Outlines of Ulster

The Spatial Politics of Contemporary Northern Irish Fiction and Film

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To my mother, Ute,
who loves a good story.

And in memory of my father, Albert,
who knew how to tell them.

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction: "A Map of Words"

Belfast novelist Glenn Patterson's second book of non-fiction, *Here's Me Here* (2015) is a collection of journalism, comment pieces and blog entries, and it was aptly taken on by a publishing house of the name of New Island. What emerges from Patterson's witty, sometimes whimsical, but always poignant observations is a vision of a new island indeed or, more specifically, a new way of thinking about the island of Ireland in general as well as the six counties that compound Northern Ireland in particular. An author who has written and unwritten Northern Ireland, and especially Belfast, throughout his fiction, Patterson offers further, non-fictional rewritings of the North in response to the ever-changing landscape of the peace process. *Here's Me Here* contains a two-page piece called "Peace Procession," which was first published in *The Irish Times* on 8 November 2011. Expressing an impatience with the institutionalised administration of the Northern Irish Peace Process, Patterson makes a startling proposition: "It is time to declare an end to the Peace Process" (94). He stresses that he does not have any sympathy with those who refuse to subscribe to peaceful means and political negotiation. Rather, his criticism dwells on the semantics of the term "peace process," which is programmatic for the current and continuous political impasse – and he suggests that "the term itself has got to go" ("Peace Procession" 94).

This aversion stems, for one, from the spatio-temporal openness of the metaphor, the term 'peace process' implies that "we are not there yet," while at the same time "leav[ing] the decision of where *there* is to the professional Processors" ("Peace Procession" 95).[1] 'Peace process' hints thus, paradoxically, at the power of a political elite to determine when the social endeavour of peace-building has been completed successfully while, in the meantime, leaving the very population carrying out the 'work of peace' in limbo, unsure of their own status as a society. The peace process entails – and partly consists in – the building of an official and digestible narrative; one that makes sense of the form which the current political arrangement of power-sharing has taken – and one that, as the process itself, remains yet without conclusion. In a counterpoise to the ongoing administration of the peace process

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[1] In a similar vein, Liam Kelly and Audra Mitchell pinpoint the catch-22 situation in which professional peacebuilding depends at least partly upon the general agreement that peace remains elusive ("Peaceful Spaces?" 321). They posit that "the meaning of the word 'transformation' in the context of peacebuilding is not the simple conversion of an object from one state to another […]. The very processes used to transform 'conflictual' actors or spaces are integral to the control and stability of these spaces; by keeping them in a constant state of flux, the strategies of peacebuilding absorb and constrain eruptions of violence" ("Peaceful Spaces?" 312).

at the political level, Patterson proposes a bounded spatio-temporal event instead, which is to be carried out at the grass-roots of society; "a Peace Procession, no less" ("Peace Procession" 95). This Peace Procession would be a democratic event open to each and every member of society as it marched through every single street of Northern Ireland. The purpose of the procession would be to facilitate the personal recounting of any site-specific memory that any individual marcher wished to share in any given location along the route: They could, publicly, "bear witness to what […] they saw, what they suffered, what they knew, what they did" (95). The written word is curiously absent from this vision; there is to be no record, no transcript, no archived account of the event and the stories told thereat. Evading the great amount of archival work dedicated to the civil war that has been carried out in recent decades, the "Peace Procession" would instead be an ephemeral performance that follows a spatial, not a temporal order. In marching, it marks the communal reclaiming of the territory of Northern Ireland as much as the conviction that Northern Ireland is a space capable of holding *together* a multiplicity of personal truths. Establishing a continuity with the (US-inspired) civil rights marches of the late 1960s, it would affirm the end of the conflict as well as put an end to the liminal character of Northern Irish politics (96).

The political impossibility of establishing a single, coordinated institutionalised approach to the contentious past was highlighted in the wake of the Flags Protest in December 2012. The protest escalated when, in an attempt to render Belfast City Hall more inclusive, i.e. less representative of one portion of the electorate only, Belfast City Council decided to restrict the flying of the Union Flag above the iconic city hall to designated days. Enraged and fearful, members of the unionist/loyalist community took to the streets and grounds surrounding the city hall and challenged the established notion of Belfast city centre as what Liam Kelly and Audra Mitchell call, albeit in a different context, "the model of 'peaceful space' promoted through international peacebuilding strategies" ("Peaceful Spaces?" 313).[2] During the protest, the city centre was again thoroughly politicised and provided the main stage for an emblematic struggle for political and cultural recognition. What was at stake during the Flags Protest was, following Anssi Paasi, the public display of

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[2] Mitchell and Kelly detail another, earlier incident involving the national flag, this time that of the Republic of Ireland, and the city centre of Belfast. On St Patrick's Day in 2009, "tricolor flags (the flag of the Republic of Ireland) carried by festival goers were confiscated by employees of the city council, only to be replaced by green shamrock flags produced by the municipality itself" ("Peaceful Spaces?" 313). For Mitchell and Kelly, this intervention exemplifies "the spatial prohibitions" and "securitization" dedicated to Belfast city centre precisely because "it is intended to act as a neutral, 'cosmopolitan' space" (313).

the national flag as a cultural practice that discursively reproduces both the identity of a place as well as the ideology behind the national border (22). National borders, as Paasi summarises, make their presence felt inwards as much as outwards, "marking the spread of societal and political control into society," and as such are touchstones of "the discursive landscape of social power" (22). The summer of the Flags Protest, the US envoys Richard Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan were invited to Northern Ireland to mediate an agreement on the administration of parades, the use of flags and the issues of dealing with the past and remembering, all of which are effective elements in the processes of "emotional bordering" (Passi 22). In December 2013, Haass and O'Sullivan issued their insightful but, ultimately, unsuccessful "Proposed Agreement," which sheds an interesting (retrospective) light on Patterson's "Peace Procession." It seems that the concern with the past and with parades (of some sort), and indeed the intersection of both as well as their potential impact on the constitutional question and peace-building in Northern Ireland, is common to both these very different texts.

Due to the historically contentions nature of parading in Northern Ireland, where marches have often been read as expressions of political allegiance, Haass and O'Sullivan demand "that the tradition of parading, protesting, and assembling be conducted in a way that contributes to the goal of building a shared and open society" ("Proposed Agreement" 4). Similarly, Patterson's "Peace Procession" proposes a public performance of transgression that challenges communally inherited geographical patterns of political allegiance. This would be an instant, communal acting out of the limited and limiting past in the present moment, which gains importance and transformative force precisely because of its temporal and material transcendence. The orality of the procession would, in a New Historicist fashion, testify to the irretrievability of the past, to the fact that the "pastness of the past means […] that it exists only as an absence, an empty space that is written upon ultimately by language" (Lynn 128; cf. H. White 89). In the Peace Procession, none of this language that lays claim to the past would be translated into the written word; what would emerge from it would be a rather different type of historical document: A document that defies the selective workings of power in the making of maps and the creation of archives, and that enacts at the same time the segregated geographies of Northern Ireland and the incoherence of human experience. At this junction of place and personal past, there would be at the same time "[r]espect for the diversity of Northern Ireland and for all space as shared space" (Haass and O'Sullivan, "Proposed Agreement" 14). The product would be an interactive story, dependent on the performative intersection of social, spatial and verbal coordinates. "That

would be our legacy," Patterson writes, "[a] map of words" ("Peace Procession" 96). This map of words would display all the virtues of a "civic vision," grounded in and achievable only through "a sense of common purpose" (Haass and O'Sullivan, "Proposed Agreement" 19).

While the Peace Procession might not directly lead to peace itself, it would, so the hopes of its inventor, lead at least to real "Politics" unfettered by a constant allusion to the unspeakable past (96). The Peace Procession can thus be seen to share some of the concerns that also occupy the republican socialist Eamonn McCann, another prominent commentator on Northern Irish politics, who has participated in numerous initiatives to transform Northern Ireland into a successfully shared space. A member of the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association (NICRA) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, McCann marched the streets in civil rights processions on a number of occasions, not least on the ill-fated Sunday in Derry that entered history as well as the public imagination as Bloody Sunday. In his introduction to the 1993 edition of *War and an Irish Town* (first published in 1974), McCann comments on the popular but limited understanding of peace as simply a means to an end, even if the end is "stopping the violence": On this reading, he argues,

> 'Peace' comes to be seen as the solution rather than as a by-product of the solution. The unspoken implication is that other aspects of the situation should, as far as possible, be left undisturbed, the integrity of 'the two traditions' held sacrosanct. Thus, none of the peace projects whose ruins litter the last twenty years, and none of the collapsed constitutional schemes, has sought to end the division. They have all been designed not to bring the people together but to keep them apart. (E. McCann, *War and an Irish Town* 59)

Citing the litany of measures drawn up to address and alleviate the sectarian divide between 1968 and 1992, McCann judges that they "all accepted that there was nothing to be done about the division except to manage it" (59). Even if it may be an unpopular stance to take, some commentators have equally criticised the much-lauded 1998 Good Friday Peace Agreement as cementing the social divide it sets out to bridge.[3]

Interestingly, Patterson's "Peace Procession" mirrors, in somewhat different proportions and with somewhat different intentions, the local performances of resistance and subversion that Liam Kelly and Audra Mitchell have witnessed in response to peacebuilding initiatives in North Belfast. They begin their essay entitled "Peaceful Spaces?" with the following observation:

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[3] James Hughes summarises some of the critics' voices (1-2).

