don't know if it was actually Bloody

⁷¹ Glassie, *Passing the Time*, pp200-210.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p269.

⁷³ Glassie, Henry, ‘The Practice and Purpose of History’, *The Journal of American History* 81, no. 3 (1994), p964.

Monday or not but whatever day it was there were bomb scares going off all over the place. And I nearly didn't get out that night because of the troubles that were going on, mum was going 'how are you going to get home', you know, 'look what's been going on today' ... 'I'll be alright, I'll be with my mates' ... again we went drinking, don't remember a thing about the gig at all ... there's been so many gigs in the younger days that are like that, just don't remember. I went to the ... Terri Hooley put on the Punk and New Wave Festival, I think that was in '79 or '80. And they had the Stimulators and the Saints, who were from Australia, the Stimulators are from New York, Rudi were playing, the Outcasts were playing, Stage B were playing, two-day festival thing in the Ulster Hall. And the only thing I can remember of that whole ... well I didn't even make it to the second day. The first day the only thing I remember is hearing Killing Joke.⁷⁴

This is a troubling story, although it was told with levity. It is not folklore or myth, but it captures something of what Glassie calls the “problem vibrating without resolution” that folklore, myth and local history contain and express in his study of Ballymenone.⁷⁵ Coming after the discussion about division within the punk scene, it re-enacts the community within the punk scene – a community that is generated through being both within and outside of the threat of violence. Gareth also places himself both within and outside the narrative here; he describes a failure of memory through being drunk (and, as his spoken tone if not his transcribed words make unavoidably clear, frightened), while offering up a historical memory that reads IRA bombing campaigns in Belfast through the lens of a punk gig. Glassie suggests:

Stories of religious faction fights symbolise all the community's reasons for division, all its forces of destruction, and describe its reality. To be a

⁷⁴ GM, 2015. 'Bloody Monday' is generally used to refer to a 1972 bomb in Claudy, near Derry, that killed nine people, and so is unlikely to be the incident that is described here. It is possible that Gareth is thinking of 'Bloody Friday', another 1972 Irish Republican Army bombing in Belfast, slightly before the Claudy bombing, in which nine also died – see McKittrick, David and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: A History of the Northern Ireland Conflict* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2001, p87). While this happened at least six or seven years before the gig being described, it looms large in the cultural memory of Belfast as one of the most violent incidents in the city centre. It is a striking transposition here and suggests the way in which the sociality of the punk scene was generated through violence and the fear of violence.

⁷⁵ Glassie, *Passing the Time*, p305.

community, it must have unity. To be real, it will be divided. Existence, everyone's life, forms between unity and separation, society and self.⁷⁶

In the sense that the people Glassie speaks to in Ballymenone are historians, Gareth is also practising a kind of history, and this generates a difference in the sense of self being presented when he is describing his older self.

As suggested in the introduction, this is a public as well as a private transformation. Catherine Nash, in a perceptive 2005 essay on the practice of local history in Northern Ireland, offers an interesting insight into the particular public affect of this practice in its specific historical and political context. Local history, she suggests, has been engaged in an attempt from the 1960s onwards to "reimagine Northern Ireland as a region characterized by cultural diversity rather than division, as a society made up of a complex mix of multiple shared and distinctive traditions, rather than 'two communities' or 'two traditions'".⁷⁷ It is in this context that Gareth's various historical practices can be placed – this is also a frame that could be widened out to include the various punk heritage activities that have taken place in Belfast in the last few years (such as concerts, DJ nights and other events aimed at bringing together both older punk and younger enthusiasts for the scene), and also to include spaces like Sean O'Neill's Spit Records website and the various Facebook pages dedicated to memorialising the Northern Irish punk scene.⁷⁸ One thing this framing does is expand the concept of local as it is used within local history, following the call of Doreen Massey to see the imbrication of the global in the local and vice versa.⁷⁹

Another is to place punk heritage in conversation with the problematics of local history in Northern Ireland, which for Nash are twofold – the danger that top-down initiatives aimed at finding 'the common ground' in the past will erase memories that don't fit into that schema, and the danger that a mythologised account of the past will take preponderance over a critical, politically-engaged one. These issues exist in the history of

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Nash, 'Local Histories', p54.

⁷⁸ See the first chapter for a more extended engagement with these various sources.

⁷⁹ Massey, Doreen, *Space, Place & Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), especially pp146-156.

punk in Belfast just as they do for other subjects of 'local history', and are apparent at various points in Gareth's narrative. As indicated in the story above, however, there is a way of acknowledging difficulty and division while still affirming community and shared emotional structures within these histories. Nash claims: "If one challenge for local history in Northern Ireland is how to deal with history in a context where history has been used in sectarian ways, and where distant and recent histories of conflict are deeply sensitive and contentious, another is how to affirm a version of the local that does not serve exclusive, introspective and conservative versions of community."⁸⁰ Reading Gareth's role here as historical, and understanding his sense of his historical role within his narrative, suggests one way to expand the local beyond the parochial.

Collecting and culture

The second and related way in which Gareth counters his young self's passivity comes in the account of his interest in the development of punk music and the records, books and objects he has collected as this interest increased. This could be understood through Bourdieu, and especially through his idea of cultural capital.⁸¹ What, in other words, makes someone collecting old punk records different than the lawyer interviewed in *Distinction*, describing his accumulation of *objets d'art* – "I'd love to own a very fine bronze. There are bronzes that are absolutely extraordinary..."⁸² – other than that the latter's taste is apparently less concerned with the ostentatious display of wealth? The argument here is that, in the same way that Bourdieu's notion of history excludes local and para-historical practices that allow people to make sense of their own relation to the objective structures that generate a habitus, his notion of culture subsumes culture as a way of life into culture as a specific set of behaviours, attitudes and tastes that are hegemonic, and various sub-categories that are non-hegemonic. While his account is helpful in making sense of how (for instance) a class-stratified education system makes certain tastes and interests hegemonic – as in Gareth's account of the difference between rugby and football above – it does not allow for the affective resonances of material

⁸⁰ Nash, 'Local Histories', p58.

⁸¹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p271.

culture, or “the mutual constitutiveness of objects and people.”⁸³ In other words, collecting things is to do with feelings, not just with capital. It is also, like storytelling, firmly embedded in questions of temporality and temporal strategies; for instance, describing the collage artwork of German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters, Roger Cardinal proposes that “to collect is to launch individual desire across the intertext of environment and history”.⁸⁴

Gareth started collecting albums when he was still at school, but this proved financially difficult.

Then you were selling stuff [records] again back to them to get beer tokens. [Laughter] Cos you, like, I was still at school – as I said I come from a very poor family compared to some of the other people I was hanging about with – not that I had to, you know, keep up with the Joneses... [...] And then you wanted to be drinking with them so you were selling your records, and now in my middle age I'm buying records back at exorbitant prices to get what I had when I was a kid. [Laughter] And that's another aspect of it that I really took to was the collecting of the records.⁸⁵

This narrative delineates a complicated temporal movement, where the older Gareth is able to redress the losses he experienced as younger man, while recognising the melancholic difficulty in this kind of backward-looking restoration or collection. Walter Benjamin, describing his feelings when unpacking his collection of books after moving to a new flat, puts it well: “Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector’s passion borders on the chaos of memory ... To renew the old world – that is the collector’s deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things.”⁸⁶ This is perhaps too neat a formulation, however. Naomi Schor, describing the act of collecting postcards of Paris, suggests that the pleasure this evokes for her is related not just to the representations on the cards but

⁸³ Dudley, Sandra H, ‘Introduction: Objects, collectors and representations’, p3, in Dudley, Sandra H, Amy Jane Barnes, Jennifer Binnie, Julia Petrov and Jennifer Walklate (eds.), *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories* (London: Routledge, 2012).

⁸⁴ Cardinal, Roger, ‘Collecting and Collage-making: The Case of Kurt Schwitters’, p68, in *The Cultures of Collecting*, Elsner, John and Roger Cardinal (eds.) (London: Reaktion Books, 1994).

⁸⁵ GM, 2015.

⁸⁶ Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations* (London: Pimlico, 1999), p60.

to their status as historical objects – “a fragment of past Parisian life”.⁸⁷ The pleasure they generate is the pleasure of the snapshot, a snapshot in which “the complex and shifting reality that was Paris at the turn of the century is here reduced to a series of discrete units that can be easily manipulated and readily consumed”.⁸⁸ The appeal of collecting records for Gareth seems to fall between these two conceptions; on the one hand an attempt to make up for the records he couldn't keep as a younger man, and on the other an attempt to order and re-order the complex and shifting reality of past experience.

Collected items cannot create a window into the past, but they can be generative of memories and narratives of the past, in a similar way to the family photographs analysed by Annette Kuhn as artefacts of cultural memory.⁸⁹ Describing a ‘performative viewing’ of a family photograph owned by a young Chinese man that shows his mother holding him as an infant, Kuhn describes the temporal movement a discursive and conversational analysis of these images can track. “Clearly for Jack the photograph is as much about his life now, far from where he was born and grew up, as it is about his own, his family's or his country's past; though in a way these pasts and the present are folded together in his account,” she explains.⁹⁰ This also touches on the way in which collection is both a public and private act, one that both literally and figuratively involves imagined communities of other collectors, as well as particular narratives about the past that are both public and personal.

And the Stranglers stuff, like I need to have everything, completist, so this is way post-punk but when they were bringing out 12-inches, seven-inches, CDs, cassettes, picture discs [F: and the imported stuff] ... got a couple of quite rare stuff, and then just punk records, punk books, sort of just getting into the scene of it. I think it's an OCD part of me [laughter]. Especially with the Stranglers stuff you have to be a completist. And on Facebook, because I go over and see them quite a bit in England there's sort of a social scene

⁸⁷ Schor, Naomi, “‘*Cartes Postales*’: Representing Paris 1900’, *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992), p237.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Kuhn, Annette, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London: Verso, 2002).

⁹⁰ Kuhn, Annette, ‘Photography and Cultural Memory: A Methodological Exploration’, *Visual Studies* 22, no. 3 (1 December 2007), p290.

to these Stranglers gigs, you're seeing people, real hardcore following who all hate Golden Brown [a crossover hit single for the Stranglers].⁹¹

In this account, then, the bifurcated epiphanies described above are resolved; Gareth's initial encounter with punk is a route into one form of community, and his later position as a historian of punk and a collector of punk memorabilia and records is a route into another.

Conclusion

Gareth's interview, then, suggests a further facet of the punk scene as structure of feeling – as a structure of feeling that emphasised the capacity for self-work and for change, while remaining conscious of its relatively-bounded status; so in the example Gareth gives of visiting the Harp Bar for the first time and maintaining a consciousness of the processes of sectarian identification while not allowing them to determine his attitude towards others, there is a sense of punk as changing his attitude towards the segregated and sectarian space of the city without changing the space itself. This is where an understanding of punk as providing Gareth with a particular habitus is useful. Bourdieu says:

Only in imaginary experience (in the folk tale, for example), which neutralises the sense of social realities, does the social world take the form of a universe of possibles equally possible for any possible subject. Agents shape their aspirations according to concrete indices of the accessible and the inaccessible, of what is and is not 'for us', a division as fundamental and as fundamentally recognised as that between the sacred and the profane.⁹²

His engagement in the punk scene does not neutralise the sense of social realities, in Gareth's narrative, but it does alter his perception of what is accessible to him and opens up "a wee trickle in the dam" in terms of his spatial experience of segregation and

⁹¹ GM, 2015.

⁹² Bourdieu, *The Logic*, p64.

sectarianism in the city.⁹³ It creates a lasting habitus, described by Gareth when he said: “And you know when you're going, I went away to university and like I did a science degree, not one bit creative at all, but when I was there I took that – it was still part of me there. And when I'm going over to see the Stranglers in England ... you can take the Belfast out of the boy but you, or, you can take the boy out of Belfast but you can't take Belfast out of the boy.”⁹⁴ In Gareth's narrative, dislocation is produced through two factors. Firstly, through going to Methody and being made uncomfortably conscious of his working-class childhood as making him out of place in the middle-class school; secondly, through the increasing segregation and violence entailed by the emergence of the conflict in the early 1970s, because of which his “little bit of an oasis of mixed community” in south Belfast changes in terms of atmosphere if not in terms of direct exposure to violence. His epiphanic encounter with punk is generative of a habitus that allows him to place himself within the city.

However, the argument here has also been that enlarging our conception of historical practice to incorporate collecting, ‘heritage from below’, and the social world of storytelling enables us to think of the agents Bourdieu describes as reflexive and critical, capable of positioning themselves in relation to their changing habitus rather than purely buffeted by circumstances outside of their control and more importantly outside of their capacity to describe or narrate. Timothy Barrett argues that “narrative material may be employed to investigate the incorporated structures of the habitus, to identify the implicit assumptions and taken-for-granted categories that structure the way agents construct and understand themselves and how they perceive the objective chances available to them within the broader social space”.⁹⁵ From the perspective of a critical oral history method, Gareth's memories of the punk scene as a formative experience in his life suggest both his awareness of its role in generating different attitudes and behaviours, and a broader sense of punk in Belfast as a structure of feeling that made a creative, playful engagement with the urban landscape possible, albeit an engagement that was limited to certain sites and moments.

⁹³ GM, 2015.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Barrett, ‘Storying Bourdieu’, p6.

The following chapter will develop this idea of an engagement with the urban landscape through an analysis of my interviews with Petesy Burns and Damien McCorry, thinking about the role of space and place in their memories of the punk scene.

CHAPTER SIX: PETESY BURNS AND DAMIEN MCCORRY – PUNK, POLITICS AND THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE

Introduction

This chapter will take two interviews, one with Petesy Burns and one with Damien McCorry, to consider a third way of conceptualising and narrativising the Belfast punk scene after Alison's accounts of mobility and transgression, and Gareth's accounts of self-work and collecting. My primary lens of analysis in this chapter will be on punk as a spatial practice, one which cannot exclusively be understood as a way to cross (conceptual and material) boundaries but which instead attempted to create new places and new social practices in the context of 1970s and 1980s Belfast in a mode that is reminiscent of Henri Lefebvre's evocation of the right to the city as *oeuvre* – the right for urban residents to shape the spaces in which they live.¹ The difficulties of doing this within spaces marked by sectarianism and class division is apparent throughout both interviews, and this difficulty will also be reflected on throughout. On one hand, the understanding of the punk scene in Petesy and Damien's narratives is a result of how they participated in it – they were both in successful bands, and Petesy in particular remains a well-known figure in the remnants of the scene and on the live circuit. On the other hand, it is also related to their explicitly political conceptualisation and narrativisation of the scene. This political mode takes different tacks in both cases. Petesy's affiliation with the anarchist Warzone Centre and the influence of anarcho-punk bands like Crass and Poison Girls inflects his understanding of punk and politics. Damien instead draws on the leftist politics of the Clash and Rock Against Racism to make sense of his own experiences in west Belfast and challenge dominant political readings of the conflict. Nevertheless, there is a common theme here that will be drawn out through analysis of the narratives. This analysis will be developed through Lefebvre's work on the production of space and of the right to the city, but also through an understanding of the embodied and affective experience of space, and of the claim to a degree of autonomy in the urban landscape (the right to the city) as encompassing the desire to feel the city differently as well as the

¹ Lefebvre, Henri, *Writings on Cities*, translated and edited by Elizabeth Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); *The Right to the City: A Verso Report* (London: Verso, 2017).

demand for “the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization”.² To put this slightly differently, I am interested in how the city is constituted as a social space and the social relations and contestations that entails; but I am also interested in the hybrid, experiential and felt ways in which the city is narrated as a specific type of place by Petesy and Damien.³

Both interviews took place, several months apart, in the Linen Hall Library in central Belfast. This was chosen as an alternative to the small café a few yards away from the library on the corner opposite City Hall, where most of my previous interviews were conducted. The initial reason for the change was simply that the library café was quieter, with no music playing and only the clattering of cups and plates to be heard when listening back to the recording. On reflection, though, this felt like an apposite choice of location. The Linen Hall Library is an important national institution. Former librarian and founding member of the United Irishmen, Thomas Russell, was arrested in the building in 1796 and later executed. It holds a remarkable selection of documents relating to the Troubles, the Northern Ireland Political Collection. The library feels historic, in Lauren Berlant’s sense, affectively and materially; the steps from the street are worn and scuffed by generations of feet. Talking about punk with Petesy and Damien in the faintly genteel café of the Linen Hall Library felt generative, jarring, upsetting. It created a situation, “a state of things in which something that will perhaps matter is unfolding amidst the usual activity of life”.⁴ This sense of unfolding or unravelling a moment of importance seems like a useful way to think about how the punk scene was able to make places, conceptually and materially, within the structures and power relations of 1970s and 1980s Belfast, in a similar way to how it remade the Linen Hall Library for a few hours during the interviews.

Both Petesy and Damien describe their encounter with the punk scene as expanding their sense of place, in epiphanic narratives that are immediately comparable to those of Alison

² Harvey, David, ‘The Right to the City’, *New Left Review* 53, 2008, p23.

³ The distinction made between space and place here is indebted to Joseph Pierce and Deborah Martin’s 2015 account, in which they bring together Lefebvre’s account of spatial production with work on the “social, experiential and physical dimensions of places”. See Pierce, Joseph, and Deborah G. Martin, ‘Placing Lefebvre’, *Antipode* 47, no. 5 (9 October 2015), p1279.

⁴ Berlant, Lauren, ‘Thinking about Feeling Historical’, *Emotion, Space and Society* 1, no. 1 (1 October 2008), p5.

in chapter four. At the start of the interview, Damien described his childhood and adolescence in the majority-Catholic community of Andersonstown.

Interesting, really, I suppose um the period you're interested in is my teen years. It was funny because it was just what you knew, you don't know any different, you're a kid, you don't know that everybody's life is not the same as yours. You go to school, you go out and play with your mates, you see the army, there's riots, there's you know trouble – you try and stay out of trouble like any kid – and all that is going on around you so it was kind of very interesting times. And that was our norm, we didn't know any different, so you just adapt very well being a kid to that.⁵

Although Damien's narrative will give punk an epiphanic role in channelling his political experience down particular avenues, it is important to note the expression of youthful adaptiveness that begins his account, before punk has played any role in his life. At the end of the interview, he returned to the way in which his engagement in punk stretched and transgressed these relatively constrained horizons – horizons that are both personal and spatial, or material limits that entail psychic and subjective limits.

You know it enabled me as a person to step outside my small horizons and boundaries and it enabled me to ... obviously, you get confidence through playing in bands, being on stage and that, and to express yourself, artistically, cos we wrote our own songs and all of that, it was very good, very good.⁶

For Petesy, from the majority-Catholic New Lodge area of north Belfast, his initial encounter with the Harp Bar has a similar resonance to Damien's experience of joining a band.

P: The Harp was great, it was good for me because it was like – from where I lived it was about 15 minutes' walk. Sorta down into the city centre on the

⁵ Interview with Damien McCorry, 2016.

⁶ Ibid.

north side, Hill Street, which is the Cathedral Quarter now. You know, I mean, on first sight it looked like a lot of other bars around – I mean where I grew up all the bars had grills around them, sorta you know security measures.

F: The only, I've seen the Sunflower has kept theirs up, so I've seen it there.

P: Yeah, all the bars used to be like that. And you had buzzers on the doors and stuff like that for getting in like. So, it looked like any other bar except the place, the whole area round it was completely run down and derelict, that part of town was completely dead. But once you get in it was just, wow, you know, wall-to-wall punks, and not only punks, there were people who went there who weren't punks, but it was just like you know – it felt like quite a homely and safe environment. And people you would never have dreamed of meeting in your life, from different parts of town and different classes and religions. So, it was really interesting in that respect having grown up in this single identity area all of my life, all of a sudden to be just in a place where you knew, you just knew people from all over the town and it didn't really seem to matter.⁷

What ties these accounts together is their understanding of how space, place and subjectivity are imbricated. In Petesy's story, the material markers of conflict (grills, buzzers, security doors) and the material conditions of deprivation on Hill Street are contrasted with the inside of the bar and its 'wall-to-wall punks'. He evokes a sense of how relationships between people can alter place while remaining confined and bounded by power and space. Petesy's description of the Harp as 'a homely and safe environment' is also striking, both in its refusal to offer up the casual trope of punkness as aggressive or violent, and in the implicit contrast being made to the unhomely and unsafe environment of other bars in the city. The Harp, Petesy says, was a place "where you knew, you just knew people from all over the town and it didn't really seem to matter".⁸ As in the other interviews, the final clause proposes an understanding of the spatial

⁷ Interview with Petesy Burns, 2016.

⁸ Ibid.

politics of the Belfast punk scene as not being predicated on ignoring difference – which in Petesy’s account is not a neat Catholic-Protestant bifurcation but also complicated by the vector of class – but as instead entailing certain ways of navigating and exploring difference.⁹ More broadly, this is suggestive of a particular way of thinking about place and politics in the city, and about the structure of feeling of the punk scene.

Space, place and Lefebvre

As described in the second chapter, the work of the French Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre is central to my understanding of how spaces are produced, through a dialectical relationship between representations of space, representational space and spatial practice. His argument that emancipatory politics cannot “aim for power without reaching for the places where power resides, without planning to occupy that space and to create a new political morphology – something which implies a critique in acts of the old one, and hence too of the status of the political sphere itself” illuminates the ways in which both interviewees in this chapter conceptualise the relationship between punk and the city, and their desire for new political spaces in Belfast.¹⁰ But (given that neither the Warzone Collective or the Clash created a ‘new political morphology’ in Belfast), it is necessary to augment Lefebvre’s insights with a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between experience and space – an understanding that can ask what it felt like to create contingent and circumscribed places of sociality and solidarity within a city that remained stubbornly enmeshed within the logics of sectarianism, violence and profit, and what the structure of feeling produced from these efforts was composed of.

This entails an engagement with two concepts – place and memory. Thomas Gieryn argues that “a spot in the universe, with a gathering of physical stuff there, becomes a place only when it ensconces history or utopia, danger or security, identity or memory.”¹¹ In both the statements from Petesy and Damien cited in the previous section of the chapter, there is a clear sense of place as relational, that is, as entailing the relation

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Lefebvre Henri,, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell, 1991), p386

¹¹ Gieryn, Thomas F, ‘A Space for Place in Sociology’, *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), p465.

between people, events, history, materiality and so on. What is helpful in Pierce and Martin's augmentation of Lefebvre's schema is that they incorporate his emphasis on the ontology of space (what space is constituted of, what it is) with the "consilience of physical, social and experiential components" of place – with the "hybrid epistemology" of place, or with what place means and how it feels.¹²

Both space and place are central in Damien and Petesy's account. They describe the city as a specific kind of space, produced by the intersection of symbols, practices and experiences. They also describe their understandings of and feelings about it, and their attempts to intervene in it, as ways of creating a specific kind of place. Following Pierce and Martin, then, this chapter will describe the "alternative bundles and hybrids that produce place".¹³ They argue that:

Individuals *experience* place/bundles, but socio-political processes *produce* the bundles. Places are contingent: negotiated agonistically, they evolve in the eyes of participants, as in the case of neighbourhood activism around urban renewal. Yet they also have trajectory and path dependency: long-standing places are often resilient in the face of seemingly transformational physical or political events, as in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.¹⁴

Place, the experience of place and the attempts to make places that relate to a particular structure of feeling are the animus behind the practices Petesy and Damien both describe. Focusing on place as well as space also makes it easier to think about the geographical purview of the punk scene while avoiding "the tendency toward a universal, class-antagonistic "demanding" subject in Lefebvre".¹⁵

Importantly, however, there is a double temporality in work in the interviews that requires consideration of the relationship between place and memory. That is, the analysis requires understanding the narratives as descriptions of place-making practices

¹² Pierce and Martin, 'Placing Lefebvre', p1280.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p1294.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p1287.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

in the past, but it also requires understanding the ways in which memory is itself a place-making practice. This double temporality is a characteristic of all the of the interviews analysed in the thesis – so Alison is describing the forms of mobility she engaged in, but she is also remembering them in a way that contextualises and makes sense of contemporary Northern Ireland, for instance for thinking about how her daughters’ friends negotiate their sexualities; Gareth is describing the way in which the punk scene changed his dispositions and generated his habitus, but he is remembering it from the perspective of someone whose ethical and cultural frameworks are still cast in the mould he discovered in the mid-1970s. As Gieryn says, the material stuff that constitutes space “becomes a place only when it ensconces history or utopia, danger or security, identity or memory.”¹⁶ Listening to these oral histories requires making sense both of the practices being remembered and of their status as memories, and of the relationship both practice and memory has to place.

Remembering the places of punk in Belfast

In a 2011 essay on the seminal British art-pop band Pulp, Owen Hatherley concludes his description of the band’s career by suggesting that “their work reanimates the mundane cities we trudge through, speaks bitterly of the inequalities we ignore and tolerate, and is carried most of all on a refusal to forgive and forget the slights inflicted upon us”.¹⁷ At their best, Hatherley suggests, Pulp’s work is engaged with in a kind of séance with the failed utopian possibilities of the 1970s, interspersed with the dismal reality of Thatcherite and later Blairite Britain. Jarvis Cocker’s early lyrics in particular rely on intensely specific evocations of the geography of Sheffield, using names as placeholders for emotions in a manner reminiscent of their use in the narratives under discussion here. The narrative of place in Petesy and Damien’s stories suggests the ways in which punk ‘reanimated’ Belfast (and reanimates their memories of Belfast), while also touching on the inequalities and divisions that marked their experience of the city as young working-class Catholics in the 1970s and 1980s. This entails making an intervention in the links between oral history and cultural geography already touched upon in the second chapter, and situating my understanding of their narratives as one that is informed by both an

¹⁶ Gieryn, ‘A Space for Place’, 2000, p465.

¹⁷ Hatherley, Owen, *Uncommon* (London: Zero Books, 2011), pp131-132.

idea of place as socially-constructed and an idea of oral history as providing a mediated and partial access to subjectivities that are themselves both partial and fragile, as Sean Field suggests.¹⁸ Oral histories give us a way of thinking about how space and place are constructed; place gives us a way of thinking about the intersection of subjectivity, power and materiality that can be perceived in the interviews. This understanding of the dialogue between place and oral history necessarily also entails an understanding of the ways in which past and present are constantly interacting within these accounts.

In his research on dislocation and violence in apartheid South Africa, Sean Field argues that “the places and spaces in which people have played, worked and lived over time are crucial to their development as individuals and as communities”.¹⁹ He describes the ways in which life stories interweave the past and present in a series of interviews with African families forced to move from Windermere, near Cape Town, under segregationist apartheid laws between 1960 and 1963. These stories include a great deal of remembered pain and distress, as well as a critical nostalgia for “the physical and emotional loss of a community destroyed by apartheid”.²⁰ The problems of the present that emerge in the interviews are contrasted with narratives of community, neighbourliness and warmth that recreate Windermere as a prelapsarian idyll for many of Field’s interviewees. “The romantic tone and longing for the Windermere past reflects a genuine desire for the pleasures and relative freedoms of being young in a vibrant semi-rural squatter community,” he says.²¹

Much of the violence and poverty of the area is occluded here, but – following Alessandro Portelli and Paul Thomson – Field emphasises the ways in which this myth-making serves a purpose in the present, at the moment of its telling, as a way to compose and settle an unsettled sense of self and of history. In this sense, it is a form of place-making as well, one that reconstructs a site in narrative while also suggesting the ways in which identity and subjectivity are generated through an engagement with the material world. Field concludes: “Sites of memory are located within a fluid web of meanings, which signify

¹⁸ Field, Sean, *Oral History, Community and Displacement: Imagining Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p39.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p54.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p59.

that the past remains open to new insights and problems in the future.”²² The way in which Petesy and Damien differentiate between Belfast now and Belfast when they were young suggests how these insights and problems emerge in oral history interviews, which describe the practices of the past in ways that illuminate the present and the future being narrated and imagined by the interviewee.

The movement between past and future is especially apparent in Petesy’s account of how punk kept him away from any involvement in violence. “It took me out of a lifestyle that I would have, for not knowing any better that I would have just followed and done what everyone around me was doing. And followed that track. That everyone was following you know. It sorta took me away from that and showed me other possibilities.”²³

Stephen Brooke, in a 2017 essay on the affective geography of 1980s London, relates this idea of place-driven myth-making to Raymond Williams’s concept of structures of feeling, contending that “everyday experience, emotion and space formed an affective ecology in 1980s London which helped shape and was shaped by a particular culture of democracy”.²⁴ Matt Cooke, writing about the gay squatting scene in Brixton of the 1970s and 1980s, makes a similar point about the relationship between emotion and space, although unlike Brooke he is working directly with oral history interviews rather than archival material. “The squatters talked more and less explicitly about the ways in which their backgrounds and personal histories in the 1950s and 1960s modulated their subsequent experiences in Mayall and Railton Road, but they also describe how those experiences in turn informed later life choices and shaped their subsequent understandings of themselves and their relationships with others.”²⁵

Attentiveness to the form and content of these narrated experiences can help historians understand the relationship between the local and the national as well as the relationship between past and present. For both writers, it is possible to spatialise ‘structures of feeling’ in a way that generates new understandings of both the feelings and the spaces.

²² Ibid., p116.

²³ PB, 2016.

²⁴ Brooke, Stephen, ‘Space, Emotions and the Everyday: The Affective Ecology of 1980s London’, *Twentieth Century British History* 28, no. 1 (1 March 2017), p112.

²⁵ Cook, Matt, “‘Gay Times’: Identity, Locality, Memory, and the Brixton Squats in 1970’s London’, *Twentieth Century British History* 24, no. 1 (1 March 2013), p108.

Sarah Ahmed's work on emotions as embodied social experience, which suggests that "affective economies are social and material, as well as psychic", fits well alongside Williams's work as a model for thinking about how emotions and politics circulate among bodies and spaces in oral history narratives.²⁶ An example of this will be seen in the 'sticky' emotionality of Petesy's recollection of anarcho-punk gigs in the A Centre and the spur this provides for setting up Giro's and the Warzone Collective.²⁷

In summary, then, space and place, and past and present, are brought together in both these interviews. Reading them means thinking about the production of space (through representations, practices and symbols); it also means thinking about place as it is experienced, felt and known. It also means thinking about Belfast in the 1970s in relation to Belfast in 2016, and the temporal elisions described by Sean Field and apparent in these accounts. This will be shown initially in my interview with Petesy Burns.

Petesy Burns

How place functions in Petesy's narrative, and how it relates to a structure of feeling, is also related to the way in which his engagement with popular culture both made him aware of his own horizons and raised the possibility of discovering others. His first awareness of punk music came about not through actually hearing the music, but rather in reading the news that the Sex Pistols' *God Save the Queen* (at number two in the charts in 1977) would not be broadcast on the radio because of its shocking content. "It sort of had that effect on a lot of people, you know, if it was banned ... what better publicity could you get you know. And then I sort of sook that out and just really loved the whole spirit of the whole thing and wanted to know more and more about it."²⁸ It is in this pursuit that the spatial parameters of his account become clearer.

Yeah at that time again sort of life was very self-contained and you didn't really go out of that area too much. And there was a record shop near to Carlyle Circus – about five minutes from where I lived, I was skint then

²⁶ Ahmed, Sara, *The Cultural Politics of the Emotions* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p46.