Peace takes space. The strategies of international peacebuilding depend on the creation of secure, manageable spaces that embody the norms of intervening actors, and which act as epicenters from which these strategies can be consolidated and extended. Specifically, peacebuilding involves a transformation of the political geography of areas designated as 'conflicted' into what are seen as 'peaceful spaces.' (307)

Analysing the geographical residue in North Belfast created by the enforced production of "peaceful spaces" in Belfast City Centre, Kelly and Mitchell conclude that such "'conflicted' spaces" in the urban periphery "exemplify active conflict at the 'interface' between local and international imperatives of peacebuilding" ("Peaceful Spaces?" 320-21). These conflicted spaces offer a stage for residents to perform little acts of "resistance" against such peacebuilding measures that ignore and/or threaten their spatial perceptions and practices (321):

These simple assertions of presence, or the capacity to be present, contest the closure and instrumentalization of these spaces for the purpose of peacebuilding. In so doing, they protect and preserve their own threatened, local worlds against the rapid and often disruptive transformations brought by peacebuilding strategies. ("Peaceful Spaces?" 321)

Kelly and Mitchell interpret these acts of resistance in terms of what de Certeau has called "tactics," i.e. simple "everyday activities such as walking, speaking, interacting, consuming, or moving through space [… employed] to challenge, subvert, or resist these logics [of peacebuilding] by adapting them to uses unintended by their strategists" ("Peaceful Spaces?" 308-9). Specific ways of using and taking up the space marked out for future transformation into peaceful space, such as graffiti spraying (317) or outsmarting surveillance cameras (318), can thus be read as expressions of alienation from, or resistance to, institutionalised peacebuilding projects. When conducting their research, Kelly and Mitchell themselves chose to draw on exactly such a tactic by *walking* from Belfast City Centre to the North Belfast areas they analyse. They explain:

From de Certeau's perspective, the act of walking allows one subtly to subvert strategies of control: although the very roads and pavements one traverses impose strategies of control and governance, the pattern in which one walks and the 'poetics' of movement contest their structures and the way in which they attempt to restrain movement. ("Peaceful Spaces?" 309)

It is at this point that Kelly and Mitchell's concern with de Certeau's tactics in a post-conflict urban landscape dovetails with the Peace Procession. Like their "ethnographic walk" and the tactics they observe on their way (309), the Peace Procession is a performance of resistance against an institutionalised peace process that has lost sight of the people it seeks to serve. It

is walking at its most subversive, proposing both a new way of taking up space and of transforming not the geography itself, but the paradigms that frame its use and perception. Eschewing written documentation in favour of pure, unrecorded, performative orality, the Peace Procession eschews likewise the "strategies of control and governance" that dominate social and political life in Northern Ireland, and it democratises the processes of remembering and commemoration.

At the time of writing, eight years have passed since "Peace Procession" was first published in 2011 and the landscape of the Northern Ireland peace process has since shifted in unexpected ways. The decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union as a result of the 2016 Brexit referendum has shaken the pillars on which the 1998 Good Friday Agreement was erected, and it spotlighted once more the constitutional and cultural intricacies that crystallise at the Irish border. The ongoing acrimonious debate and concomitant uncertainty about what kind of Brexit exactly will be implemented has thrown Northern Irish society once more into a precarious position, a position that has been exacerbated by the inability (or unwillingness) of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin to form a power-sharing executive for three years following their election in March 2017. In the Brexit referendum, a majority of Northern Irish citizens expressed their wish to remain part of the European Union, displaying in the process an unusual degree of consensus across the political spectrum. 56 percent of the 790,523 votes cast voted to remain, in comparison to 44 percent who voted to leave ("EU Referendum" n. pag.). The Brexit referendum has thrown into stark relief the fault lines of Northern Irish politics. Campaigning for Brexit, many politicians chipped away happily at the pillars that prop up peace in the North and for a long time, a post-Brexit Northern Ireland did not seem to be deserving of more than an afterthought in the public discourse on the British Isles beyond the island of Ireland. Uncertainty continues to exist not only with regard to the future materiality of the Irish border, but also with regard to the pillars of the Good Friday Agreement itself. Fintan O'Toole has pointed out that the peace agreement serves as the bona fide constitution of Northern Ireland, due to which "the province is a kind of mini-EU, a polity that runs, not on unilateral self-assertion, but on painful compromise and awkward consensus" ("After Brexit" n. pag.). In the run-up to the Brexit referendum, this consensus was imperilled by a DUP which, "act[ed]," as O'Toole put it, "like a party that sniffed up too many lines of Brexit marching powder" ("After Brexit" n. pag.). In the assembly elections in March 2017, this policy yielded an astonishing harvest for all political parties involved:

> [F]or the first time since Northern Ireland was created in 1921, its parliament no longer has a unionist majority. The DUP, its older rival within unionism, the Ulster Unionist Party, and smaller pro-union groups now hold only 39 of the 90 assembly seats. Sinn Féin and its main rival within nationalism, the SDLP, also have 39 between them. The DUP's Brexit-fuelled hubris has not quite led to a unionist nemesis, but a wide crack has opened in the foundations of the UK. ("After Brexit" n. pag.)

According to O'Toole, Brexit and the subsequent election results have been ringing the changes on the Northern Irish polity. Recent events are indicative of a growing regional Northern Irish identity, complementing the neat nationalist/unionist divide: While "[t]ribal politics are alive and well […] neither a monolithic 'British' nor 'Irish' identity is adequate to Northern Ireland's more intricate existence" (n. pag.). While it is questionable if ever it was, the real change lies supposedly in the fact that the political circumstances are finally such that people are no longer afraid to express their commitment to a Northern Irish identity.

A more detailed look at the Northern Irish Brexit vote, however, yields a decidedly splintered picture in socio-political social terms. John Garry's analysis suggests that Northern Irish voting behaviour was strongly influenced by traditional segregation patterns, or "ethno-national factors" as he calls them: He found that "Catholics overwhelmingly voted to stay by a proportion of 85 to 15 while Protestants voted to leave by a proportion of 60 to 40"; a concomitant look at nationalist versus unionist voting behaviour yielded similar results (2).[4] An examination of voting behaviour in light of national identity altered the picture very little:

> Sixty-three percent of British identifiers voted to leave compared to only 13 percent of people who describe themselves as 'Irish'. Interestingly those who identify as 'Northern Irish' tend to vote to stay, with almost two thirds doing so. And the same strong patterns emerge when attitudes to the constitutional future of Northern Ireland are compared to referendum voting: 85 percent of those in favour of Irish unity voted to stay while only two fifths of people in favour of Direct Rule did so. (2)

According to these findings, the Brexit vote coincided broadly with inherited patterns of national identification, rendering the referendum on EU membership also an implicit opinion poll on the question of the Union – or starkly put, the Irish border. While the denomination "Northern Ireland" is usually perceived as an endorsement of the state and hence oftentimes implies political unionism, Garry suggests that there is a significant overlap between

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[4] Garry's findings further suggest that voting behaviour also correlated with educational levels as well as political views on topics such as same-sex marriage, immigration and globalisation, with higher educational levels and more liberal views coinciding with a tendency to favour the remain vote (3-5).