²⁷ PB, 2016.

²⁸ PB, 2016.

anyhow, so I just went in by chance and there it was – the single, God Save the Queen, you know. Yeah, so, and that was it. And then from there I think just the more you got involved and the more bands you went to see – uch there was a lot of record shops in the town centre so the likes of Caroline Music and then [I] eventually discovered Good Vibrations and places like that, there was quite a few independent record shops in the mid to late 70s in Belfast you know so there was never really an issue getting anything. You know but it was just, as you say, there was no internet – you had to physically go through the record collection.²⁹

Record shops provide an infrastructure for developing Petesy’s interest in punk, a physical and embodied experience of exploration that he contrasts to the disembodied or atomised experience of finding music online. This contrast suggests one of the possible movements between past and present in oral history narratives, where the past (finding records as an spatial and social practice) is used to critique the present (finding music online as a metonym for atomisation).

This early interest in the punk scene eventually leads to Petesy forming a band.

Like mates jumping up on the stage in between bands or something in the Harp and doing a cover of one of your favourite bands or something – chaos – but it was just a gradual process of you know, and then you know there was a couple of friends who had a band and their bass player left and they said do you want to join sort of thing, so that was, it was just the start of that process, being involved in a different level.³⁰

Finding places to gig and to rehearse was difficult, however. The Harp Bar closed in 1981 or 1982 – subjected to a short-lived Western-themed makeover, “wagon wheels and nooses and things like that ... quite embarrassing”.³¹ The Pound, near Oxford Street,

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

would occasionally put on punk gigs, but inconsistently – what is implicit in Petesy’s narrative here is that it also lacks the sense of community that he describes in the Pound.

Nah nah, definitely separate, so there wasn’t a lot of opportunities – we would’ve had a few places, maybe the Manhattan, which is down near Victoria Street, just a regular venue. But sort of very early 80s, very little happening, so you found yourself playing wherever people could organise gigs. So they’d be all over the place, out of town, up the west, wherever, playing in youth clubs, whatever opportunity you could get to play. The Anarchy Centre was a great place [but] it was short lived.³²

There is an ambivalent edge to the positively-inflected sense of mobility punk allows Petesy in this account. It is suggestive not just of mobility but also of the contingency and dependency that made the mobility necessary, thus avoiding the application of a nostalgic (or an uncritically nostalgic) lens to this period.

The Anarchy Centre

As discussed in the third chapter, the Anarchy Centre was only open for about six months, but marks an interesting intersection between the punk scene as a youth culture and the older, more politicised but often more middle-class anarchist culture that coalesced around Just Books and the university. Petesy describes this intersection while reiterating its ephemeral nature – although despite its ephemeral nature, it is apparent that the anarchist emphasis on DIY culture and mutual aid had a lasting effect on Petesy, on his sense of community and his habitus. “Punks would always go on about anarchy and stuff like that ... in a sort of incoherent and nihilistic way but here were a bunch of theoretical anarchists who were sort of putting their money where their mouth was and actually it was – but having said that it was really very short lived.”³³ Despite this (and despite the tension Petesy describes between the idealistic anarchists’ desire to politicise the punks and the punks’ continued commitment to hedonism, and particularly to sniffing glue), the nascent social centre takes on a central role in his narrative as he describes his own

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

conversion to a more politically active understanding of the punk scene and of his band's role within that scene. The epiphanic moment here occurs when the the venue temporarily reopens for gigs from two British anarcho-punk groups, Crass and Poison Girls.

F: Did you see the Crass gigs and the Poison Girls gigs?

P: Yeah we played with both of them, my band Stalag 17 played with the Poison Girls and played with Crass. And actually I was pretty much – at that point I was still firmly entrenched in the sorta, not what I would call the fashion end of punk but the apolitical, the hedonistic sorta chaos type thing, and that was the first time ... and I would have always dismissed Crass ... [Long pause ... F: Hectoring or preachy?] ... Not even that, just the way, just took the line from the media, basically saying they were middle-class hippies. And just took that line without really having met them or thought about it, and then when they came I met them and saw how engaged they were just with people, outside of being on the stage, sitting about, not being stars, just being really interesting and interested, you know. And then seeing the band and the spectacle of it – because they had all their films and banners and them themselves, just completely engaging, it was just like a completely different kind of experience and you sorta thought, that's what punk's about.

F: [You thought] there's something there?

P: And it really grabbed you you know. And that really was a turning point for me personally.³⁴

Petesy describes the way in which the band occupy everyday space in a particular way: "Sitting about, not being stars, just being really interesting and interested." This is a spatial performance that is fundamentally different from the performance that is visible

³⁴ PB, 2016.

in, for instance, the Clash's much-maligned publicity shots from their first visit to Belfast. This is a way of being in the social world that avoids generating a distance from the band and the fans, suggestive of Crass's desire to find a different route than the dead-end hedonism of early punk bands like the Sex Pistols. In a useful account of the band's career, George McKay argues that "what was different about Crass was that here was a post-punk band whose sole reason for existence was that they were going to change the world".³⁵ As the description of the gig above suggests, Crass's attempts to change the world did not exclusively entail sloganeering and the vocal espousing of left-wing political causes. Rather, it consisted of an anarchistic desire to engage in the micropolitics of space, disposition and affect, where how you engaged with an audience and how you behaved off stage were the necessary starting point for activism and organising. This means that, as McKay and Petesy both argue, Crass's aesthetic and politics were founded on an internal tension, in this account the tension between their deliberately low-key presence off stage and their highly choreographed, agit-prop stage shows – "the spectacle of it ... all their films and banners". Petesy's story concludes with a highly physical sense of the way in which Crass inhabited the space – "it really grabbed me ... that really was a turning point for me personally" – which indicates a shift in his narrative.

The tension apparent here between Crass's use of space on stage and off stage suggest two types of spatial practice. On stage, the use of symbols and performance is a spectacular claiming of space as a form of politics, but an inherently transient and temporary claim; it is theatrical and bounded, in a similar way and with similar limitations to the carnivalesque appropriations of public space described by John Nagle in his application of Lefebvre to cross-community parades and celebrations in Belfast.³⁶ Off stage, Petesy says, "I met them and saw how engaged they were just with people, outside of being on the stage, sitting about, not being stars, just being really interesting and interested, you know".³⁷ This encompasses a different, more quotidian sense of spatial practice, as a description of how a certain set of dispositions related to the way in which one occupies a room can have affective and signifying components; in this sense it

³⁵ McKay, George, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance Since the Sixties* (London: Verso, 1996), p76.

³⁶ Nagle, John, 'Sites of Social Centrality and Segregation: Lefebvre in Belfast, a "Divided City"', *Antipode* 41, no. 2 (25 February 2009), pp326–347.

³⁷ PB, 2016.

is immediately relatable to Gareth's account, in the previous chapter, of going to the Harp for the first time and feeling welcome rather than intimidated despite the daunting appearance of the bar.

Sara Ahmed asks: "How do emotions work to secure collectives through the way in which they read the bodies of others? How do emotions work to align some subjects with some others and against other others?"³⁸ Her argument is that emotions and feelings – shame, pain, love, fear – are sticky in two senses; that is, they adhere to the body of the person who experiences them, constituting a formative history similar to the embodied history of the habitus in Bourdieu, but they also move between bodies and across groups like burs, sticking to others through contact. "The impressions we have of others, and the impressions left by others are shaped by histories that stick, at the same time as they generate the surfaces and boundaries that allow bodies to appear in the present," Ahmed concludes.³⁹ In Petesy's account of meeting Crass above, he is arrested by their desire to occupy space in a particular way, creating what is for him a history that sticks. The epiphanic role that encountering anarcho-punk (rather than just punk as such) plays in his narrative is reinforced by his account of seeing another band from that small scene, Conflict.

And they played in a wee small bar, Conflict were [stretches out in the chair to indicate the size of the lads in the band] I mean, tall, and big spiky hair, it was just ... and Colin the singer was just so angry, you know. And it was such a spectacle to see the power of that anger. Of that sort of, someone who was really fucked off with the way things were and was going to do something about it. Stuff like that.⁴⁰

The remainder of the interview was about Petesy's role in setting up the Warzone Collective, a longer-lasting anarchist social centre, café and recording studio. He explains:

³⁸ Ahmed, Sara, 'Collective Feelings: Or, the Impressions Left by Others', *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 2 (1 April 2004), p25.

³⁹ Ahmed, 'Collective Feelings', p39.

⁴⁰ PB, 2016.

“Yeah the A Centre opened in ‘81 and Crass played in ‘82, that’s right. So um they really sowed the seeds for what we all did later. After Crass and the politicisation thing, Stalag 17 went from being like a party band or just another punk band to having a bit more of a political or an anarchist slant. Even though I might not have quite understood it at the time [laughter] I still wanted to identify with that idea of doing things for yourself and all. And through that we met other people like the other band about locally that would have professed anarchism at that time was Toxic Waste, so they would’ve been based in Newtownards so they started to come into town and we would’ve shared gigs. And basically through that, through that came the catalyst, for what became the Warzone Collective. Now this was ‘83, ‘84. And again we were just starting to get our act together in terms of pooling resources and organising gigs. Sorta trying to educate people about what was going on in the world. And at that stage also the Just Books – there was a café in Just Books and the ones who had been running it gave it up. So we took it on.”⁴¹

The café became the Warzone Collective, a site from which Petesy and other members corresponded with other anarchist-inclined bands and groups, mostly from England – “Dirt, Conflict, Subhumans.”⁴² Petesy explained that although even in the early 1980s many bands were unsure about the risk and the logistics involved in coming to Belfast, those with a political bent tended to be curious about the situation. “Like a lot of bands talking about social issues and singing about social issues, to me the ones who meant something actually made the effort to come and try to understand what was going on. Did their heads in mostly like, you know, because try and explain... (laughter).”⁴³ There is an interesting interplay here between the desire of the bands to practice their politics through coming to Belfast, Petesy’s admiration for this commitment but finally the impossibility of making comprehensible the complexity of the Northern Irish situation. A further strand in this narrative is Petesy’s realisation that even with the café as a base of operations and with the increasingly transnational network this enabled him to generate,

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

their groups remained largely at the mercy of venue owners and concert promoters in terms of setting up gigs, leading him and his friends to develop the space into a rehearsal space and occasional venue. This marked a significant step in the political development of Stalag 17 as well as Petesy, allowing them to develop a less commercial and more confrontational approach to music and songwriting.

The Warzone Collective

And that was the whole thing and we were going everything we do here and everything we create – and we weren't really interested in making money ourselves – but everything we do it goes to someone else. And that fair enough where the bands are concerned, they deserve the money, blah blah blah. But we're giving this money to all these bars all the time, what the hell like, what about just having our own bloody place like. So that was from about '83 or '84 that idea of lets just try and do this.⁴⁴

This desire to circumvent the vagaries and whims of commercially-driven clubs and bars is also motivated by a three-week trip Stalag 17 took to Europe in the mid-80s.

Squats and social centres, and it was just ... actually that was the basis for Giro's, for the Warzone Centre. Ourselves and Toxic Waste had been away and we came back and we were talking about that model and going like, that's fantastic, it's fantastic, and it's within the realms of possibility. So yeah the, that's what I loved about, there was no rockstar attitudes, people came and just came for what they got basically.⁴⁵

The transnational connectivity described here is reminiscent of Alison's narrative of her trip to London and her feelings about John Peel's radio show (that when listening to it she no longer felt like an isolated dot in Belfast but part of larger fabric). It is also similar to Gareth's description of going to Scotland for university but retaining his punk dispositions – “you can take the Belfast out of the boy but you, or, you can take the boy

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

out of Belfast but you can't take Belfast out of the boy."⁴⁶ This is also a mobility story in the same way that some of Alison's narratives are, suggestive of the dynamic between Belfast and elsewhere and the experience of moving between them. With help from a Rathcoole charity and the Unemployed Centre near Donegall Place, Petesy and other members of the Warzone Collective expand their café into a fully-fledged social centre and gig venue, called Giro's (after the popular name for unemployment benefit). Following a few minutes of chat about the periodised waves of punk fashion in Belfast in the '70s and '80s, the interview took on a more intense tone as Petesy described the process of setting up the centre.

This is '86, so I was 24. We'd nothing but time on our hands. So we went in and just completely refurbished this place, got the ground floor ready and turned it into a practice room. And within a few months we had like two practice slots a day, four at weekends or six at weekends something like that, they were booked out solid within a couple of months with just bands generally coming to the place. And then the café opened, we had a screen printing workshop and stuff like that. And that happened within, we were in it about a year, less than a year before the café opened, and the café then was it. As soon as the café opened the place was established. People were coming – and not just punks – people were just coming to see what was going on.⁴⁷

The animated performance of this epiphanic narrative, and its position at the arc or centre of the interview, suggests its continued importance to Petesy's sense of self, and to the account he is creating of how having "nothing but time on [his] hands" allowed him and the other founding members of the collective to make their own place in Belfast. This is also an account that links Petesy's experience to the connection between the 'libertarian left' and the post-punk scene drawn out by David Wilkinson and, to a lesser extent, Simon Reynolds.⁴⁸ The "prefigurative building of alternative institutions built on

⁴⁶ GM, 2016.

⁴⁷ PB, 2016.

⁴⁸ Wilkinson, David, *Post-Punk, Politics and Pleasure in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp37-77; Reynolds, Simon, *Rip it Up and Start Again: Post-Punk 1978-1984* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005).

principles of shared ownership and democratic control ... co-ops, left trades councils, women's and community centres, independent printing presses, radical bookshops" is a feature of what Wilkinson calls the 'libertarian left', drawing on traditions that stretch back to the counter-culture of the 1960s.⁴⁹ The Warzone Collective is part of this history, but it also needs to be read through the specificity of its position in Belfast, which is not directly addressed in the interview fragment above, but becomes clear when Petesy described the other impetus for setting up the centre.

While running the original space they invited bands over to play with them but found that "you were just constantly at the mercy of people who owned bars and clubs ... we're giving this money to all these bars all the time, what the hell like, what about just having our own bloody place like. So that was from about '83 or '84 that idea of lets just try and do this".⁵⁰ This lack of infrastructure is one specific aspect of the centre's position in Belfast, which lacked the resources of cities like Manchester as described by Wilkinson. The second is to do with the sectarian division of the city and the capacity for propinquity that the place generated.

As described in chapter two, Shirlow and Murtagh suggest that in contemporary Belfast, "community and history [serve] as micro-territorial constructions, which reinforce the manner through which the presentation of hostility was a valid and necessary sectarianisation of space".⁵¹ In the sectarianised geography of Belfast, the creation of a social centre that actively attracts people from different communities (and not just punks, as Petesy makes clear) is an intervention in this geography, albeit one that takes place in the relatively neutral space of the city centre. "The John Hewitt, there's an archway there, and through that archway there's a building on the right. It belongs to the unemployed centre now so it does but that was ours then," Petesy explained.⁵² It is this claim of ownership over the place that gives a present-oriented as well as a past-oriented heft to this narrative; as discussed by John Nagle and others, the neoliberal urban reimagining

⁴⁹ Wilkinson, *Post-Punk*, 2016, p42.

⁵⁰ PB, 2016.

⁵¹ Murtagh, Brendan and Peter Shirlow, *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City* (London: Pluto Press, 2006), p96.

⁵² PB, 2016.

of the city centre of Belfast may reinforce its neutral or non-sectarian status but it does so while valourising the role of capital in creating peace.⁵³

Beyond the sectarianisation of space described above and in chapter two, then, it is also important to think about this narrative in the context of the United Kingdom as a whole. In an extensive analysis of the way in which Thatcherism affected Northern Ireland, Gaffikin and Morrissey concede that the province is something of an aberration here. Thatcherite policy has an uneven impact because of the region's history of independent administration, the level of autonomy granted to successive secretaries of state and the backdrop of violence against which policy is conducted.⁵⁴ However, attempts to regenerate Belfast through commercial means are comparable to those seen in England. These policies (Enterprise Zones, the Lagside Development Order) are predicated on a logic of economic rationality based on a trickle-down model that assumes that private sector success will invigorate the whole city; as Gaffikin and Morrissey indicate "the process has also involved considerable social costs, including community dislocation and effective disenfranchisement".⁵⁵ In this sense, The Warzone Collective is not just an intervention in sectarian geography but in a city centre that is shaped by commercial imperatives. In Lefebvrian terms, there is an obvious tension here between the representation of space – that is, space as it is conceived of by the city planners and business-owners "regarded by government as pre-eminent investors and employers in a modern urban economy", and the right for people to shape the city in which they live.⁵⁶

To return to Lefebvre, Petesy's story of setting up the Warzone Collective can be read as an actualisation of his insight that "the city is an *oeuvre*, closer to a work of art than to a simple material product".⁵⁷ If we understand urban space as being shaped not only by

⁵³ See for instance Nagle, John, 'Potemkin Village: Neo-Liberalism and Peace-Building in Northern Ireland?', *Ethnopolitics* 8, no. 2 (1 June 2009), pp173–190; Ramsey, Phil, "A Pleasingly Blank Canvas": Urban Regeneration in Northern Ireland and the Case of Titanic Quarter', *Space and Polity* 17, no. 2 (1 August 2013): 164–179; for a fascinating account of the attempts to utilise urban design as a peacebuilding tool in Belfast since the 1970s and a set of proposals for how this should be done in the future see Gaffikin, Frank, Chris Karelse, Mike Morrissey, Clare Mulholland and Ken Sterrett, *Making Space for Each Other: Civic Place-Making in a Divided Society* (Belfast: Queen's University Belfast, 2016).

⁵⁴ Gaffikin, Frank and Michael Morrissey, *Northern Ireland: The Thatcher Years* (London: Zed Books, 1990); see also Curtis, Jennifer, "Profoundly Ungrateful": The Paradoxes of Thatcherism in Northern Ireland', *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 33, no. 2 (1 November 2010), pp201–24.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p125.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Lefebvre, *Writing on Cities*, p101.

design (representations of space) and by symbols (representational space) but also by the third aspect of Lefebvre's triad, spatial practice, the Warzone Collective stands as an attempt to intervene in the social and spatial structures of the city. "But at the end of the day we were spending our time just doing nothing hanging about the town centre and there was a dire need, there was a dire need," Petesy concluded.⁵⁸ As the interview came towards an end we discussed the afterlife of the Warzone Collective, which maintains a limited presence in the city, although exclusively as an occasional venue for punk and metal music rather than as a social centre, café or rehearsal space.⁵⁹

"There's a place now which is Warzone in name but it's not really ... it's not really like what we did. The place in Donegall St Place lasted for five years and then we moved up to Donegall Lane, far bigger premises, and it lasted for 12 years. So 17 in total. '86 it opened and 2003 it closed. There was a very temporary premises down on Linen Hall Street there," Petesy explained.⁶⁰

Ours was more like, our idea was to have a social centre, a place where you could utilise the building rather than just it being closed all week and having gigs at the weekend. Which is basically what it is, it's a venue now like. And a venue was only part of what we wanted to do, we never had a venue for years, we had the café and the practice room [...] It was the daily thing, it was the ... but then having said that we were all on the dole then and even towards the end of the Giro's that I was involved with it was becoming really difficult for people to volunteer, to find the time to

⁵⁸ PB, 2016.

⁵⁹ It is also interesting to relate the Warzone Collective to community work in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s, which is described in a fragmented but effective way in the personal testimonies collected by the Northern Visions Our Generation archive. An anonymous introduction to the archive attests to the "experiments in building new community structures" that emerged during the conflict. "There were unprecedented levels of participation by local people in tenants and housing action committees, community associations and advocacy groups," it suggests. In this context, the Warzone is part of a patchwork quilt of organisations that emerged in the cracks left by the state's failure to support communities in Belfast – two examples are attempts to improve poor housing conditions in both Protestant and Catholic enclaves, or to provide support for women affected by the conflict. Petesy's description of flux and uncertainty as one aspect of being in a band in this period is more widely applicable to all forms of community organising and grassroots initiatives. See <http://ourgeneration.northernvisions.org/>, accessed online 19/5/18.

⁶⁰ PB, 2016.

volunteer, because they were just being pressured into schemes and into you know, so I mean, it may not be sustainable to have the model we had.⁶¹

The impossibility of maintaining the Warzone Collective under current economic conditions – especially the more stringent restrictions on employment benefit that put claimants under pressure to show that they are applying for jobs – means that the possibilities of the space are reduced. “It really is, definitely, you know, and people – we just had very unique circumstances and grew up in a different culture.”⁶² What is particularly striking here is not simply the evocation of the culture of 1970s and 1980s Belfast as a different culture – a trope commonly deployed in temporalising narratives of Northern Ireland’s recent history – but as a different culture that can connote a positive rather than negative set of connotations.⁶³ If there is a kind of nostalgia at work here it is a critical nostalgia.

Andrew Burke describes this form of present-critiquing nostalgia as “a manifestation of utopian longing politically necessary in an era where substantive political change seems more or less impossible”.⁶⁴ This is not to say that Petesy’s narrative expresses a desire for a return to the past. The Warzone Collective’s role as a stabilising force in the flux and uncertainty that characterise his description of Belfast in the 1980s suggests an implicit critique of the precarity of his position in this period. But as in Svetlana Boym’s 1994 account of utopian nostalgia in Russia as a longing for a common place that has disappeared, there is a sense in which the radical possibilities of the 1980s are more difficult to grasp in contemporary Northern Ireland.⁶⁵ In this way, nostalgia gives us some access to “the residual traces of the past ... a crucially important archive of dreams, desires and political demands that would otherwise be lost to the present”.⁶⁶ This sense

⁶¹ PB, 2016.

⁶² Ibid., p10.

⁶³ Dawson, Graham, ‘Memory, ‘Post-Conflict’ Temporalities and the Afterlife of Emotion in Conflict Transformation After the Irish Troubles’, pp257-297, in Corporaal, Marguérite, Christopher Cusack and Ruud van den Beuken (eds.), *Irish Studies and the Dynamics of Memory: Transitions and Transformations* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017).

⁶⁴ Burke, Andrew, ‘Music, Memory and Modern Life: Saint Etienne’s London’, *Screen* 51, no. 2 (1 July 2010), p105; see also Boym, Svetlana, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), especially pp283-291 and Pyzik, Agata, *Poor But Sexy: Culture Clashes in Europe, East and West* (London: Zero Books, 2014).

⁶⁵ Boym, *Common Places*, 1991, p291.

⁶⁶ Burke, ‘Music, Memory and Modern Life’, 2010, p106. As in the previous section, the impact of Thatcherism on Northern Ireland is also evident here, even in the joltingly managerial language that

is reiterated at the close of the interview, where Petesy describes how he thinks being a part of the punk scene affected his life.

After a moment of hesitation at the scale of the question – at the difficulty of assessing the impact a moment or a series of moments can have one something as mobile and hard to pin down as a life – Petesy confidently said that punk had changed his life, acknowledged this to be a cliché, but avowed it anyway. It introduced him to positions and experiences he would never have encountered otherwise, he added, citing the gay-friendly nature of the scene as unusual for Belfast at that time.

Totally, totally [unusual], as was meeting a Protestant, as was you know lots of things, cultural things, meeting people who had snooty accents from the Malone Road or wherever, but you never, you know, maybe in school, but in your daily life people who you were engaged with involved with people went on to get married across the divide and things like that so cliché though it is it was a total life changing experience. Yeah, and still, I would carry those principles, try and carry your life in that way. Getting that sort of grounded ... and such an insight into so many different minds, there's a lot of sloganeering in punk about changing things, when you get to the likes of Crass and bands like that who just went into it you were reading them and you didn't understand half of it but it was really great, it was like an education, you were going this is taking that idea of sloganeering and going well actually look at the foundation of this.⁶⁷

This relates to the statement quoted earlier where Petesy uses a spatial metaphor to describe how punk changed his sense of mobility and possibility. Punk, he says “took me out of a lifestyle that I would have, for not knowing any better that I would have just followed and done what everyone around me was doing. And followed that track. That

inflects Petesy's explanation – “it just wasn't sustainable to have the model we had”. Writing in 1990, Gaffikin and Morrissey explain: “Operating under the concept of absolute rather than relative poverty, the conservatives have simultaneously reduced the measure of benefits support for the most dependent groups while emphasising job creation programmes. Within the region [Northern Ireland], this has resulted in proportionately greater hardship because of the higher benefits dependency ration.” See Gaffikin and Morrissey, *Northern Ireland*, p111.

⁶⁷ PB, 2016.

everyone was following you know. It sorta took me away from that and showed me other possibilities".⁶⁸ Both descriptions offer an understanding of the dispositions generated in the punk scene as long-lasting, as having a continued resonance in how Petesy lives and thinks. As in Damien's interview below, it also considers the relationship between the past and the present. This immersion in the punk scene as creating a space for critique – as well as creating a material place where differences of class, sexuality and ethno-political identity could be negotiated in particular embodied, grounded ways – is the strand that ties together Petesy's interview with Damien McCorry's.

Damien McCorry

Damien's interview began with a reflection on the area where he grew up.

West Belfast, place called Stewartsdown Park, it's in Andersonstown. So that's where we, I was brought up. Mum and Dad still live there to this very day and, ah, quite a few of the family still live around there, you know. I would go up and see them a couple of times a week and the street hasn't changed, the people haven't changed, you know, but that's the way it goes.⁶⁹

From the outset, then, this account establishes a chronotropic conception of history, one in which time thickens and space responds to the congealing of narrative time.⁷⁰ A key insight of the suggestive, if somewhat allusive, chronotopic analysis of narrative proposed by Bakhtin is that "our historical imagination emerges through dialogical interactions across multiple chronotopes", or that different spaces are charged with different temporalities when described through stories.⁷¹ As in Petesy's narrative, certain sites are identified with continuity and others with change – in Damien's, it is notable that the domestic sphere associated with the home remains relatively stable, while the public

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ DM, 2016.

⁷⁰ Bakhtin, Mikhail, VN Volshinov and PN Medvedev, *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Volshinov* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p184.

⁷¹ Wirtz, Kristina, 'The Living, the Dead, and the Immanent: Dialogue across Chronotopes', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6, no. 1 (1 June 2016), p344.

sphere of Belfast as a city is associated with change and progress, as we will see below. He continued his description with the account quoted at the start of this chapter – “You go to school, you go out and play with your mates, you see the army, there’s riots, there’s you know trouble” – and the suggestion that adaptation to this disruption was the norm for young people in west Belfast.⁷²

For Damien, this adaptation was aided by an interest in music, which quickly became an interest in both the politics and the culture of the punk scene.

I think it’s just it’s a culture thing, it’s what was happening musically at the time that was a good, it was all part of the youth culture at the time. I was very much interested in the whole political side of it. Which was, OK, you know there was the anarchist side of it but it was more Rock against Racism [RAR], Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament [CND], it was part of a youth movement, as much as just about the music and the bands [...] But we were very much, there was a movement there which felt you could change things, this idea that you didn’t have to be signed by EMI, that you could do things yourself.⁷³

Much like Petesy, Damien finds himself engaging in a politics of the city that connects DIY punk culture to Lefebvre’s idea of the oeuvre, one in which the city is not understood as the materialisation of exchange value, but as a space that is “created and recreated every day by the quotidian practices of urban inhabitants”.⁷⁴ And, in another echo of Petesy’s account, Damien’s interest in RAR and the CND renders Belfast cosmopolitan, not an atavistic remainder of internecine religious conflict but a site marked by transnational eddies and currents. His first band begin to organise their own gigs around the city, after a successful first gig at the Cosmos youth club in Andersonstown. This leads to encounters with difference that reorient the childhood perspective expressed at the beginning of the interview.

⁷² DM, 2016.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Purcell, Mark, ‘Citizenship and the Right to the Global City: Reimagining the Capitalist World Order’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 3 (13 October 2003), p578.

It was great, because one of the really interesting things about it was that certainly everybody in my band – I only can tell my experiences – I wouldn't have met a Protestant person [strong emphasis on the last word here] *ever*. Right? Didn't happen, there were none near me, didn't go to my school – we were in our ghetto, you know. And you knew what they were and they were supposed to be the enemy and that but you know whatever, you never met a real one. Until I started playing in the bands, and you came into the centre of Belfast, and I was meeting guys from the Newtownards Road, meeting guys from other parts of Belfast. Who you know, different tradition, et cetera, and then you realise these guys are just thinking, they're young people thinking the same as I do, they may be from a different faith or whatever. And how could we support things like Rock against Racism if you're holding kind of, you know, if you're having sectarian thoughts. You can't say well racism's wrong but sectarianism's OK, you can't do that. So it was really refreshing. And I know a lot of the other guys felt the same because the centre of Belfast and the places we played *were* non-sectarian. They were the only places ... I mean I couldn't have walked into a bar on the Sandy Row or on the Zetland Road, I'd have been in trouble. And equally, someone from there couldn't have gone into a bar in my place or they'd have been in trouble. But in the punk scene none of that featured at all. It was great, really refreshing. But the thing was that we couldn't really bring bands from other places into our area, you know, so when we were having gigs in that area it was bands that were kind of...⁷⁵

This is a nuanced account that is suggestive of the politically transformative possibilities of making new space in the city, of the affective, 'refreshing', nature of these possibilities in contrast to the stifling environment of sectarianism – but also of the structural limits that this evocation of the right to the city invariably encountered in Belfast in the late 1970s. The punk scene's capacity to reinvent places is both temporary and contingent, and is not a capacity that can be made manifest across the city as a whole. This is similar

⁷⁵ DM, 2016.

to the dynamic apparent in Matt Cooke's reading of squatters' testimony, where he thoughtfully identifies "the need to situate 'being gay' more carefully within a network of identities, identifications, and associations, which intersect and modulate each other in different ways and at different times".⁷⁶ Damien's affiliation with the punk scene does not make him safe or subjectively comfortable on Sandy Row or the Zetland Road. Strikingly, he adds that "we couldn't really bring bands from other places into our area", trailing off rather than describing the "bands that were kind of..." who were willing to play in the majority-nationalist community of Andersonstown and similar Catholic enclaves in West Belfast – presumably, bands from or associated with nationalist communities. The unspoken final clause here is partly just a typical apothegmatic strategy of polite Northern Irish conversation. But it also shows the difficulty of incorporating this structural problematic into the narrative, a narrative that broadly cleaves with the collective memory among Northern Irish punks of the scene as non-sectarian in a way that transcended these kinds of structural divisions. Passerini says: "Oral sources refuse to answer certain kinds of questions; seemingly loquacious, they finally prove to be reticent or enigmatic, and like the sphinx they force us to reformulate problems and challenge our current habits of thought."⁷⁷ In this example, the problem being reformulated is that of the punk scene as un- or non-sectarian; evidently, it makes more sense to understand it as consisting of a constellation of spatial practices that could be non-sectarian under the right conditions but that did not transcend the field in which they were performed.

A further reflection on the spatial constraints involved in living in West Belfast followed. Damien describes the ring of steel, being searched coming in and out of the city, and the difficulty of transporting amps and guitars from home to gigs when public transport tended to stop running quite early.

Well there was black taxis, there was – you know the black taxis ran later – although to be honest if you were walking late at night through town and up to the black taxi rank, I think it used to be on Castle St, with a guitar and

⁷⁶ Cooke, 'Gay Times', 2013, pp99-100.