identifying as Northern Irish and supporting the European Union. In this context, the Northern Irish identity appears to transcend the binary distinction between unionist and nationalist politics. The Northern Irish remain vote, however, went unheard as an overall UK majority voted to leave, inciting resentments about English ignorance or even indifference towards (Northern) Irish socio-political welfare. Only a day after the referendum, on 24 June 2016, Fintan O'Toole wrote an opinion piece in *The Guardian*, accusing English Brexiters in no uncertain terms of jeopardising, with nonchalance, the peace in Ireland in the same breath as British-Irish relations: "Recklessly, casually, with barely a thought, English nationalists have planted a bomb under the settlement that brought peace to Northern Ireland and close cordiality to relations between Britain and Ireland" ("The English" n. pag.). Remembering Queen Elizabeth's remarkable visit to the Republic of Ireland in 2012, O'Toole argues that it rang in a new era of British-Irish relations, free from the emotional baggage of a violent history. He adds poignantly, "I never imagined then that I would ever feel bitter about England again. But I do feel bitter now, because England has done a very bad day's work for Ireland" (n. pag.). Major instances of this "very bad day's work," as O'Toole reminds his readers, concern the crucial question of citizenship as much as the permeability of the Irish border. One of the major concessions of the Good Friday Agreement consists in the fact that citizens of Northern Ireland are entitled to choose whether they want to hold a British passport, an Irish passport, or indeed both at the same time. It is doubtful whether this will be possible to continue should the Irish border be turned into an EU external border. "The new border," as O'Toole imagines it alarmed, "will be the most westerly land frontier of a vast entity of more than 400 million people, and it will be an immigration (as well as a customs) barrier" ("The English" n. pag.). In consequence, it seems almost inevitable that the border in its new incarnation will be harder, less permeable, more tangible and divisive than it has ever been since the end of the Troubles.

In 2007, in the conclusion to their essay collection on Irish cross-border relationships from the partition of Ireland onwards, John Coakley and Liam O'Dowd were still hopeful that "the traditional political mantras of uniting Ireland or maintaining the union have lost much of their conviction – or alternatively, they may now be capable of more diverse and creative definition" ("The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 292). The Brexit debate since 2016 has been hacking away at much of that diversity and creativity, framing the question of the border in a way that necessarily reinforces "the traditional political mantras." This is the case not least because the UK and Ireland's membership in the European Union had done much to reduce the perceived anomaly of the Irish border, evidenced in heavy fortification

and the occurrence of violence, in the context of the British Isles. Coakley and O'Dowd summarise: "EU membership has helped to normalise the border as an internal one like other increasingly permeable national borders within the EU" ("The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 306; cf. "The 'New' Irish Border" 17). Further, the now endangered Good Friday Agreement crucially introduced a three-thronged approach to Northern Irish politics, establishing Strand One, Strand Two and Strand Three institutions, which secure political exchange and cooperation between Ireland north and south as well as between the UK and the Republic of Ireland.[5] Strand One deals with those institutions pertaining to the power-sharing executive within Northern Ireland, while Strand Two and Three regulate the North's relations with its neighbour to the south and, in turn, the South's relations with the United Kingdom: Strand Two provides for the North-South Ministerial Council, which is "to develop consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland – including through implementation on an all-island and cross-border basis – on matters of mutual interest" (Good Friday Agreement n. pag.), while Strand Three provides for both the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. While the former unites "representatives of the British and Irish Governments, devolved institutions in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales […] together with representatives of the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands," the latter "bring[s] together the British and Irish Governments to promote bilateral co-operation at all levels on all matters of mutual interest" (Good Friday Agreement n. pag.). Coakley and O'Dowd highlight the paramount importance these institutions have had for inter-state cooperation and the attendant de-escalation of the Irish border question:

> The enshrining of North-South relationships within the Good Friday agreement has further legitimised cross-border cooperation, integrating it with new east-west arrangements between the two islands and cross-communal institutions within Northern Ireland. It would be difficult to overstate the long-term effects of the sea change in political attitudes that has led the vast majority of Irish nationalists to offer constitutional and institutional recognition of the border as democratic under the Good Friday agreement. This removes one of the main objections of unionists to closer North-South links, undermining their image of an aggressive southern constitutional claim on Northern Ireland and the perception that North-South links mark a slippery slope to realising that claim. ("The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 306)

Irish nationalists thus yielded to an acceptance of the legitimacy of the border and hence, of the Northern Irish state and its devolved government. Northern Irish unionists in turn,

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[5] See Stefan Wolff 183-86 for a concise summary of the institutions created under Strands One to Three of the Good Friday Agreement.

accepted that there must be an "Irish dimension" to Northern Irish political life in subscribing to the cross-border bodies as outlined in Strand Two ("The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 294). Further to their enhanced cooperation in matters pertaining to the North of Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland underwent a slow reappraisal of one another as a result of their joint EU membership (Coakley and O'Dowd, "The 'New' Irish Border" 17). It is against this backdrop of east-west and north-south relations that Jeffrey Donaldson, a member of parliament for the DUP, expressed his hope that the Republic of Ireland might join the Commonwealth of Nations once more, an institution it left seventy years ago, completing in the process its slow divorce from the UK and its Crown (Coakley and O'Dowd, "The 'New' Irish Border" 9). Speaking at a Fine Gael party conference in the South of Ireland in March 2019, Donaldson emphasised the importance of "strengthening the level of east-west cooperation […] within the political institutions that we created including the east-west institutions" once the United Kingdom (and the Northern Ireland along with it) left the common framework provided by the EU ("Republic of Ireland" 2:43-2:58). He went on to say:

> I do hope we can come to a day when the Republic of Ireland will join with many other nations in the Commonwealth of Nations. And recognising, […] whatever the differences that there have been in the past, that we've overcome a lot of adversity in the past in dealing with those issues. […T]he Commonwealth is a place where Ireland's voice should be heard. And I would like to see that happen ("Republic of Ireland" 3:09-3:37)[6]

The sincere delivery of Donaldson's wish allows for no doubt that it was made in the interest of cordial cooperation and continuing bridge (and peace) building. While the present situation of the British Isles urgently calls for new frameworks of east-west cooperation, it seems misled to place the onus for it on the Republic of Ireland. The Commonwealth might provide an acceptable forum for all-island exchange for Irish unionism. For Irish nationalism, however, rejoining the Commonwealth would require a major readjustment of the way they look at themselves, their history and the island they inhabit. With its roots in the British Empire, the Commonwealth provides a geographical frame that the Republic cannot step back into without having come to terms with, and maybe even recasting in a different light, its history of colonisation.

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[6] These quotes, as well as the time codes given in parentheses, are based on my transcription of the video recording of Jeffrey Donaldson that the *Belfast Telegraph* embedded in their article.

What the above considerations highlight is the continuous – and contentious – importance of the uses and interpretations of space and place for any attempt at consolidating peace and reconciliation within and beyond Northern Ireland's borders. In his comparative study *Disputed Territories*, Stefan Wolff has observed that "the conflict in Northern Ireland is not ethno-religious, but […] ethno-territorial in its nature," with the two largest political communities striving towards mutually exclusive constitutional solutions: union versus reunification (153; 152). As Coakley and O'Dowd have shown, the Irish border and the dynamics that it both addresses and (re-)produces lie at the heart of this constitutional quandary. They argue that the border "divid[ed] the island along a rather arbitrary geographical frontier that failed to match the deep political, economic and social dichotomies to which it was designed to respond" ("The 'New' Irish Border" 22). In other words, the pre-existing divisions on the island of Ireland were not exactly mapped onto the outlines of the newly established southern and northern jurisdictions when they became political realities in 1921. While the Protestant minority in the nationalist South was relatively small, the Catholic minority in the unionist North was sizeable but without hope of effective political representation (Wolff 153-54; Dillon xxxvii). As a result, "partition produced in Northern Ireland an insecure majority, which saw reinforcement of the border as its own best protection, and an embittered minority, which saw the dismantlement of the border as the only solution" (Coakley and O'Dowd, "The 'New' Irish Border" 22).