⁷⁷ Passerini, Luis, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, trans. Robert Lumley and Jude Bloomfield (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1984]), p91; see also Field, *Oral History*, 2012, p127, for a thoughtful reflection on this dynamic.

an amplifier – you’d better have about five or six friends with you. Cos otherwise [laughing] you weren’t going to get as far as the taxi, certainly not with your guitar!⁷⁸

As with some of my other interviewees – Hector Heathwood’s interview is a notable example here – casual violence is casually introduced as a sort of environmental factor in the everyday life of teenagers in Belfast.⁷⁹ The following section will expand on the relationship between violence and place in these narratives.

Violent spaces and vulnerability

Damien’s relative success in bands did not make an enormous impression on his parents, he explained, echoing the sense given at the beginning of his interview of the domestic sphere as relatively fixed in comparison to the multi-faceted, shifting public sphere.

My dad was happy that I was playing music, he liked music even if it wasn’t to his ... I don’t think to be honest they really appreciated the half of what was going on. I mean they were very busy, I come from a family of six children. So really when I wasn’t around you were off the radar and that was fine.⁸⁰

This indifference, however, was unsettled by an incident in his late teens.

⁷⁸ DM, 2016.; during the conflict, black taxis were used as an unofficial substitute for buses, especially for residents living in parts of the city where the transport network was often disrupted by violence. See Wiedenhoft, Murphy Wendy Ann, “Touring the Troubles in West Belfast: Building Peace or Reproducing Conflict?” *Peace & Change* 35, no. 4 (8 September 2010), pp537–560.

⁷⁹ Hector said: “It just got to the stage, I’m sure a lot of punks did, it got to the stage where if somebody called you something on the street you just went for them cos half the time they would back off – oh he was pissing around, leave it – and then it was grand, but all of that, if you were gonna get a kicking you were gonna get a kicking anyway you might as well get the first smack in. What can I tell you, (jovially) what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. Yeah, yeah but I mean the Clash gigs, I always liken the Clash gigs to a bit like, have you ever been in, like a riot. (F: No, not really) Well I was in a fair few East Belfast riots at the time they were using baton rounds but the Clash gigs were a bit like a riot set to music.”

Interview with Hector Heathwood, 2016.

⁸⁰ DM, 2016.

But I remember one night, oh man, I was thinking I was maybe 17, I definitely wasn't 18 I was still at school, we'd played in Belfast and I think it was up in Ardoyne, the Shamrock Bar. And one of the guys lived across the street from me. And we were all meant to get a lift home but this girl was like, girl, I mean, to me she was a woman, she was 21 or 22, took a shine to me and took me back to her apartment on Cliftonville Road. And I was happily spending the night there thinking this is great, living the dream, rock and roll blah blah blah, and what had happened was when my mate got home and mum knew I was out, wouldn't settle until you got home. Then she realised the big guy across the road was home so she says to my dad, where is he, so he had to go and get him up, who then took my dad and showed him where I'd gone, so I'm thinking I'm like real punk and living the dream and all this with this woman, but my dad starts battering on the door – about half two in the morning – to take me home. I was like [performs a sort of all-over adolescent cringe; laughter] he was gonna kill me, my mum was like where were you at this time of night, and to be fair that was a really tough time in Belfast. Late '70s, people were getting lifted off the streets and taken away and they were found up the Hightown Road or whatever. So I mean I get it but when you're 17 or 18 and you're getting [with] a girl you don't ... think about it, not at all, and we'd been drinking and playing and just whatever. And as I say this was pre-mobiles so you couldn't call or text or phone, he wasn't a happy bunny.⁸¹

This is an anecdote in Daniel James's sense. That is, it is a "morality tale with both a social and an individual register ... about proper and improper behaviour, responsible and irresponsible actions, about the way the world is and the way it ought to be".⁸² Spatial performance and place-making only goes so far. An archetypal adolescent narrative of casual sex, performed in the conventional register of slightly bashful masculinity from the perspective of an older and wiser person, is interrupted by the memory of violence and fear. "Late '70s, people were getting lifted off the streets and taken away and they were

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² James, Daniel, *Doña María's Story: Life History, Memory and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p172.

found up the Hightown Road or whatever,” he says. The performance of “thinking I’m like real punk and living the dream” is interrupted by a firm reminder of the performance’s staging, and of the real threat of abduction.

It appears that the Hightown Road (which passes through the north of the city towards the back of Cave Hill) is being used here as an off-hand example of an isolated part of town. It is worth noting, though, that the Hightown Road is where the bodies of Paddy Wilson and Irene Andrews were found after they were murdered by the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) in 1973. John White, the commander of the UDA front organisation the Ulster Freedom Fighters, was convicted of the murders in 1978, around the time that this story is taking place in Damien’s narrative.⁸³ Like the transposition of Bloody Friday into Gareth’s narrative in the previous chapter, this is suggestive both of the way in which cultural memories of the Troubles informs the way in which my interviewees remember the period, and of the way in which remembered fear marks the text of the interviews indelibly if sometimes near-imperceptibly. Peter Shirlow, describing Belfast after the peace process, argues that “the narratives and reality of constantly protecting place and religious segregation are still interlinked devices in the whole enactment of discord and conflict” – Gareth and Damien’s evocation of signal moments of violence that seep into their narratives from other parts of the past highlight the way in which these narratives permeate the stories told about Northern Ireland’s recent history.⁸⁴

The almost-conventionality of the story (teenage hijinks; stretching the bounds of responsibility; parental strife; reflection on the parental relationship from the position of full adulthood) is troubled by the recognition that the late 1970s was “a really tough time in Belfast”. As in Alison’s interview, then, the potential violence of particular spaces is present in the interstices of the narrative, but not fully incorporated into it.

Directly after this story, still reflecting on how his parents felt about his involvement in the punk scene, Damien mooted that they did at least appreciate that it took up his time

⁸³ Rowan, Brian, ‘Loyalist White a police informer: Special Branch recruited killer’, *Belfast Telegraph*, February 21st 2006, accessed online <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/incoming/loyalist-white-a-police-informer-28108844.html> 14/8/18

⁸⁴ Shirlow, Peter, ‘Ethno-Sectarianism and the Reproduction of Fear in Belfast’, *Capital & Class* 27, no. 2 (1 July 2003) ,p93.

and prevented him from becoming involved in sectarian or violent elements of youth culture, or from joining the paramilitaries.

It gives you an outlet and also it kept me out of trouble from any other paramilitary activity or anything like that, so whereas quite a number of my peers would've got involved in that kind of stuff – as happened to teenagers in West Belfast. But all the guys that played with me in bands they never had any because [F: All your free time, I suppose] well, we weren't hanging around the street corners to be preyed on by these people.⁸⁵

The choice of words here – “preyed on” – is suggestive, and reflects the dual spatial vulnerability that Damien's description of West Belfast evokes. On the one hand, the possibility of becoming a victim of sectarian violence, as in the first story; on the other, the possibility of responding to this threat by joining a paramilitary group like the Provisional IRA.

A final sense of the interaction between punk as a spatial practice and the forces of sectarianism and class that structured space in Belfast comes in Damien's story about his first job, in the laboratories at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

The first day I started the guy, they put me into this lab with a guy who was a horrible person and he said to me here, take your earrings out. I said no, he said I'm telling you to take these earrings out, I said I was interviewed with these earrings in got the job with the earrings in and nobody mentioned it, I said girls are in here wearing earrings – so if they take theirs out, cos we need to for health and safety reasons [F, redundantly: Hygiene!] I've no problem, and he hated me forever after that.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ DM, 2016.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

As in the account of how some bands couldn't play in West Belfast, we get an idea here of how punkness as a signifier of difference functioned differently depending on place and position.

Punk and place in Damien's narrative

Like Petesy, Damien's account of place is explicitly related to a broader structure of feeling. It is similarly related to the DIY ethos of punk, and although it is narrativised in a different way here, there seems to be a similar sense in which the punk scene functions as a response to a feeling of being ignored or mistreated by social systems and structures.

You know it enabled me as a person to step outside my small horizons and boundaries and it enabled me to ... obviously you get confidence through playing in bands, being on stage and that, and to express yourself, artistically, cos we wrote our own songs and all of that, it was very good, very good. And that can-do mentality. I mean most of the guys that I know from way back then would be you know a lot of them went on. I mean I started a business a lot of my friends started businesses.⁸⁷

The entrepreneurial verve expressed here takes a different form from the anarchist-minded ethos expressed in Petesy's interview, but the desires are roughly coterminous – to generate spaces and institutions that circumvent Belfast's existing spaces and institutions. This desire plays a role in composing the narrative and the subject both Petesy and Damien are presenting within the interview.

And I'm not saying, that might have happened anyway, but it was this culture of we don't need you to give me a job, I can stand on my own two feet. I don't need you to give me a record contract, we can make our own music, do our own thing. And I think that's definitely been a thread through my life you know.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ DM, 2016.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

This avowal of punkness as a 'thread' that has continued to unravel through the lifecourse is a common theme in nearly all of my interviews.⁸⁹

Damien concluded our discussion by returning to the link between politics and place in the Belfast punk scene.

And I think it, some of the ideas from the punk were still very valid. The anti-nuclear thing, the anti-racism thing. I mean we were at a Rock against Racism gig in Divis Flats, very near Divis Flats, there was a big church hall there [F: I think I've seen a picture] yeah and that was amazing, St Congall's Hall I think it was, and we did Rock for Cambodia, we did somewhere near there as well which was sponsored by Blue Peter, something like Blue Peter was involved in that, we did a Rock for Cambodia thing. That was quite novel you know and there were a couple of music festivals in West Belfast we played at there was a band called the Lids were really really good back in the day...⁹⁰

This account, again, links politics in Belfast to broader political currents – but it also stresses the importance of the local, the embodied and the specific. To return to Matt Cooke's article on squatting in Brixton, it "shows how the contingencies of everyday lives further modulated [political] involvement, and brings into sharper focus the array of localised economic, material, personal, and historical factors, which complicated political activism, countercultural identifications, and identity and community formations".⁹¹ It is reminiscent of Eamonn McCann's proud assertion, when reflecting on Northern Ireland's position in the '68 protests, that 'we were part of that', internationally; it insists on seeing

⁸⁹ See, for instance, John Callaghan on watching *Good Vibrations* for the first time: "Looking around and you see all these middle-aged men, dragging their partners ... coming out, every single one of us misty-eyed, lump in the throat ... I found it really emotional to be honest. Just right at the end they showed pictures. I knew a couple of people in it, not great friends but just part of the big fraternity, a couple of them are dead, you know what I mean, Jesus Christ was that really 30-odd years ago." Interview with John Callaghan, 2016.

⁹⁰ DM, 2016.

⁹¹ Cook, 'Gay Times', 2013, p109.

the problems facing nationalist communities in Belfast as part of a constellation of social and political issues without attempting to elide their complexity or specificity.⁹²

This was drawn out further in our final exchange, in which Damien set up a dichotomy between certain punk bands that he felt were more interested in the scene as a set of empty signifiers than as a set of political and spatial practices.

I don't want to name names about some of the bands but some of the bigger bands that were getting a good bit of public recognition – some of them were from good schools and very well, you know, parents were very well sorted, from an upper middle class background shall we say. And I'm not saying what they were doing was invalid or being critical of what they did at all but it wasn't quite, it didn't have the realism of we are actually from the streets of West Belfast, where it is really bad. And you've never experienced that because you go to Campbell College and your parents take you for two weeks to Spain every summer.⁹³

There is an important corrective here both to totalising narratives of the punk scene in Belfast and to totalising narratives of punk in general as a form of working-class resistance.

I think we started to view some of the conflicts in a different way because we were probably very left-leaning then we looked at the situation and we didn't see it as a Catholic versus Protestant we kind of looked at it and thought you know the people on the Shankill Road who have no jobs, the guys above them the politicians and the leaders and all them, they're telling them that they've no jobs cos the Catholics have taken their jobs. Go over the Falls Road you're being told the Catholics have no jobs cos the Protestants, and we thought we saw it as maybe more of a class struggle, that that was what was wrong, and that punk maybe could – and it maybe

⁹² Eamonn McCann, quoted in Prince, Simon, 'The Global Revolt of 1968 and Northern Ireland', *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (2006), pp851–875.

⁹³ DM, 2016.

changed but we certainly were anti-establishment we were certainly anti-government but you know not much changed of that. I remember going to Ballanahinch, Enoch Powell with his famous rivers of blood speech, we were there protesting. We all went there and protested. And I'm sure it was Ballanahinch we went to we went protesting back then. So that was all part of what we did, certainly for me and my band that was integral to what we did.⁹⁴

Like Petesy then, Damien explicitly connects his engagement in the punk scene with a structure of feeling that made it possible to “creep into the utopian gamble of something else ... to embrace future feelings”, in Ben Highmore’s memorable formulation.⁹⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed interviews with Petesy Burns and Damien McCorry to suggest that for them, engagement in the punk scene made it possible to take part in forms of urban politics that attempted to rework space in Belfast. Drawing on the work of Henri Lefebvre as well as on rearticulations of his work that emphasise the multiplicity of possible experiences of place, it suggested that there are two temporalities at work here; Petesy and Damien both felt that punk allowed them to change the city they were in in the 1970s and 1980s, but they also experience the contemporary city in different ways because of their memories of the punk scene. This double temporality generates a kind of critical nostalgia in their narratives, allowing for a nuanced critique of the politics of space in post-peace process Belfast as well as an account of the sectarianisation of space they remember as a feature of the Belfast of their adolescence and young adulthood.

⁹⁴ DM, 2016. As Damien alludes to, Powell is mostly remembered now for a racist speech he made in April 1968 as a member of the Conservative Party’s shadow cabinet, expressing fear and alarm about immigration into England – “As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see ‘the River Tiber foaming with much blood.’” See Hillman, Nicholas, ‘A “Chorus of Execration”? Enoch Powell’s “Rivers of Blood” Forty Years On’, *Patterns of Prejudice* 42, no. 1 (1 February 2008), p83–104. However, in his later career he was also the Ulster Unionist MP for South Down, between 1974 and 1987. It is striking here that Damien appears to elide protests made against Powell at some point during his sojourn in Northern Ireland with the speech itself, which was made in Birmingham, but the nature of the action being described is unclear.

⁹⁵ Highmore, Ben, *Cultural Feelings: Mood, Mediation and Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 2017), p133.

Following Matt Cook and Stephen Brooke, the chapter proposed that we can understand this account of the spatial politics of the punk scene as revealing a spatialised structure of feeling, one in which “emotion was also rooted in physical space [and] political action revolved around changing the emotional culture of that physical space—making everyday life emotionally, as well as materially, more functional”.⁹⁶ Thinking of this in terms of what Lefebvre calls the right to the city, we can appreciate the double function of this claim, one that operates to explain Petesy’s desire for a venue that was not implicated in either capitalist or sectarian logics, but also the affective resonance he attributes to the Crass gig at the Anarchy centre; and one that explains Damien’s evocation of urban political protest but also the feeling of meeting people from Protestant backgrounds and challenging your preconceptions or concerns: “You know, different tradition, et cetera, and then you realise these guys are just thinking, they’re young people thinking the same as I do, they may be from a different faith or whatever.”⁹⁷

Reading Lefebvre via Pierce and Martin, then, and considering both the production of space and the experience of place in Petesy and Damien’s narratives, the argument here is that a third and final facet of punk as a structure of feeling is visible in their accounts. If Alison stresses the feeling of anxious mobility and exciting transgression her engagement in punk generated, and Gareth the feeling of changing oneself in relation to space and to other people, Petesy and Damien emphasise the hopeful feeling of possibility generated by trying to change the city itself, along with the frustration and fear generated by the difficulty of exercising this possibility. The conclusion, below, will bring these three facets together to propose a final way of thinking about the punk scene in Belfast as remembered by my interviewees.