In his study *The Narrow Ground. The Roots of Conflict in Ulster*, first published in 1977, the historian A.T.Q. Stewart addressed the precarious demographic situation that both predated the border and was exacerbated by it with candour:

> The success of the Protestant minority has produced a bizarre consequence for it has created within its own state a Catholic minority. The Ulster problem […] is in essence the problem of a double minority. Since 1969 a great deal has been said about 'the minority', but it is always the Catholic minority in the north which is meant. It hardly seems to occur to most observers that half the insecurity of the majority position stems from the basic anxieties which haunt a potential minority. (162)

As others before and since, Stewart points out that for the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland from the seventeenth century onwards it was no contradiction in terms to self-identify as Protestant and Irish nationalist (162). This changed in the mid-nineteenth century when Irish nationalism became increasingly dominated and defined by Catholics (162-63). This development came to a head in 1886, as Stewart summarises: "The Ulster question in its

modern form appears to begin in that year when Gladstone introduced his first Home Rule Bill for Ireland in the House of Commons" (163). Unlike elsewhere on the island, opposition to Home Rule in the North of Ireland was independent of class membership as Protestants of all denominations rose to defend the union with Great Britain (163). If 1886 is indeed to be taken as the point at which the foundation was laid for the two separate jurisdictions that would in time ensue as well as for the two civil wars that came to be fought on the island of Ireland in the twentieth century, then the ethno-territorial dimension of the Ulster question is thrown into relief. Stewart poignantly notes that "[t]he unavoidable fact of coexistence dictates the most enduring aspect of the conflict, which is that it must always be conducted in terms of topography" (180; cf. Wolff 154-55).[7] Dismissing the religious argument (as much as the stigma of anachronism that is attached to it), Stewart has, however, acknowledged that "religion is the shibboleth of the contending parties" and generally aligns with their respective "political outlook" (180). These two, religious affiliation and political outlook, as Stewart underlines, coincide with distinct, segregated patterns of spatial movement and territorial ownership. Describing the crucial significance of "the 'territorial imperative'" in a context such as this, he posits, "[t]he war in Ulster is being fought out on a *narrower ground* than even the most impatient observer might imagine, a ground every inch of which has its own associations and special meaning" (181, emphasis mine).[8]

Pointing at the inherent territoriality of electoral politics and administrative bodies, Coakley and O'Dowd have similarly stressed the endurance of the territorial imperative and the importance of borders in post-conflict Northern Irish politics. They have observed that

> boundaries are the *sine qua non* for representative democracy, political control and public accountability and the functioning of modern states. In Ireland, and elsewhere, their paradox lies in their less than democratic and often violent and coercive origins. When, as in Northern Ireland, the central material and symbolic issue in politics is the very territory of the state, politics takes a zero-sum form, expressed in competition

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[7] Barry White, writing on the challenges of the Peace Process in 2000, seems to concur: "The underlying problem will remain the same, finding a political dispensation that can satisfy two separate ethnic communities sharing so little common ground" (n. pag.). Stefan Wolff begins his 2003 study of *Disputed Territories* explaining his terms, shedding light on the question of "the double minority": "By external minority, I mean an ethnic group that, while residing in one state (the host state) is related through shared cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics, which it wishes to preserve, and through kinship to the titular nation of another, often neighbouring state (the kin-state)" (3). While Northern nationalists are an external minority vis-à-vis their kin-state in the South, Irish unification would turn Northern unionists into an external minority vis-à-vis their British kin-state.

[8] Stewart's singularly adequate phrase of "the narrow ground" will be used many times throughout this study. Whenever it is used, it is with reference to Stewart's understanding of it as denoting the segregated use of space as much as the emotional import of communally claimed space as being inscribed with "its own associations and special meaning" (181).

between protagonists to claim and control territory. (Coakley and O'Dowd, "The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 308; also Anderson and O'Dowd 596, 598)

In this scenario, the state territory cannot be imagined as a shareable space; territorial power is either won or lost, with either outcome mobilising divisive references to the "violent and coercive origins." If, as Stewart has suggested in the same vein, the conflict in the North of Ireland can be understood as the expression of a "constitutional problem […] about political power and who should wield it" (180), i.e. who should legitimately exercise power over the territory of the state, then peace building in the North must necessarily have a spatial dimension. The social redistribution of political power has effected changes in the spatial patterning of society, but further change has yet to occur if Northern Ireland is to emerge from its struggle with the past as a geographically and socially integrated society. In her article "Places and Their Pasts," Doreen Massey has persuasively shown that places, as socially perceived and constructed, are as much temporal as geographical entities (see Assmann 15). In her eyes, present discord concerning the identity of a place is always based on divergent, vested readings of the history of this place; it aims, as such, at inserting the place in "specific envelopes of space-*time*" ("Places" 188, emphasis in original). This arbitrary amalgamation of a selective historical narrative with a clearly defined place is shown to serve an ideological purpose: "And these conflicting interpretations of the past are put to use in a battle over what is to come. What are at issue are competing histories of the present, wielded as arguments over what should be the future" (185; also Jess and Massey 134).[9] Especially in the context of the peace process, where the future of the political institutions is dependent on and shaped through compromise, there seems to be much leeway for such forceful participation in the political discourse around the use of space.

It is for this reason that William Cunningham, in his 2001 paper on peace building in the North, has spoken of the need "to develop creative ways to de-link territoriality from national identity; [and to] create safe and shared spaces" (33). US envoy Richard Haass and Megan O'Sullivan's "Proposed Agreement" must be read in the same light when it starts out with the declaration that its measures aim at "build[ing] a more united community where […] public space is shared, open, and accessible to all" (2), and contains two further references to 'shared space' (4, 14). The reciprocal relationship between social cohesion and

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[9] Cf. Klaus Eder who, in a similar vein, understands borders and boundaries as discursively legitimated social constructs. He proposes that "symbolic struggles over borders will be analysed as struggles over narrative projects that provide a plausible way of telling the past on which to build the present" (256). Borders as well as border struggles must thus possess "narrative plausibility" (257).

shareable space then, appears evident. Less evident, however, is the answer to the question of how these shared spaces are to be achieved. External measures might positively influence the accessibility of public space and the use thereof, but they must be accompanied by a concomitant internal change concerning the personal and communal perceptions and interpretations of space. In their chapter on "The Contestation of Place," Pat Jess and Doreen Massey summarise the crucial part that contrasting conceptualisations of a place, of its history and identity, have to play in geographical struggles: "The argument about the future of the place […] rests very much on whose interpretation of the place wins out. [… E]ach side is laying a claim to how the place should be thought of, how it should be represented – in other words, how its fits into our *geographical imagination*" (134, emphasis in original).[10] In this sense, successful spatial change in Northern Ireland, away from 'the narrow ground' and towards shareable space, requires a shift in the 'geographical imagination.'

Exploring the common ground between the post-conflict cities of Mostar and Derry/Londonderry, Brendan O'Leary conducted a comparative analysis, describing these cities as

> zones of negative peace [… that] remain engaged in vibrant debate, a *meta-conflict*, a conflict over what their most recent armed conflicts were about, over what explains them, and who, if any, should be held jointly and severally liable for the losses of life and limb, and for the consequent continuing anguish. ("Traitors Within" 62)

Compared to Bosnia, O'Leary argues, Northern Ireland's consociational power-sharing arrangements have been more successful and efficient ("Traitors Within" 63).[11] He summarises the scientifically proven benefits of power-sharing arrangements as 1) "enhanc[ing] established democracies," 2) "improv[ing] governmental performance," 3) "reducing the likelihood of violence within democracies [… and] of conflict-recurrence after civil wars" and 4) "stabilis[ing] peace agreements" ("Traitors Within" 63). While all this is the case, the Good Friday Agreement, just as the Dayton Accord, was flawed in an important way: "neither agreement extensively considered arrangements to organise 'transitional justice', e.g. through a truth commission mandated to evaluate what had occurred before and during the relevant war" ("Traitors Within" 66). Hence, the meta-conflict that concerns the

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[10] This concept of the 'geographical imagination' will be one of the guiding concepts in this study. Whenever I use the term in what is to follow, I will do so in the sense set out here by Jess and Massey: as the "interpretation" that determines "how the place should be thought of [… and] represented" (134).

[11] In *Disputed Territories. The Transnational Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict Settlement* (2003), Stefan Wolff offers an explanatory summary of the concept of consociation, providing international examples (30-33).

truth about the past and the roots of the present has to be carried out in the public domain. It is part of everyday life in Northern Ireland and makes its presence felt on television, on the radio, in newspapers, in political debates and in much of the work carried out by civil society agents. It is eye-opening to observe the far-sighted contributions that fiction and film have made to the debate about the conditions of living created by pre-, mid- and post-conflict politics. Expressing their own interpretations of events past, present and future – interpretations which are ideologically inclined but which are beneficially free from the commands of party politics – they too are participants in the meta-conflict that is contemporary political discourse (cf. Alexander 15). Imagining often alternative forms of social and spatial coexistence, they are capable of providing different frames of interpretation for the past and the places in which it occurred. As Joachim Frenk has shown in the introduction to his essay collection on *Spatial Change*,

> [I]t is clear that […] space and time are indissolubly joined in literary texts, and changes in one of these categories often cause changes in the other. Literary texts – which are assigned to their discursive sites partly by means of their references to fictional instead of real spaces, to fictional instead of historical times – have always been involved in cultural debates about commingled spatial and temporal changes: they have revised supposedly known spaces and have created utopias, dystopias, and heterotopias […] in the contested (and always represented) present […]. (Introduction 16)

This ability of fiction to partake in the cultural creation and revision of spaces and places – to challenge established notions of what a place might *mean* and how it might be *interpreted* – is crucial in any post-conflict debate about what O'Leary calls "zones of negative peace." 'The narrow ground,' as Stewart has argued, is defined not only by a territorialised juncture of religion and politics, but also by a crucial additional ingredient. He has suggested that "the chequerboard on which the game is played has a third dimension. What happens in each square derives a part of its significance, and perhaps all of it, from what happened there at some time in the past. Locality and history are welded together" (182). On this understanding, the territory enclosed on the northern side of the Irish border has not been a mere arena for events to take place; it is rather a spatial document of sorts, saturated with socio-cultural text, that continues to accrue further layers of meaning as time progresses.

If place can be read as a palimpsest of text, then it must be open to textual modes of alteration and change. Derek Hook has suggested that space and place are always also cultural, discursive constructs that do not exist in a separate realm of purely territorial, non-textual matter (178-79). He writes that "[t]he discursive by no means precludes the spatial:

the identities, materiality and practical functionality of places, so long as they are social phenomena that produce and contribute to the construction of social meaning, are amenable to discursive forms of analysis" (179). By the same token, editing the essay collection *Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland 1960-1990*, Eamonn Hughes attempted in 1991 "to interrogate the idea of Northern Ireland as a place apart" ("Northern Ireland – Border Country" 4). As Stewart, Hughes has referenced the anachronistic prejudice that has been levelled against the troubled North – often perceived as "a category of one" – and has argued that it is rather a place in which multiple temporalities coexist and collide ("Northern Ireland – Border Country" 1). "Northern Ireland," he postulates in consequence, "exists as both a ghetto and as a postmodern entity" (3). Apart from the national border, the North is characterised by a multiplicity of other borders – "of language, of gender, of party politics, of social structures" – that account for its internal plurality and render it "a border country" (3). In line with this observation, artistic representations of Northern Ireland have increasingly challenged the perception of the province as a socio-spatial oddity fallen out of time. In his later survey of Northern Irish fiction from 1971 to 2001, Hughes has, for instance, identified "thrillers and crime novels [… as] the dominant forms of fiction about the north," poignantly summarising that "the thriller is for the most part a circular and enclosed form which represents Northern Ireland as a fated place, doomed to inevitable and enduring violence" (E. Hughes, "Fiction" 80; cf. "Northern Ireland – Border Country" 6-7). This stagnant representation of the troubled North, Hughes goes on to show, has been challenged by "[t]he work of younger writers, such as Deirdre Madden, Glenn Patterson and Robert McLiam Wilson, [which] is often concerned to dismiss stereotypes and conventions about Northern Ireland established within thrillers" ("Fiction" 80; cf. "Northern Ireland – Border Country" 7-8). Here too, the importance of geographically meaningful representations is highlighted. Such fossilised stereotypes as are concerned with the North's irredeemable fatedness, which in such representations appears to be a function of its geographical boundedness, can be contested and subverted by alternative modes of representation. Speaking of "the necessity of realising that there are other stories to be told about Northern Ireland," Hughes identifies the emergence of the theme of "leave-taking," and by extension, of "movement and migration," as highly relevant to fictional narratives that suggest new ways of thinking about the North: "in the face of the stasis so often found in Troubles-oriented writing it suggests that some forms of mobility are possible" ("Fiction" 88). In this sense, the theme of movement is crucial in that it coincides with a turn towards "the urban novel," which, in jettisoning rural (Northern) Ireland as its predominant setting,

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"is part of the even broader narrative of the opposition of tradition and modernity which underscores much writing, an opposition made all the more pointed by the increasing influence of globalisation which allows so many writers to use locations other than Northern Ireland" ("Fiction" 88). A broadening of the fictional frame, both in terms of geography and tradition, thus enables stories to emerge that counteract preconceived notions of socio-geographical stasis.

Eamonn Hughes's observation of the subversive importance of movement (as much as its representation) in a context such as this ties in with an observation made by Doreen Massey in her 1993 essay entitled "Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place." Here, Massey describes the ways in which networks of power interrelate with the use of space in an age of globalisation, claiming that "it does seem that mobility and control over mobility both reflect and reinforce power" (62). The fictional representation of fossilised spatial patterns as much as the narrative creation of new ways of taking up space would thus seems to lead to a concomitant questioning of power structures that express themselves in spatial terms. Taking up Hughes's definition of Northern Ireland as "a border country" criss-crossed by a multiplicity of internal boundaries, Richard Kirkland has contemplated the narrative difficulties that emerge from this postmodern situation of persisting incongruity. Writing in 1996, he has suggested that

> the tensions implicit in the essentially spatial distributions of power in the province have problematised any sense of an easy temporal development of linear narratives. […] It is a sense of being on the borders of history as well as on the borders of spatial development which informs this reading of the current 'position' of Northern Ireland. Within the concept of simultaneous time, to be in doubt of the *telos* is to be in doubt of the primal beginning, to suffer a crisis of confidence in history as formative and therefore to find activity self-consciously performed within the vacuum of a lived interregnum. (7, emphasis in original)

On this reading, Northern Ireland's precarious liminal position on the edges of both history and space is a function of its peculiar pattern of spatialised power. This situation of fundamental uncertainty questions and undermines the linearity required by traditional notions of what compounds successful, intelligible storytelling. Examining the formidable questions of power and narrative that Kirkland raises, it is helpful to consider Michel Foucault's complementary approach to the topic. In "Questions on Geography," he argues that

> [m]etaphorising the transformations of discourse in a vocabulary of time necessarily leads to the utilisation of the model of individual consciousness with its intrinsic temporality. Endeavouring on the other hand to decipher discourse through the use

of spatial, strategic metaphors enables one to grasp precisely the points at which discourses are transformed in, through and on the basis of relations of power. (69-70)

Foucault thus ascribes limited heuristic value to temporal descriptions of discourse because they are merely based on and filtered through subjective, human perception. Spatial descriptions in contrast, he considers as more valuable because they can illuminate the workings of power that determine the formation of discourse. This is relevant if read against Kirkland's understanding of the Troubles in terms of an "interregnum" which, he writes referencing Raymond Williams, "gains significance only in relation to what has been and what will yet be and as such it occupies a marginal space" (7).[12] During the interregnum as an interim characterised by the absence of a clearly identifiable centre of authority and control, spatial metaphors and narratives make the more oblique networks of power not only visible, but can effectively attempt to challenge and subvert them. If the peace process too can be regarded as a marginal period that – just as the Troubles – "gains significance only in relation to what has been and what will yet be," spatializing descriptions of its socio-political discourse will reveal its underlying structures of interested power.

The conviction that guides this study, then, is one provided by Michel Foucault in "Space, Power and Knowledge" when he claims that "[s]pace is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power" (170). This study is located at the junction of space, communal life and power and investigates, focusing on diverse textual examples, the ways in which contemporary Northern Irish fiction and film have responded to and commented on the discursive traffic that flows through this junction. Both fiction and film interrogate the complex interactions between individual and communal identities and the identities of places in the North, creating their very own versions of what Massey calls "the power-geometries of time-space" – that is, of the questions of who is in the position to move freely through space and concurrently, of who is the position to control this very movement ("Power-Geometry" 60). At the heart of this study lies a concern with the verbal and visual representations of socio-spatial change in Northern Ireland in the context of thirty years of conflict, the recent redistribution of political power and the ongoing

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[12] Examining the three decades from 1965 onwards, Kirkland adopts the term "interregnum" to denote the cultural, spatial and temporal discontinuities that predicate a persistent break in the historical narratives of Northern Ireland (7). Referencing Williams's use of the term, Kirkland explains "that it signals an absence or a problematic space within linear developments of tradition and continuity" (7). The interregnum is, as such, a state of interpretative limbo. Due to the strong historical connection of the term to Oliver Cromwell's reign, the use of the terms "pause," "breakage," "absence" or "problematic space," all of which are also used by Kirkland, seems preferable.

negotiation of what peace might look like in social, political, cultural and spatial terms. I contend that the interpretations of space and place put forward in fiction and films on Northern Ireland are extremely effective incursions into what human geographers call the 'geographical imagination.'[13] Participating in the negotiation of shared spaces, peaceful spatial practices and of truth and reconciliation, they are capable of challenging the real or imagined parameters of 'the narrow ground' and of opening up new cultural spaces and narratives for Northern Ireland (cf. Frenk, Introduction 16; Kirkland 11-13).