⁹⁶ Brooke, ‘Space, Emotions and the Everyday’, p142.

⁹⁷ DM, 2016.

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The conclusion will return to the two sets of questions proposed in the introduction. Firstly, in light of both the interview analysis and the historical accounts of sectarianism and space in Belfast in the previous six chapters, what did the punk scene mean to its participants? Secondly, how is this meaning expressed through oral history narratives, and what can the construction of meaning through memory that is characteristic of oral history narratives tell us about the punk scene and about Northern Irish memory culture?

In this final section, these questions will be reconsidered in light of the institutional and spatial histories of the first two chapters, the methodological discussion of the third chapter, and the oral history analyses of the final three chapters. This entails bringing each of the chapters together to consider the different aspects of punk as a structure of feeling that is expressed in the interviews, and linking this to the question of punk as a memory culture. Having done this, I will conclude by proposing the significance of these findings to work on oral history, to work on cultural memory in Northern Ireland, and to work on the history of the punk scene.

Research questions and punk as structure of feeling

The crux of the first two chapters is that sectarianism in Northern Ireland needs to be understood as a historically-constituted structure. In the first chapter, I proposed that we think of sectarianism as doubly-articulated, that is, as being a product of institutions that also permeates and shapes everyday life. In the second chapter, I proposed that the production of sectarianised space is one of the central modalities through which this structural sectarianism has been expressed in Belfast, particularly following the partition of Ireland in 1921. Taking both of these arguments together, I would suggest that it is important to be somewhat cautious in assigning the quality of non-sectarianism to the punk scene for two reasons. Firstly, because this argument would mistake sectarianism for a fundamentally interpersonal dynamic which punk could unsettle or resist simply

through the act of bringing young Catholics and Protestants into the same spaces. Secondly, because it separates the punk scene from the everyday life of which it was a part; as my interviewees suggest, being a punk was not a totalising identification and punk-ness coexisted with other factors such as class and gender in constituting their subjectivities.

Where this leads, along with the interview analysis in the final three chapters, is to an understanding of the punk scene as a structure of feeling embedded in its social, material and cultural world that was experienced and understood differently by its various participants.

For Alison, the structure of feeling she encountered through her engagement with punk was one that made the transgression of certain social norms, expectations and discourses possible. In her narrative, this made movement possible – movement both across and within the lines of class, sectarianism and gender that bisected Northern Irish society. More generally, this is an aspect of the structure of feeling that has two faces. On one side, it makes Alison able to perceive more clearly the lineaments of the conflict in Northern Ireland and provides a set of inflections and formulations that make a critique of Northern Irish society possible. On the other, it is an embodied sense of possibility which manifests itself in her narrative as mobility, as the capacity to perform this critique by having both Protestant and Catholic friends, by dressing differently, by moving through space in trajectories that do not attempt to fundamentally alter the lines of division in Northern Ireland but that do draw attention to the constructedness and inequity of these lines. The structure of feeling that comes through most clearly in Alison's account is one of possibility, in which things that did not usually happen in Dungannon or Belfast were made able to happen by her involvement in the punk scene. This is an emergent element of the structure of feeling, one of the "indefinite and diffuse sensual forms" that can be part of the picture without solidifying into "an explicit sociopolitical form such as a pathos towards suffering", in Ben Highmore's words.¹

¹ Highmore, Ben, 'Formations of Feelings, Constellations of Things', *Cultural Studies Review*, Vol. 22 No. 1, 2016, p144-167.

In Gareth's account, the structure of feeling is more internal and more tangible in his sense of self than it is as a movement across the external parameters of Northern Irish society, although still related to the idea of possibility. Subtly, he proposes two interconnected moods within the punk structure of feeling, that of hedonism or simply fun, and that of creativity, productivity and changing yourself through an engagement in creative practices like playing music or writing fanzines. But as suggested in chapter five, Gareth also resolves the discomposure that this split mood creates in his narrative, contrasting the passivity of his younger self with the role of his older self as a collector and as someone with a historical perspective on the punk scene. This suggests another commonality with Alison's account. The structure of feeling of punk as creating the possibility for changing your attitude and behaviour, or your habitus, stays with Gareth even though its effect have a lag; they catch up with him, as it were, years later. As he puts it:

And you know when you're going, I went away to university and like I did a science degree, not one bit creative at all, but when I was there I took that – it was still part of me there. And when I'm going over to see the Stranglers in England ... you can take the Belfast out of the boy but you, or, you can take the boy out of Belfast but you can't take Belfast out of the boy.²

The structure of feeling that comes through most clearly in Gareth's account is one of openness, openness to change in how you perceive the world and are perceived by others.

Damien and Petesy share elements of both Gareth and Alison's account. Like Alison, they both contrast the relatively fixed, immobile possibilities of their early lives with the transgressive and mobile possibilities of the punk scene. And like Gareth, they both emphasise the way in which the creativity of punk in Belfast allowed them to change their sense of self, which for Damien entails an engagement with a leftist politics that reads the conflict as resting on the exploitation of both Protestant and Catholic working-class people, and for Petesy entails an engagement with an anarchist politics of self-organisation and prefiguration.

² GM, 2016.

This is also, however, where their account of the punk structure of feeling differs from that of Gareth and Alison – they both stress the directly political nature of their engagement and their desire to intervene in the production of space in Belfast, an attitude which I have connected to Henri Lefebvre’s evocation of the right to the city.

Bringing the accounts together

Bringing the three interviews together with the previous three chapters suggests three findings. Firstly, that punk’s relationship to sectarianism was complex, and in particular that the practices and attitudes generated by an engagement in the punk scene were various and not monolithic. This is partly because each interviewee is speaking from a particular position and narrating a specific set of experiences; it is also because encounters with punk, like encounters with sectarianism, were determined by class, religion and gender. For Alison, as a young Protestant woman from a rural part of Northern Ireland, punk allowed her to transgress the interconnected boundaries of respectability and sectarianism; for Gareth, as a young and working-class Protestant man from a majority-Protestant part of Belfast, punk allowed him to perform his identity in a particular way. For Damien and Petesy, both young working-class Catholic men from majority-Catholic parts of Belfast, punk enabled them to express a political claim on space that did not draw explicitly on nationalist discourses.

Conversely, what is also striking here is the sense in which each of the interviews emphasise Robbie McVeigh’s important claim that sectarianism needs to be understood as “more than a set of ideologies or a category of practices or an amalgam of individual actions [and that] sectarianism is the modality in which life is lived by everybody in the Six Counties.”³ Focusing on individual accounts of the structuring power of sectarianism in the formation of their identities allows us to see clearly that McVeigh is correct to emphasise that sectarianism percolated into the everyday life of Northern Ireland via state and non-state institutions in the period described by my interviewees, and should

³ McVeigh, Robbie, ‘The Undertheorisation of Sectarianism’, *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 16, no.2 (December 1990).

not therefore be understood as the aberrant production of a group of aberrant 'sectarians'.⁴

Secondly, that the production of space was critical to the maintenance of sectarian structures in Northern Ireland, and that – while there are some issues with thinking of the punk scene as non-sectarian without problematizing that notion, as discussed – a central component of the structure of feeling of the punk scene was its contestation of this spatial production. This is most explicit in Damien and Petesy's account; for Alison and Gareth the emphasis is on place rather than space, in that the punk scene gave them a way to feel differently about the spaces they inhabited.

Thirdly, that granular, detailed analysis of individual memory narratives can provide specific insights into the differential experience of sectarianism, into how people make sense of their identities through spatial engagements, into the practices and dispositions that characterised the punk scene, and into the relationship between cultural and individual memory in Northern Ireland. In that my analysis has incorporated accounts by men and women, and two Catholics and two Protestants, some attempt at representativeness has been made. But the question of representativeness is somewhat beside the point here. In his beautiful analysis of an oral history interview with Valtèro Peppolini, an Umbrian worker, Portelli highlights the "collective and shared" motifs Peppolini's individual narrative draws on – lifelong confrontations with authority, an emphasis on a form of work ethic that is understood through socialism rather than through individual social mobility, a rebellious attitude as a young man that is later channelled into a particular form of political action through membership in the Communist party.⁵ What is particularly productive in focusing so closely on individual narratives of the punk scene and of adolescence in Northern Ireland in the 1970s is that it allows us, firstly, to see how individual memories are formed in relation to social discourses and, secondly, to consider what use people make of those social discourses in composing and narrating their memories. The crucial finding here, then, is related to the question of oral history's role in writing histories of Northern Ireland during the conflict.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Portelli, Alessandro, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p137.

Paying attention to the form and style of oral history accounts, as well as to their intersubjective dimensions, is important in understanding the pervasiveness of cultural memories of conflict and the ways in which people make sense out of these memory discourses and of their own experiences.

Memory culture, lifecourse and oral history

The final points to be made in bringing the interviews together entail a consideration of how they speak to the memory culture of punk discussed in chapter two, and how this relates to the life-course and experience of my interviewees. To recapitulate on the second chapter briefly, the punk scene in Belfast had a scattered and largely community-driven memory culture associated with it from the 1990s onwards, one that is perhaps most visible in the launch of *It Makes You Want to Spit* in 2004.⁶ This shifted somewhat in 2012 and 2013 with the release of the Terri Hooley biopic *Good Vibrations* and the resultant public intervention around this event, including the unveiling of a blue plaque commemorating Hooley and the punk scene on Hill Street, near the site of the old Harp Bar and now situated squarely in Belfast's redeveloped Cathedral Quarter.⁷ The context for my interviews in 2016, then, was a somewhat renewed public visibility for the punk scene and for memories of the punk scene, and the film did form a part of my conversations with many of the interviewees, to the extent that it was often referred to in transcripts as 'the film' rather than by its name.

This did not lead, however, to a situation in which they recounted events from the film as if they had happened to them, as in Alistair Thomson's classic work on World War One memory in Australia.⁸ Rather, they engaged critically and thoughtfully with the film's intervention both in punk memory culture and in Northern Ireland as such. For Alison, as discussed in her chapter, the film provided an opportunity to make the punk scene tangible for one of her daughters, but also to make the difference between past and present in Northern Ireland tangible; our discussion of *Good Vibrations*, then, focused on

⁶ O'Neill, Sean and Guy Trelford (eds), *It Makes You Want to Spit: The Definitive Guide to Punk in Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Reekus Music 2003).

⁷ D'sa, Lisa Barros and Glen Leyburn, *Good Vibrations* (London: Universal Pictures UK, 2012).

⁸ Thomson, Alistair, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

the way in which Alison composed her past and present selves in relation to contemporary Northern Ireland and to her family. Gareth gave a slightly different account of this relation, more focused on the narrative of the film. This seemed to me to relate to his own position within punk memory culture as an active participant in its maintenance and shaping. He said: “There's a lot of truth in it but there's also a lot of the legend, the rose-tinted glasses, the story fluffed out a wee bit to make it sound – that's my impression.”⁹

Petesy had a third and slightly different position as someone who was actively involved in the production of the film and indeed has a small acting role in it. He said:

I loved the process and I loved what they were doing in terms of shining a light on that time which was a really important part of, as far as I'm concerned, my history [...] Now on the back of that there's a lot of revisionism and a lot of infighting about you know what actually happened then ... It's like fucking 'I'm Spartacus', you know, 'I'm Brian and so's my wife'. It's ridiculous what it has stirred up as well. I'm also not comfortable with ... you know it's the media being the media you know, the Godfather of punk and all this bollix. [...] It was a great thing and it was great that it was celebrated in some way. And when I look at that I just look at it like it's a work of fiction, it's embellished, and OK – so what – they're not making a documentary they're making a film. They don't want it to play just to local people. But you know having said that there's an awful lot of revisionism that's sorta ... to try and make that a nice wee media packaged story Terri Hooley did this and you know ... and it really wasn't like that. The scene wasn't dependent on any one person or any set of people, it really was people and bands keeping things moving.¹⁰

Petesy, then, recognises the value of the film as a representation of a period of history that he took part in; but embedded in this recognition is a critique of the tendency of these kinds of cultural representation to impose a particular narrative on the past, one that in

⁹ Interview with GM, 2016.

¹⁰ Interview with PB, 2017.

this instance he sees as emphasising individual agency rather than collective and social struggle. As with Gareth's account, though, this isn't a simple dismissal of the film as 'not what really happened', but a more complex understanding of its status as a representation and an intervention in a pre-existing memory culture.

To draw a more general point from these responses, then, it is clear that oral historians interested in how memory cultures shape oral history testimonies need to be attentive to the fact that their interviewees are often just as conscious of these cultures as they are, and also capable of critiquing their lacuna and their narratives. While the nature of the data gathered here does not allow for a comprehensive claim about how the film and the events around the film affected their accounts (because all of my interviews took place after these had happened), it does suggest that my interviewees were interestingly critical of aspects of the punk scene's reimagining as part of Belfast's new public heritage initiatives, while remaining invested in and moved by the possibility of their past being represented in this way.

The memory culture that coalesced around *Good Vibrations* was also a way for my interviewees to talk about what it meant to them in the present to have been involved in the punk scene in the past. This dynamic is of the unusual things about researching a youth subculture historically through the method of oral history, in that it entails asking middle-aged people about their memories of something that is quintessentially associated with adolescence, at least in terms of the dominant cultural signifiers surrounding it.¹¹ With Petesy, Brian and John T Davis, this dynamic was somewhat different insofar as Petesy and Brian continue to be in bands and John continues to make films – for them, while their identification with punk is not the same as it was 40 years ago, their lives remain indelibly and visibly marked by the scene. For my other interviewees, what was striking was the extent to which they understood punk-ness as something that had continued to play a part in their lives even as they moved on to different things – jobs, families and so on. For some of them, notably Alison and John

¹¹ On this, see for example Turrini, Joseph M, "Well I Don't Care About History": Oral History and the Making of Collective Memory in Punk Rock', *Notes* 70, no. 1 (2013), pp59–77; Bennett, Andy, 'Punk's Not Dead: The Continuing Significance of Punk Rock for an Older Generation of Fans', *Sociology* 40, no. 2 (1 April 2006), pp219–35.

Callaghan, the film provided a structure through which they could make sense of this dynamic between past and present and explain their involvement in the punk scene in the context of contemporary Northern Ireland, even if – as Alison pointed out – this structure can only ever be partial given the continued connections between past and present. However, all of my interviewees avowed that the habitus, the attitude or the structure of feeling of the punk scene had continued to play a part in their lives long after their active participation in it had ended, often suggesting that it had made them less quick to judge others, more open to different experiences or more critical of the political situation in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

Contributions to knowledge

These findings suggest four contributions to existing knowledge. Firstly, in terms of developing the history of the punk scene in Northern Ireland, the thesis has brought together a series of oral history accounts that shed light on the quotidian practices, sites and relationships that constituted the scene as a structure of feeling. This adds both to the existing community history of the subject, epitomised by the *It Makes You Want to Spit* anthology and the related website, and to the small body of academic work on the topic, almost none of which has drawn upon an oral history methodology.¹² In relation to the former, it adds to the history by incorporating the voices and the narratives of participants in the scene to a greater degree than has been hitherto attempted, and by considering the relationship of the scene to its social conditions more rigorously. In relation to the latter, it complicates the relationship between punk and sectarianism, and places more emphasis on punk as being situated within everyday life in Northern Ireland. Ultimately, it suggests that despite the cultural memory of punk as non-sectarian – a cultural memory that my interviewees recognise, draw on and sometimes accept – an analysis of their memory narratives suggests that punk was instead a negotiation with sectarianism, incorporating practices of polite avoidance and circumlocution as well as

¹² The recent exceptions here, as mentioned in the introduction, are Stewart, Francis, “‘Alternative Ulster’: Punk Rock as a Means of Overcoming the Religious Divide in Northern Ireland”, pp76-90, in *Irish Religious Conflict in Comparative Perspective: Catholics, Protestants and Muslims* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and Heron, Timothy, ‘Alternative Ulster’: le punk en Irlande de Nord (1976-1983), (unpublished Phd thesis, Ecole doctorale Sciences de l’homme et de la société, 2017).

practices of transgression and place-making. Sectarianism was formative of the culture within which the punk scene and its participants moved and the punk scene could not function as a step outside of that culture, even as it generated a structure of feeling that challenged aspects of the sectarian logic of 1970s and 1980s Northern Ireland.