Pursuing a twofold structure, this study analyses the representations of social division and spatial change in Northern Ireland in six fairly recent visual and verbal texts. Published in the relatively short period between 2004 and 2016, these four novels and two films, while they are diverse enough to delineate the complexity of the topic, make for an arguably random selection in terms of genre and subject. What they have in common, however, is a pronounced concern with the social and geographical complexities of 'the narrow ground' on the changeability of which they retrospectively reflect. Entitled "Geographies of Contention," the first chapter pivots around representations of the Irish border as a reference point for individual subject positions and communal identities in two novels and one film, namely Lucy Caldwell's coming-of-age narrative *Where They Were Missed* (2006), Eoin McNamee's thriller *The Ultras* (2004) and Steve McQueen's bio pic *Hunger* (2009). Both Caldwell's novel and McQueen's film, different as they are, share an interest in the Irish border, geographically as well as metaphorically, as an interstitial space that allows for de-centred processes of identity negotiation, cutting the individual painfully free from the strictures of communally acceptable modes of being. Irishness, Northern Irishness and Britishness are contested, negotiated and sometimes collapsed at this frontier which attempts but does not succeed at distinction. In this context, McNamee's novel is an exception, for it focusses on Ulster as a panoptic space, which is characterised by the power-geographies of division and the related issues of policing and surveillance. *The Ultras* shows how the border is reinforced by British state agents who manipulate the general public's 'geographical

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[13] Neal Alexander, in his study of Ciaran Carson's oeuvre, entitled *Ciaran Carson. Space, Place, Writing* (2010), concurs. In his introduction, he writes: "Literary representations of space have long played an important role in shaping the geographical imaginations that predominate in Irish culture" (11). His book shares a set of analytical and theoretical concerns and approaches with the present study as his analysis of space and place in Carson's texts establishes "lateral and radial links to [Carson's] related concerns with language and narrative, memory and history, violence and power" (3). As this study as whole, so is Alexander, in the first chapter of his study, concerned with tracing "the various ways in which [Carson] encourages his readers to plot 'imaginative geographies', intuiting the often hidden networks of relations linking here to elsewhere, local places and global spaces" (17).

imaginations' to serve their own spurious ends. The second chapter, entitled "Geographies of Transition," takes as its subject the representations of emergent geographies of political transition and the concurrent cultural production of more permeable spaces and identities. It interrogates, thus, the ways in which these transitional spatial representations coincide with and give rise to different notions of reconciliation. As the first chapter, it too analyses two novels and one film, focussing on Glenn Patterson's novel *Gull* (2016), David Park's political thriller *The Truth Commissioner* (2008) and Oliver Hirschbiegel's docudrama *Five Minutes of Heaven* (2009). I will argue that each of these three texts develops and promotes its own transitional 'geographical imagination' that questions rigid, bounded and dichotomous understandings of place and that allows for plurality and difference. As a whole, this chapter considers the changing semiotics of space due to the redistribution of power as part of the peace process, and the causal relations between this structural reformation and individual crises of identity, which may or may not lead to new subject positions in- or outside of the cultural topography of Northern Ireland.

The use of the term 'Ulster' in the title of this study might not be to everyone's liking. While for some it may imply political prejudice or ignorance, I would like to stress that the choice of the term intends to signal the opposite. It has become something of a commonplace to mention the many terms that may be used to refer to the state of Northern Ireland, such as "the province" or "the wee six". Even the official denomination "Northern Ireland" is one only reluctantly used by some nationalists. It implies the recognition of the Northern Irish state as a legitimate administrational unit and, by extension, consent to the political dispensation that places six counties on the island of Ireland within the United Kingdom. The use of the term can thus express allegiance to a system of categorisations that affirms the state as the supreme "holder of the monopoly of *official naming*, correct classification, the correct order," as Pierre Bourdieu has argued (734).

This unresolved question of geographical naming and political allegiance strikes immediately at the question at the heart of this study: It is symptomatic of the continuous status of Northern Ireland as "a border country" (E. Hughes, "Northern Ireland – Border Country" 3; Kirkland 7), which encloses within its boundaries (at least) two pronounced and strongly narrativised national identities that understand their current positions with recourse to different focal points in Irish history. As mentioned above, Doreen Massey has argued that places are defined by a selection of socio-historical reference points, so that the assertion of the identity of a place "depends not just on a particular characterisation of a place as it is now but on a demarcation, and a reading of, the historically changing form of that […] nexus

of social relations" ("Places" 188): Such negotiations are about the insertion of a place into a selectively defined "envelope of space-time" (188; cf. Jess and Massey 134). The title of this study is an attempt to bypass the quarrelsome question of the 'correct' naming of Northern Ireland by means of interpretational doubling: Understood on an all-Ireland scale, as one the four traditional Irish provinces, Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connaught, the term "Ulster" denotes the nine northern counties of Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan, and Fermanagh, Armagh, Tyrone, Londonderry, Antrim and Down. When partition placed the former three counties on the outside of the new state, the current six-county shape of Northern Ireland was created. It is this six-county solution that is now often referred to as Ulster, and it is in this context that the term may imply unionist sympathies. In this study, "Ulster" will be used precisely because it is capable of bringing to bear simultaneously "competing claims not just about its present but about its history," and thus alludes to two very different "envelopes of space-time" (D. Massey, "Places" 188).[14] If read in this light, the term Ulster itself can be understood as a product of the border, as one that reflects the vacillating field of forces in the borderland which gives rise to the double (or multiple) vision characteristic of border regions.

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[14] Caroline Magennis, in her study *Sons of Ulster*, echoes this concern. She writes, "[t]here is obvious political contention in the mere naming of the geographical area in which these writers were born. While I will mostly use the term 'Northern Ireland', occasionally the terms 'Ulster' and 'the North of Ireland' will be employed to represent the diversity of political opinion this book represents" (1-2, ft. 2). When curating his 2014 exhibition "Mapping Alternative Ulster," Garrett Carr opted for the same choice: "I suppose one of the first things every curator does is define the parameters of their show. I decided to include maps of areas a little beyond Northern Ireland's six counties, going into the nine counties of Ulster" ("Rethinking the Land" 174-75).

2. Geographies of Contention

Both recent and timely, Garrett Carr's *The Rule of the Land* (2017) chronicles his journey along the Irish border, on land and water, hiking and paddling. Following the exact line of the border as charted in his Ordnance Survey map, Carr carried out his journey in 2016, the very year in which the Brexit vote authorised a radical change of the Irish border's materiality. The political backdrop to his journey, however, concerns Carr less than the geography of what he finds, and the ways in which this geography has been claimed, marked and narrativised over the centuries (see Craig n. pag.). Naturally, many of the incidents he recalls along this ever contested border belong to the Troubles, but his book looks beyond the temporal confines of the Troubles and in the process creates a fascinating picture of the border and its inhabitants in the present. Among the many peculiarities of life on the border unearthed by Carr are the "concession roads" around the southern border town of Clones in county Monaghan, which "is at the beginning of the border's twistiest stretch, where it folds back on itself multiple times, meaning even a short journey can cross into Northern Ireland, out again, in again and out again" (Carr, *The Rule* 127). In the middle of the last century, concession roads were introduced in order to make the daily navigation of this part of the island easier for the region's inhabitants. As Carr explains, "[c]oncession roads crossed the border but could only be used if your ultimate destination was back in your own country [… D]rivers were obliged to keep their wheels turning until back in their own jurisdiction" (*The Rule* 127). Concession roads then became one of the Troubles' casualties as the British army moved in to make the border increasingly impermeable, draining the region of social and economic life in the process. Local resistance to the obstruction of cross-border traffic was fierce and spawned the "Borderbuster," a motorised phenomenon that appears to have come straight out of the popular motoring show *Top Gear*: "Borderbusters were the diggers used to reopen border routes, filling in cratered roads and shoving aside concrete bollards" (*The Rule* 129). On his walk, Carr comes across a colourful, idiosyncratic monument to the Borderbuster which, erected near Clones, commemorates the locals' assertive claim to their lived environment, north and south.