Secondly, in addition to focusing on a regional manifestation of the punk scene that is relatively understudied in relation to its metropolitan counterparts, the argument here for thinking about punk as a structure of feeling has extended the usefulness of this concept for analysing and historicising the punk scene as initially proposed by David Wilkinson and Matt Worley.¹³ Historicising the specific manifestation of punk in Belfast responds to their call for historical research that locates punk “within its (shifting) cultural, socio-economic and political context”, by arguing that the punk scene in Belfast took on a particular meaning for participants because of the specific conditions of life in the city, especially in terms of segregation, sectarianism and violence.¹⁴ This meaning, oddly enough, does not appear to have drawn very often on the “post-democratic imagining” that Northern Ireland inspired in punk bands from England in which the province became synecdochal with the breakdown of British society, particularly under Thatcher.¹⁵ Rather, it was one in which punk became a means of alternative identification that allowed people make sense of their positions within the province in different ways, without transcending them completely. It was also one in which punk – at least in the narratives of my interviewees – seemed to signify optimism, innocence and hope, in contrast to the dystopian imaginaries recently charted by Matt Worley in his work on punk and post-punk in Britain.¹⁶

The research here has additionally suggested that an oral history method allows us to ask different questions about the nature of the felt experience of the punk scene as structure of feeling, and makes it possible to reach aspects of the structure of feeling that leave little or no trace on the documentary record. Thinking about Williams’ work on culture and

¹³ Wilkinson, David, Matthew Worley, and John Street. 2017, “I Wanna See Some History”: Recent Writing on British Punk’, *Contemporary European History* 26, no. 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p410.

¹⁵ Worley, Matt, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture, 1976-1984* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p238.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the methodological developments of interpretative oral history together is a productive way of analysing how subjectivity, experience, discourse and social worlds are connected.

Thirdly, in bringing an interpretative oral history method together with the work of Lefebvre, Bourdieu and Cresswell, the thesis has shown how memory narratives can inform work on the social production of space and of place. In terms of Lefebvre, the argument is that we can see how people respond to the historical process of spatial production, which in Belfast entails the production of sectarianised space. In terms of Cresswell we can see how discourses of right and wrong places, and of transgressive or unruly mobility, can be challenged, and how that challenge can impact memory and subjectivity. In terms of Bourdieu, we can see how a slightly modified understanding of history and of the capacity of individuals to engage in historical practices can inform his useful account of how social conditions form subjectivities and dispositions. More generally, situating narratives of the punk scene in Belfast through their spatial components allows for a reading of space in the city that highlights both the historical constructedness of segregation and one of the points at which that construction has been challenged.

Finally, in analysing punk as a structure of feeling that can be accessed through memories of the scene, the thesis has suggested that oral history can illuminate the ways in which a group of young people negotiated sectarian structures, violence and the fear of violence within their everyday lives in Northern Ireland during the 1970s and 1980s. This is important for two reasons. It allows us to see how quotidian lives, spaces and behaviours were framed by the pervasiveness of sectarianism and fear in Belfast in this period; but it also allows us to see how this did not determine how people behaved, or make moments of sociality and acts of transgression or mobility impossible. Jennifer Curtis, in her work on the structure of feeling attached to housing activism in 1970s Belfast, says:

When applied to the housing protests in 1970s Belfast, Williams' idea demonstrates that political action in divided societies, violent or otherwise, is not reducible to sectarian geography. Rather, applying the concept of 'structures of feeling' to particular historical moments reveals the contours

of nuanced emotional allegiances and spatial associations that motivate and limit political action.

The final contribution of the thesis is to show how the sectarian divisions of Northern Irish culture, and Northern Irish memory culture, do not make impossible the articulation of complicated narratives of affiliation, negotiation and friendship within those divisions and cultures.

Further research

Firstly, while an effort is made here to draw out some of the gendered tensions of the punk scene in Alison's narrative, it is unfortunate that the preponderance of male voices in the interviews reproduces a tendency to 'masculinise' the punk scene in history and memory. Further research should attempt to redress this through the inclusion of more narratives from women participants. While time constraints have made it impossible for me to include my interviews with Tabitha Lewis and Claire Shannon in the analysis, any further development of this work would do so.

Other than rectifying this absence, there are several additional avenues that could be followed from this point. One would be to move both backwards and forwards; that is, to connect the structure of feeling of the punk scene both to the counter-culture of 1960s Belfast and to the rave scene of the early 1990s. There are prominent figures in whom this connections is embodied (so Terri Hooley, most obviously, for the former, and the DJ and producer David Holmes for the latter); but of more interest than simply tracing these individual connections would be a project that considered the different spatial practices and affects of these three scenes as remembered by their participants. This would allow for a comparative analysis of the memories of three different periods in Northern Ireland's history, and perhaps a more nuanced account of the way in which sectarianism, segregation and violence function in the pre-conflict period, during the conflict, and in the period directly preceding the Provisional IRA ceasefire of 1994 and the later ceasefires of 1996.

Another would entail a spatial rather than a temporal expansion, and develop the proposition made in chapter four that ‘the punk scene in Belfast’ is something of a misnomer. In a sense, the focus on Belfast evident in this project is a reproduction in microcosm of the much-maligned focus on London or New York in other histories of the punk scene; it would be useful to widen the net to consider regional manifestations of punk in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s, in smaller towns and in Derry. This would, again, allow for a more nuanced account of the functioning of sectarianism and the culture of division in this period, building on Mark McGovern’s important point that the network of sectarian relations and its impact on everyday life is part of rural as well as urban society in the north of Ireland.¹⁷ This effort to illustrate and historicise regional links could also be developed through an analysis of the interconnections between punk and post-punk scenes in Belfast and Dublin.

Finally, in my initial conception of the project the possibility of relating it back to the conditions of contemporary Northern Ireland via an exhibition or a similar public-facing event was proposed. Given that, as has been amply documented, issues of sectarianism and segregation remain a fundamental part of everyday life in Belfast and elsewhere in the province, the relevance of a community-driven use of the narratives here remains apparent.¹⁸

Conclusion

The 2017 Good Relations Indicator from the Northern Irish Executive was optimistic, at least within its own conditions of possibility. 52 per cent of young people felt that relationships between Protestants and Catholics were better now than they had been five years ago; 76 per cent of people believed that the culture and tradition of the Catholic community adds to “the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland society”, and the same amount believed the same thing for the Protestant community.¹⁹ In this context, the punk scene could be read as a precursor to the happily non-sectarian culture now emerging in

¹⁷ McGovern, Mark, “‘See No Evil’: Collusion in Northern Ireland”. *Race & Class* 58, no. 3 (1 January 2017).

¹⁸ See, for instance, Leonard, Madeleine, *Teens and Territory in ‘Post-Conflict’ Belfast: If Walls Could Talk* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

¹⁹ *Northern Ireland Good Relations Indicators: Annual Update* (Belfast: The Executive Office, 2017), p4.

the province, or in Raymond Williams' terms, as an emergent structure of feeling that has now become dominant.

Hopefully, it is clear that this is not how I want to read it. What my interviewees' memories suggest are a more complex set of relations, emotions and feelings, one that is antithetical to the 'good relations' model that is now hegemonic in Northern Ireland despite the political stalemate in evidence at the time of writing. Firstly, this is because their memories are revealing of the material limits of everyday life both in the '70s and '80s and now, limits that are made invisible by the non-sectarian rubric of the Good Relations Indicator; so Gareth points out that he was aware of whether or not fellow punks were Catholic, even if that didn't change his attitude towards them; Damien points out that he wouldn't have gone into certain bars in East Belfast even if he felt safe as a punk in the city centre; violence and the fear of violence mark all of the narratives in different ways.

Secondly, it is because their memories of punk as a structure of feeling point, with their stress on the possibilities and excitement of punk, to the idea of something different; a different form of connection between people that is perhaps inchoate but nonetheless present within their narratives. This cannot be reduced to the etiolated language of 'good relations' between Protestants and Catholics that characterises much public discourse on sectarianism now. It is this possibility that animates their narratives and my analysis.

Finally, it is worth returning to the question of the punk scene itself and how it should be understood. It has very much not been my intention here to classify the Belfast punk scene in a taxonomic way; instead, I have attempted to stress the insufficiency of these kinds of classifications via the complex and multifaceted memories of my interviewees. But a few thoughts are offered here on how the punk scene relates to other youth cultures in Northern Ireland, and on how the punk scene related to similar scenes in other cities, especially those in Britain. In terms of the former, the research here suggests that punk was indeed less divided by sectarian logics than the other leisure activities described in chapter one, particularly in terms of working-class leisure activities, and that its participants felt it to be a space in which they could make sense of their identities in new ways. However, it also suggests that there were limits to its capacity to transcend these

sectarian logics, and that to some extent this capacity has been overstated, perhaps because of the way in which punk as a transnational cultural form has been to some extent integrated into hegemonic understandings of ineffective but charming youth rebellion. An instructive comparison could be made with the rave scene in Northern Ireland in the 1990s, which has been understudied in academic work; as Brian Hollywood has shown, the relatively benign reading of the punk scene visible in Northern Irish public culture in the 1970s, and now visible in its public memory culture in this century, differs sharply from the moral panic that emerged around the rave scene, ecstasy use and so on.²⁰

In terms of how the punk scene in Belfast related to similar scenes in other cities, Matt Worley's recent work is interesting in indicating that punk in Northern Ireland was, because of the sectarian division in Northern Ireland and the material circumstances of the scene, particularly drawn to anarchist and self-organising tendencies; this claim would seem to be drawn out through the accounts of my interviewees, especially in chapter six.²¹ This also chimes with the sentiment expressed by Brian Young and others that the DIY ethos was heavily engrained in Belfast punk, meaning it avoided the vagaries of fashion more than its equivalent in London. It is worth noting, as well, that the apparent paucity of female-fronted bands in the Belfast scene suggest that punk had less of a role in challenging or transgressing traditional norms of gender than it did in, for instance, Manchester, although as Alison and Petesy pointed out its proximity to the small gay scene in Belfast did inculcate some progressive attitudes towards sexuality in at least some of its participants.²² But ultimately, the specific parameters of the scene are of less interest here than the way in which individuals grasp and express it as a structure of feeling in relation to their subjectivities and identities, as the preceding analysis has shown.

²⁰ Hollywood, Brian, 'Dancing in the Dark: Ecstasy, the Dance Culture, and Moral Panic in Post Ceasefire Northern Ireland', *Critical Criminology* 8, no. 1 (1 March 1997), pp62–77. See also Bell, Desmond, 'Dancing on Narrow Ground: Youth & Dance in Ulster', 1995, accessed online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dM5TktcXdnk> 23/2/19.

²¹ Worley, Matthew, *No Future: Punk, Politics and Youth Culture, 1976-1984* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p236.

²² See Wilkinson, David, *Post-Punk, Politics and Pleasure in Britain* (New York: Springer, 2016); on the specific gender politics of anarchist and feminist groups like the Raincoats see O'Meara, Caroline, 'The Raincoats: Breaking down Punk Rock's Masculinities', *Popular Music* 22, no. 3 (2003), pp299–313.

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Interviews, in the order they were conducted

John T Davis – Belfast, October 2015

Alison Farrell – Belfast, November 2015

Gareth Mullan – Belfast, November 2015

Paul Kerr – Belfast, November 2015

John Callaghan – Belfast, December 2015

Sheena Bleakney – Belfast, January 2015 (not recorded on her request)

Hector Heathwood – Dublin, February 2016

Petesy Burns – Belfast, February 2016

Damien McCorry – Belfast, February 2016

Brian Young – Belfast, March 2016

Tabitha Lewis – Brighton, September 2017

Claire Shannon – Brighton, October 2017

Various informal conversations with other individuals involved in the punk scene have informed this thesis and contributed to my overall analysis of punk as a structure of feeling; given the informality of these conversations their anonymity is respected here.

APPENDIX A

Sample Information Sheet

Memories of punk in Belfast

You are being invited to take part in a research project, undertaken as part of a PhD at the University of Brighton. Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it's important you understand the details of the project and how your contribution will be used, so please take the time to read the following form.

What is the purpose of the project?

This project aims to gather memories of between eight and twelve people involved in the Belfast punk scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s in order to compile stories about the city that have never previously been recorded. The project will touch on elements of being a young adult at that time and in that place, and consider issues related to political and cultural experience.

Why have I received an information sheet?

All prospective interviewees were involved to some extent in the Belfast punk scene of the late 1970s and early 1980s. You've received this information sheet because you've expressed some interest in taking part in the project.

Taking part is voluntary, and having expressed an interest doesn't entail any commitment. It's up to you to make a decision based on the information on this sheet and our conversation prior to the interview. If you do decide to take part, you'll be given a copy of this sheet and a consent form to sign.

Following that, you're still entirely free to withdraw from the project at any juncture and without giving a reason. If this decision comes after you've taken part in an interview, your archived interview will be deleted immediately.

What does taking part entail?

If you agree to take part, I will get in touch with you to arrange an interview. In general, it's preferably that this take place at your house, but you can choose an alternative venue if you'd like. The interview will last for around two hours, and involve a set series of questions that I can email you beforehand if you like. With your permission, the interview will be recorded – I'll also take some notes.

If there's anything you wish to add following this initial interview we can arrange to meet up again.

After this I'll transcribe the interviews. This transcript can be shared with you if you'd like to check it over.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

As mentioned earlier, the project hopes to gather stories about Belfast that have never previously been recorded. I would like the process to be a rewarding and interesting one for the interviewee. The interviews will give you a chance to discuss your experiences and help with developing an understanding of how young people engaged with the city in the 1970s and 1980s, and how this might be of interest to young people negotiating the contemporary city.

What are the possible risks or disadvantages of taking part?

When discussing past experiences, it's possible that unhappy or difficult memories can come to the fore. Anyone who feels they wish to discuss these memories in more detail will have the opportunity to seek out further guidance following our interview.

What will happen to my interviews after they have been transcribed?

All data (transcriptions and recordings) can be anonymised, and the files will be encrypted to ensure that they couldn't be accessed if, for instance, the USB key storing them was misplaced. As explained on the consent form, there are three tiers of possible use to which you can agree.

Firstly, to quotes from the transcript being used as part of my dissertation and published at the end of my doctoral training. Secondly, to quotes and audio recordings being shared on the internet as part of a website I hope to develop as part of my research. Thirdly, to quotes and audio being used at a later date as part of an installation or exhibition related to my research.

Depending on what you wish to share and to what extent you wish to share it, the files related to the interview will be kept for a longer or shorter period. If you only wish to be quoted in the dissertation, your information will be deleted on completion of the project – if you are happy to take part in the second or third tiers of use, then they'll be kept for longer, and potentially archived.

If at any point you wish for your information to be removed from a public forum such as a website, contact me and I will delete it at once. Again, you don't need to give any reason for this.

Will my information be confidential?

You can be anonymised in the publication of any research, although it's important to bear in mind that (given the relatively small number of people involved in the scene in question) it may be possible that other people involved in the scene could recognise you through your voice or through the information you recount. You will have the opportunity to decide if you want any other names you use throughout your transcript to be anonymised or used verbatim.

Following on from the Boston College case in 2012, where the American university was compelled to release transcripts of its interviews with former nationalist and unionist

participants in an oral history project, participants in any oral history project in NI need to be aware of the potential legal implications of their participation.