While phenomena such as the Borderbuster seem endearing, even amusing, in retrospect, the Irish border still remains contested territory.[15] The ongoing Brexit

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[15] The copy of Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson's book *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (1999) that I have taken out from the McClay Library at Queen's University Belfast features a map of the Irish border on page 74. The map shows the locations of a number of Irish

negotiations have once again put the question of the Irish border centre-stage in the world of British, European and even transatlantic[16] politics. In the *Irish Times*, Fintan O'Toole reminded his readers in August 2017 of the enduring relevance of "Winston Churchill's great rhetorical evocation of 'the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone' emerging from the deluge of the Great War with 'the integrity of their quarrel' unaffected by the cataclysms of Europe" ("Parishes" n. pag.). The context in which Churchill coined this undying phrase was, as O'Toole points out, a 1922 "debate about the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the establishment of the Irish Free State" (n. pag.). With British leaders being occupied with more pressing matters, discussions about Home Rule had been set aside upon the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. In the interim, Irish nationalist frustration and impatience led to the ill-fated Easter Rising of 1916, which, despite its failure, came to be the touchstone of the later Republic's national consciousness. As Diarmaid Ferriter wrote in the run-up to the centenary in an article entitled "Why the Rising Matters" in September 2015, "[t]he 1916 Rising came to be seen as the first stage in a war of independence that resulted in the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922 and, ultimately, the formal declaration of an Irish Republic in 1949" (n. pag.).

The years between 1916 and 1922 would be eventful and bloody. In the general election of 1918, Sinn Féin won the majority of Irish votes and, instead of taking their seats in Westminster, established the Dáil Éireann in Dublin. The Anglo-Irish War which ensued as a result eventually found its resolution in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Through the Treaty, the Irish Free State was created and received dominion status within the United Kingdom, while the six counties of Northern Ireland were allowed to opt out of the arrangement. This was the birth of the Irish border.[17] This border, which baffled Churchill

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border towns, north and south, among them the city of Derry/Londonderry in the north-east of Northern Ireland. The map originally gave the official name of the city, "Londonderry." Altered by the energetic pen of an irascible borrower, it now says "——derry City." This illustrates the extension of border discourses across Northern Ireland and the ways in which personal and official 'geographical imaginations' contend with each other in the public sphere (see O'Leary, "Traitors within" 61). The longhand emendation is a challenge to "the coherence of [the] place", and to the way this place has been "defin[ed] and nam[ed]" (D. Massey, "Places" 188). Brendan O'Leary offers a scholarly solution to the "naming controversy" by summarising that "the county is Londonderry, […] the urban area […] is Derry or Derry City; and the interior of the old walled city, and the walls, is Londonderry" ("Traitors within" 61).

[16] Echoing her husband's crucial involvement in the Peace Process, Hillary Clinton argued the Good Friday Agreement's case in an article entitled "Don't Let Brexit Undermine Ireland's Peace" in the *Guardian* on 9 April 2018.

[17] Refer to Patrick Buckland's chapter on "Partition" (92-126) in *Irish Unionism: Two. Ulster Unionism and the Origins of Northern Ireland 1186-1922* for a detailed account of the political negotiations that led to the creation of two separate jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

so much, has been, in the wake of the Brexit vote, baffling British, Irish and European politicians alike as it persistently refuses to shed any of its historical complexity. Castigating the diffuse approach to the Irish border as taken in the British government's position paper, O'Toole criticised the handling of the border in August 2017, writing with irritation that "the first time is tragedy; the second time is farce" ("Parishes" n. pag.).

In his forthcoming essay "Dreary Steeples/Hard Borders: Ireland, Britain and Europe, 1918-2018," Éamonn Ó Ciardha takes a more extensive look at the Irish border in the context of post-WWI history. Shedding light on a number of key political developments, within Europe and across the Atlantic, that have dictated the emergence and the endurance of the Irish border in the hundred years since the Paris Peace Conference in 1918, Ó Ciardha discusses the partition of Ireland in the context of declining empires and highlights, among other things, the importance of the European Union for political stability on the European continent as much as political understanding between Ireland and the UK (n. pag.). In lieu of a prognosis for the conclusion of the Brexit debate (which would have been just as impossible in 2018 as in the autumn of 2020), he explains the historically uncomfortable position of Ulster unionism when confronted with British interest, adducing a number of pertinent examples from 1870 onwards: "There are few certainties in Irish and British history except one; the Tory party will never put Irish/Ulster Unionism before their own self-interest" (n. pag.).While, for a good while, it did seem likely that the border would be projected into the Irish Sea, more recent developments between the EU and the UK have rekindled fears of a hard border. Writing in 2017, O'Toole favoured the soft-border/soft-Brexit-solution for Ireland, which was also favoured by Labour. He writes: "The Border problem can be dealt with only if the UK stays in the customs union and, preferably, also the single market" ("Parishes" n. pag.). This solution would guarantee that the Irish border remained a permeable border within the European framework, not one whose primary purpose it is to define some static national alterity between Ireland and the UK. The coexistence of both processes, integration and exclusion, on the Irish border has proved beneficially dynamic in the long run, as Coakley and O'Dowd explain in the conclusion to their 2007 essay collection *Crossing the Border*:

> [T]he story that emerges here is scarcely unilinear or developmental, nor is it easily captured in terms of a crude process of economic and social development. Factors pointing to the increased permeability of the border are counterbalanced by enhanced patterns of separate development which serve to reinforce the border as a barrier. ("The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 292)

A permeable barrier, the border is always at least two mutually exclusive things at the same time. Coakley and O'Dowd point to the border's oxymoronic existence that was enshrined in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. While the agreement granted "[t]he constitutional and institutional confirmation of the integrity of the border," it contained, at the same time, "the associated reconfiguration of North-South and British-Irish relationships" (292). It thus managed to square the circle of catering to unionist and nationalist territorial desires alike. The authors conclude from this that "[i]n sum, the traditional political mantras of uniting Ireland or maintaining the union have lost much of their conviction – or alternatively, they may now be capable of more diverse and creative definition" (292).

While there has been a thrust towards "more diverse and creative definition" of what the border stands for – or against –, binary thinking of the old territorial order still tends to crystallise along it. For example, the border's continually contested nature was thrown into relief early in 2015, by the BBC Northern Ireland's Spotlight programme "What we have we hold." The programme covered a suspected incident of "colour-coding" in the rural border county of Tyrone, where a Catholic man had been prevented from purchasing a farm formerly owned by a Protestant (Lawn n. pag.). The issue at stake, as the programme emphasised, was the question of "land; who owns it, who can buy it, and the role that religion and politics continues to play when it comes to property in rural parts of Ulster" (Lawn n. pag.). In the course of their investigation on the property market in rural Northern Ireland, the programme also learned about the existence of Orange Order land funds, which are set aside with the intent of keeping Protestant-owned land in Protestant hands. Drew Nelson, Grand Secretary of the Orange Lodge, explained the purpose of these funds:

> There are some funds in existence which do that type of work and that is something that strategically we regard as one of the roles of the institution, to help Protestant communities that are in distress, particularly around border areas, or areas where Protestants are in the minority. (qtd. in Lawn n. pag.)

To Nelson's mind, the Orange land funds apparently serve to equalise the financial imbalance on the property market created by the smuggling of petrol across the border, an activity that seems to benefit republicans (Lawn n. pag.). Interestingly, Nelson's rhetoric, which explains the institutional "work" aimed at reducing communal "distress," gives the land funds a respectable, charitable hue that is absent from the smuggling activities of the republican counterpart who exploit a border they see as politically and ideologically invalid.

The issue of land sales can cause distress to even high-ranking unionist politicians, which is a reminder of the fragile nature of the Northern Irish power-sharing assembly. In

2013, the *Belfast Telegraph* reported that First Minister Peter Robinson (DUP) and MLA Jim Allister (TUV) were involved in an argument concerning the permissibility of unionists/Protestants conducting business with nationalists/Catholics. The argument between the two unionist politicians took place against the backdrop of the proposed development of the historic Maze/Long Kesh prison site into a peace and reconciliation centre, a project that the European Union had announced it would support with £18 million. According to the *Telegraph*, when asked about his withdrawal of support for the centre, Robinson accosted Allister in turn: "He chides me for doing business with republicans, but then secretly and outside of the House, the Member, as the executor of a will, is selling land to republicans in County Fermanagh to benefit his own family" (qtd. in L. Clarke, "Land Sale" n. pag.). Robinson's accusation appears to have been incorrect, and the importance of the argument resides less in the content than in the territorial thinking it reveals: Political partnership with republicans is legitimate, it seems to say, while business transactions, especially those involving land, are not (a circumstance commented upon, predictably, by Sinn Féin; cf. Sean Lynch qtd. in L. Clarke, "Land Sale" n. pag.). The conundrum that remains to be solved is the double-think characterising much of the political rhetoric in post-conflict Northern Ireland: How can the defence of land owned by one 'community' be reconciled with a joint political governance of the territory of Northern Ireland?