The Supreme Court has granted oral history interviews the same status as journalist's notes – this means they do not need to be handed to a court unless the information contained is directly relevant to an ongoing criminal investigation and not available through less sensitive sources. This is the only case in which your information will be shared with the police.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you want to take part, please contact me using the details at the bottom of the sheet to indicate that you are interested. You should also have been given a consent form along with the information sheet; please read both of these and if you are happy to give your consent, send this on to me with your signature.

Who is organising and funding this research?

I am conducting this study as a student at the University of Brighton. It is being funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (ARHC).

Contact for further information

Researcher: Fearghus Roulston (fr70@brighton.ac.uk)

Supervisor: Graham Dawson (g.dawson@brighton.ac.uk)

Sample Consent Form

Consent form for project participants

Memories of punk in Belfast

Full name:

Date of birth:

Date signed:

I agree to take part in this research project with Fearghus Roulston and the University of Brighton. I understand what the project entails and have read, and understood, the attached information sheet.

I am willing to:

Be interviewed by the researcher.
Allow the interview to be recorded and transcribed.

Additionally, I am willing for:

My transcribed interview to be used to inform the written dissertation element of the researcher's doctoral project, suitably anonymised. (YES / NO)

My transcribed and recorded interview to be used on a publicly-accessible website and stored on a web database (YES / NO)

My transcribed and recorded interview to be used as part of an exhibition or installation in the future (YES / NO)

This consent is conditional and can be withdrawn at any point by contacting the researcher directly.

In return, the researcher agrees to:

Keep all information secure and encrypted, apart from the portions that are used in the contexts mentioned above.

Only breach the conditions of anonymity if the information disclosed is relevant to a live and ongoing police investigation and requested by the police, who are only able to access this information if it cannot be gathered through the use of less sensitive sources.

I consent to the use of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998

Signature: _____

WERE YOU A PART OF THE

BELFAST

PUNK

SCENE

DURING 1977-1982

???

If YES then contact Fearghus (PhD student
at University of Brighton): [fearghus.roulston@
gmail.com](mailto:fearghus.roulston@gmail.com)

For more information, visit: [BELFAST7782.SQUARESPACE
COM](http://BELFAST7782.SQUARESPACE.COM)

APPENDIX B

The information here on Northern Irish bands is largely sourced from *It Makes You Want to Spit*, and from Sean O'Neill's unparalleled *Spit Records* website, which has been an invaluable resource throughout the writing of the thesis as a whole. Any errors are my own. The bands here are not alphabetised but rather organised in the sequence of their appearance in the thesis.

The Outcasts – Formed in January of 1977, and picked their name after getting turned away from five nightclubs in two weeks. Their debut album, *Self Conscious Over You*, was released on Good Vibrations in 1979; they went on to record several more albums and retain a cult following in France.

The Clash – English punk band, founded in London in 1976 and along with the Sex Pistols probably the best-known exemplars of this wave of punk. Occasioned the 'riot of Bedford Street' in Belfast in 1977 after a planned gig at the Ulster Hall was cancelled.

Terri Hooley – Better-known for his record shop and record label, Terri also recorded a single in 1979, *Laugh at Me* – a cover of the 1966 Sonny & Cher song – on Fresh Records.

Stalag 17 – Stalag 17, featuring Petesy Burns on bass, were the mainstays of the Northern Irish anarcho-punk scene alongside Newtownards band Toxic Waste. Formed in 1979, they were central in the formation of the Warzone Collective, bringing bands from across Europe to play in Belfast.

Protex – Protex were formed in 1978, recorded on Good Vibrations, and later moved to London to work with Polydor Records. They were recorded playing in New York in an unreleased short film by John T Davis, *Sham Rock*.

Rudi – Probably the first punk band in Belfast, Rudi – formed in 1975 by Brian Young, Ronnie Matthews, Graham 'Grimmy' Marshall, Leigh Carson and Drew Brown – were influenced by glam rock and old rock'n'roll as much as by the nascent punk scene. Their 1978 single *Big Time* was the first and the best record released by Good Vibrations.

Victim – Formed in mid-1977 and gigging by 1978, Victim moved to Manchester in 1979 and became something of a feature of the punk scene in the north of England, playing at the Factory and rehearsing in the same space as Magazine, Joy Division and the Buzzcocks. Mike Joyce, later of the Smiths, was briefly their drummer.

The Undertones – The Derry band are the most recognisable sound of Northern Irish punk, along with Stiff Little Fingers, and released a string of excellent singles – most notably Teenage Kicks, Radio 1 DJ John Peel's favourite song.

The Sex Pistols – Very famous, swore on television, managed by Malcom McClaren. Only released one studio album and four singles; formed in 1975 and split up in 1978.

Stiff Little Fingers – The Stiffs are best-remembered for their debut album *Inflammable Material*, co-written with the English journalist Gordon Oglivie. Their career is covered exhaustively in Roland Link's 2009 book, *Kicking up a Racket: The Story of Stiff Little Fingers, 1977-1983*.

The Ramones – American punk band known for their short, catchy songs and simple lyrics. Very influential on the Northern Irish punk scene and played several gigs in the Ulster Hall in the 1970s.

The Xdreamysts – Signed to Good Vibrations, the Xdreamysts – from the north coast of Ireland – were more of a rock than a punk band, and went on to support, among others, Thin Lizzy.

The Idiots – The Idiots, formed in 1977, featured Barry Young, Dee Wilson and Gordy Owen. Dee Wilson is working on a history of the punk scene and as part of the Alternative Ulster Historical Society recently placed a plaque on the original site of the Trident Bar in Bangor, where many of the early Northern Irish punk bands played.

Spider – Belfast band, signed to Good Vibrations and released a single on the 1978 *Battle of the Bands* EP.

Crass – An English anarcho-punk band and art collective formed in 1977, widely considered the apotheosis of the DIY tendency in punk. Known for their engagement in a range of political issues, including the role of the British state in Northern Ireland, they played at the A Centre in 1982 in what was a formative gig for my interviewee Petesy Burns.

Poison Girls – An anarcho-punk band from Brighton fronted by Viv Subversive and known for their feminist, anarchist politics. They played in Belfast several times.

Conflict – From south London, an anarcho-punk band closely associated with Crass and with Ian Bone's British anarchist network *Class War*.

Ruefrefx – Ruefrefx, from the Shankill and the Ardoyne in north Belfast, were along with Stiff Little Fingers one of the few bands from the first wave of Northern Irish punk to address politics directly in their songs. Influenced by the Clash, their first album was released in 1985; the band played a benefit gig for Lagan College, Northern Ireland's first integrated school, in the mid-80s.

The Stranglers – The Stranglers emerged from the pub rock scene of the mid-70s to become a fixture of the punk scene and beyond, changing their style and sound several times. An important band for Gareth Mullan, interviewed in chapter five.

Siouxsie and the Banshees – Siouxsie and the Banshees, from London, were a post-punk and goth band known for their experimental instrumentation. Played in Belfast several times.

Echo & the Bunnymen – The central band in Alison Farrell’s account, as discussed in chapter four, Echo & the Bunnymen were formed in Liverpool in 1978. Known for their charismatic frontman, Ian McCulloch.

The Au Pairs – British post-punk band from Birmingham, whose 1981 debut album *Playing with a Different Sex* is notable for its caustic lyrics on sex, gender and (on *Armagh*), the British government’s use of ‘interrogation techniques’ in Northern Ireland.

The Slits – All-woman punk band formed in England in 1977, featuring Ari Up, Palmolive, Viv Albertine and Tessa Pollit. Their first album, *Cut*, was released in 1979. As discussed in chapter three, Viv Albertine has played an important role in historicising the punk scene via her recent memoir, *Clothes, Music, Boys*.

Patti Smith – American writer and singer who first came to prominence in the New York punk scene of the early to mid-’70s. Released her first album, *Horses*, with the Patti Smith Group in 1975.

Toyah - Toyah were a punk and new wave band formed by Toyah Wilcox in 1977. Their first album, *Sheep Farming in Barnet*, was released in 1979. Alison expresses her identification with Toyah in chapter four.

Bucks Fizz – An English pop group from the 1980s, best-known for winning the Eurovision Song Contest in 1981 with *Making Your Mind Up*.

The Miami Showband – The Miami Showband were one of the most successful of the Irish showband groups, cabaret bands who played pop and country songs and were a major live attraction in Ireland in the 1960s and ’70s. Band members Fran O’Toole, Tony Geraghty, and Brian McCoy were killed by the Ulster Volunteer Force in 1975, in an attack alleged to be planned with the collusion of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. See *The Miami Showband Massacre: A Survivor’s Search for the Truth* for an account of former member Stephen Travers’ attempts to relate the killing to British state collusion.

Bacteria – The punk band formed by Gareth Mullan and his schoolmates, as discussed in chapter five.

Sabrejets – Former Rudi singer Brian Young’s current band, influenced by rockabilly, rock’n’roll and the New York Dolls.

The Damned – One of the earliest English bands associated with the punk scene after the release of their single, *New Rose*, in 1976. Played in Belfast in the 1970s.

The Sweet – British glam rock band, formed in London in 1968 and best-known for their 1973 single *The Ballroom Blitz*. Described as a precursor to punk by Gareth in chapter five.

The Beatles – Liverpoolian pop band who became one of the most famous groups in the world in the 1960s and ’70s. Played at the King’s Hall in Belfast in 1964.

The Animals – English rock band formed in Newcastle in the 1960s. Especially famous for their much-covered single *House of the Rising Sun*.

Stimulators – The Stimulators were a punk band from New York who played at the Punk and New Wave Festival in the Ulster Hall in 1980.

The Saints – From Brisbane in Australia, the Saints were formed in 1973 and were arguably one of the first punk bands in the world. They also played at the Punk and New Wave Festival in 1980.

Stage B – A Northern Irish punk band who made their first appearance at the Harp in 1979. They were booked to support Siouxsie & the Banshees in 1979 but the gig didn't happen because the Banshees' equipment was left in England; this is the gig that Gareth attended and left alone, later being chased down the Lisburn Road, as discussed in chapter five.

Killing Joke – Killing Joke were formed in London in 1978; their eponymous debut album was released in 1980. Part of the post-punk scene at the time, they later became an important influence within industrial music.

Pulp – Pulp, from Sheffield, were formed in 1978 but rose to prominence in the 1990s as slightly atypical members of the Britpop scene. See Owen Hatherley's wonderful book *Uncommon* for a consideration of their career that relates it to the post-industrial heritage of Sheffield and to working-class politics more generally.

Toxic Waste – Toxic Waste, from Ards, formed in 1983 and became the fulcrum of the Northern Ireland anarcho-punk scene along with Stalag 17. Founding member Roy Wallace is now a filmmaker and historian who has made documentaries on the punk scene (*The Day the Country Died*) and on the Rathcoole Self-Help Group (*Goodbye Ballyhightown*).

[Spotify link here](#); or search for 'Justa Nother Teenage Rebel' in Spotify.

Appendix C

Some biographical data on my interviewees is included here. This should not be taken as comprehensive and in places is deliberately vague, partial or impressionistic; this is a function of the form of the interviews, which did not entail a linear discussion of the interviewees' lives or their personal histories, but instead focused on their memories of the punk scene specifically and on their thought about the punk scene from the perspective of the present. The biographical details offered here, then, are largely the ones that my interviewees considered relevant to the memories they expressed about the punk scene. They should be read in that context rather than as offering a detailed sociological insight into their lives. For more discussion of this style of interviewing and the advantages and disadvantages it entails in terms of producing oral histories, see chapter three.

John T Davis – Belfast, October 2015

John is a filmmaker and musician from Holywood, a small town between Belfast and Bangor in County Down, from a Protestant background. He was in his early 30s when he was first taken to a punk gig by a friend, and immediately struck by the energy and excitement of the scene. His documentary *Shellshock Rock* was released in 1979; it was supposed to premiere at the Cork Film Festival but was removed from the competition at the last minute, supposedly on technical grounds. John later made several other short films about the punk scene (*Protex Hurrah*, *Self Conscious Over You*), as well as a number of other acclaimed documentaries – *Route 66*, *Dust on the Bible*, *Power in the Blood* – exploring his twin fascinations with evangelical Christianity and Americana.

Alison Farrell – Belfast, November 2015

Alison was born and grew up in Dungannon in the 1970s, and studied at Queen's University Belfast in the 1980s. She is from a Protestant background and is married with two daughters, and still lives in Dungannon, where she works in the third sector.

Gareth Mullan – Belfast, November 2015

Gareth was born in south Belfast near Finaghy, and still lives near the house where he grew up, although as he noted in our interview the area has changed a great deal since then. He is from a working-class Protestant background but was educated at Methody, a prestigious grammar school in the centre of the city. He studied science at university and now works in an administrative role for Belfast City Council.

Paul Kerr – Belfast, November 2015

Paul is a former punk from Dungannon, County Tyrone, from a Protestant background and is in his mid-50s. He was in a number of bands, including the Nimmules. He now lives and works in the Netherlands as a personal trainer.

John Callaghan – Belfast, December 2015

John was born in south Belfast but moved with his family as a very young child to Lenahoon in Andersonstown. He was around 12 when the punk scene started in Britain, and got involved in the punk scene while he was still too young to get into gigs or pubs. He is from a Catholic background and now works in an IT-based role for Belfast City Council.

Sheena Bleakney – Belfast, January 2015 (not recorded on her request)

Sheena is from a working-class community in East Belfast and from a Protestant background. She was slightly too young to be involved in the first wave of the punk scene but was mostly involved in the slightly later anarcho-punk scene, particularly in Giro's and in Just Books. She continues to be involved in activism and direct action, particularly around environmental issues and vegetarianism.

Hector Heathwood – Dublin, February 2016

Hector is a freelance photographer, and previously taught photography in an art school as well as having numerous odd jobs in his twenties. He is from a Protestant background and grew up in a working-class community in East Belfast. Along with Terri Hooley and some others he was involved in the committee that set up punk gigs at the Harp Bar, and he played for some time in a band called Voltage. He now lives and works in Dublin.

Petesy Burns – Belfast, February 2016

Petesy is best-known in the punk scene for being a founding member of the anarcho-punk band Stalag 17 and for being involved in the formation of Giro's and the Warzone Collective. He is from a Catholic, working-class background and grew up in the New Lodge area of Belfast, leaving school at 16 to work as a bouncer and in other odd jobs. He continues to play with bands, most recently in the Northern Irish punk supergroup ARSE, and is in his 50s.

Damien McCorry – Belfast, February 2016

Damien is from a Catholic background and grew up in the working-class community of Andersonstown. He was involved with a number of bands in the punk scene in the 1970s and 1980s and is now in his late 50s. He is self-employed and runs a small business in Belfast, and still lives near where he grew up.

Brian Young – Belfast, March 2016

Brian is from a working-class Protestant background in East Belfast. He was a founding member of the Belfast punk band Rudi and has fronted many other bands including the Tigersharks, the Roughnecks and Sabrejet. He now works in an administrative role for Belfast City Council.

Tabitha Lewis – Brighton, September 2017

Tabitha was born in London but moved to Belfast when she was a baby, with an English mother and a Northern Irish father who was largely absent from her childhood. She grew

up in East Belfast in a middle-class Catholic household and studied at Methody, where she met a number of people who would later become involved in the punk scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s. She now lives in London and has worked in healthcare and education as well as working as a visual artist.

Claire Shannon – Brighton, October 2017

Claire was born in Rathcoole but moved from there when she was relatively young and grew up on Ravenhill Avenue. Although she went to a Protestant school, she noted that her friendship groups were always mixed and that her parents were former members of the Communist Party with broadly republican politics. She was mostly involved in the punk scene in the early 1980s and now lives in East Sussex.