These controversies about the ownership of land can be seen to illustrate the fact that the developments that have taken place as part of the peace process are potentially more frightening to citizens of the loyalist tradition than to those of the republican tradition. Commenting upon the Flags Protest surrounding Belfast City Hall in *The Irish Times* in August 2013, Fionola Meredith summarised seethingly,

> loyalists believe that they are the true victims of the peace process, radically disenfranchised and abandoned to the slums by the indifferent leaders of mainstream unionism. Meanwhile, smooth, cocky republicans – the perceived winners of the peace game, rewarded for their murderous campaign by cushy jobs in the Stormont Assembly, and with a compliant police force in their pocket – now wage a (not so) covert cultural war on them by ripping down the union flag and other emblems of their beloved 'Britishness.' (12)[18]

Looking at the facts and figures concerning "socioeconomic deprivation," however, Meredith argues, does not confirm the loyalist self-perception as the losers of "the peace

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[18] Writing *The Price of my Soul* in 1969, Bernadette Devlin [McAliskey] already claimed that the late Reverend Ian Paisley was useful to political Unionism because he "played on [the Protestants'] fear that their heritage [was] threatened."(156).

game." Drawing on the Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010, she shows that deprivation in general affects Catholic households more strongly than Protestant ones, education being the only sector where Protestant deprivation is more severe. From this, Meredith concludes "that loyalism's sense of self as a goaded, beaten dog is far more complex and intractable an issue than a simplistic inventory of material disadvantage can ever hope to explain" (12). Land ownership, as shown above, appears to be a powerful source of loyalist/unionist insecurity. As Coakley and O'Dowd have shown in their essay collection on the Irish border, a host of rather recent, fundamental political developments, made possible by both Ireland's and the UK's joining the EU's forerunner, the EEC, in 1973 and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, have made the border more permeable in terms of institutional and economic traffic than it has been ever since its inception ("The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 292; 306). When the Irish border was drawn by the British administration in 1921 to pacify 'the Irish Question,' it ironically resulted in the first of two Irish civil wars fought over constitutional arrangements on the island. Cutting right across the traditional nine-county province of Ulster, the border established Northern Ireland as a predominantly Protestant and unionist statelet consisting of only six-counties, enclosing a small minority of Catholic nationalists which were separated from the Republic of Ireland. The Republic, in turn, enclosed its own (and often forgotten) share of Protestant unionists. Coakley and O'Dowd summarise the situation when they write that "the partition settlement […] thus failed to separate a unionist North from a nationalist South; instead, it separated a divided South from an even more divided North" ("The 'New' Irish Border" 6). As mentioned above, A.T.Q. Stewart has captured this Irish border predicament in the paradox phrase of the "double minority," which to him is where "[t]he Ulster problem" originates (162).

Forty years onward, the predicament of the "double minority" still stands, and stands still. The garrison mentality stems from a unionist/loyalist sense of cultural, political and spatial insecurity. In her analysis of Northern Irish politics in the throes of Brexit, written in March 2018, Susan McKay argues that "Unionism is a politics of vigilance, of defending the frontier, standing tall against the cowardly enemy in the bushes" (n. pag.). This insecurity is not only caused by a wariness of nationalist Ireland but is also fuelled by fears of the potential neglect of "the mainland." As McKay summarises poignantly,

> When there is a crisis, as there is now over the Irish border, unionism reminds Britain how much it owes to loyal Ulster. Paisley junior recently urged the Brexit secretary to stand up like a man and take a 'no surrender attitude' to the EU, the reference being to the valiant cry of the Protestants besieged in Derry by Catholic forces in 1689. (n. pag.)

Propping up Theresa May's government after the 2017 loss of the Tory majority, the DUP was of course in a better position to be heard in Westminster than ever before. Coakley and O'Dowd argue in a similar same vein as McKay when they write

> Northern unionists, the most committed advocates of partition historically, saw the border as essential to preserving their collective identity and as a form of protection against the threat of Catholic and nationalist domination on the island. […] Their strong identification with Great Britain encouraged unionists to obscure the ways in which their relationship to nationalists on both sides of the border constituted an integral part of their own position and identity. ("The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 293)

For unionists, the border served primarily as a protective measure, installed to preserve unionist power and identity against nationalist desires and influences. In the process, it transformed the social space along it into an abstract space, inscribing the map of Ireland with a disregard for the territory as an "articulation of social relations" (D. Massey, "Places" 183). The result was, as Kirkland has put it, "a geographically and culturally discontinuous community" (6) in the North, which is "subject both to the effects of exterior influences from beyond its physical borders and interior disturbances of its own internal disputing narratives" (7).

Courtesy of Brexit, there appears to have been not only a "double minority" but also, possibly for the first time ever, a double majority. Highlighting the substantial Northern Irish remain vote, Susan McKay criticised Theresa May for having entered an "unholy alliance with the DUP" (n. pag.). She insisted that "May has responsibilities not just to the DUP but to all of the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic. This shabby alliance of unionism and little Englandism might manage to get the UK out of the EU, but the price could be the end of the Union" (McKay n. pag.). In an interview on the twentieth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement in 2018, however, David Trimble, the Nobel prize-winning protestant negotiator of the agreement, shed a different light on the same question. He argued that the Republic of Ireland might be inciting a resurfacing of loyalist violence if it continued to push the idea of special EU status for Northern Ireland in the wake of Brexit (McDonald "David Trimble" n. pag.). In the interview, Trimble said "[he] believe[d] that some senior Irish government officials go around Brussels talking about the 'Hong Kong model' – the one country, two systems idea" (n. pag.). This approach, he argued, would disregard one of the founding principles of the Good Friday Agreement:

> The one thing that would provoke loyalist paramilitaries is the present Irish government saying silly things about the border and the constitutional issue. If it

looks as though the constitutional arrangements of the agreement, based on the principle of consent, are going to be superseded by so-called 'special EU status' then that is going to weaken the union and undermine the very agreement that Dublin says it wants to uphold. (qtd in McDonald, "David Trimble" n. pag.)

The irony in this merry-go-round of arguments is the usage of the word "majority." While McKay rightly points towards the clear majority of Northern Irish citizens that voted for their state to remain within the European Union, Trimble invokes "the majority" to argue the reverse: The Good Friday Agreement enshrined the principle that a majority of Northern Irish citizens have to consent to any alteration of Northern Ireland's constitutional status. Under the heading "Constitutional Issues," the text of the agreement documents that

> the present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland […] is to maintain the Union and, accordingly, that Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom reflects and relies upon that wish; and that it would be wrong to make any change in the status of Northern Ireland save with the consent of a majority of its people. (n. pag.)

The question of the double majority is a fair one. The fact that a majority of Northern Irish citizens wished to remain part of the European Union does not predicate that a majority would likewise wish to become subsumed under an Irish umbrella. Northern Irish politics has once again been asking British, Irish and European politics to attempt a squaring of the circle.

Brexit has thus centre-staged a cultural and political discontinuity which has, in fact, been part of the make-up of Northern Ireland right from the state's inception: From the beginning, it contained a substantial Catholic/republican minority population, which, more recently, has even risen to 45 per cent (Coakley and O'Dowd, "The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 296; cf. Wolff 154). While the Catholic and Protestant populations are almost of equal weight, the status of the 'internal other' appears to have increasingly been shifted onto immigrant groups, especially following the 2004 expansion of the European Union. Borders, simply put, have the power to establish and define the social bodies they delineate. As Michel Foucault has shown, the state authorities have manifold ways of exerting regulating power in order to engineer the kind of social body they wish to govern ("Body/Power" 55-56). In their chapter on "Body Politics" at the border, Donnan and Wilson point out that the understanding of national borders can be mapped onto the understanding of the human body as a closed system (132). According to this geographical vision, the nation is potentially assailed by that which is carried in from without and which cannot be halted at the border, very much in the same manner that bacteria and viruses attack the healthy body. The authors

cite the examples of drug smuggling at the US-Mexican border (130-31) and of HIV/Aids and other diseases at a host of international borders, where the illnesses are associated with ethnic groups from outside the national border (132-33). In these and other cases, the authors contend, "diseased" or otherwise deviant bodies are discursively deprived of their human status and subjected to an "'animalising' of the human body" (134).[19] Donnan and Hastings suggest:

> The reclassification of undocumented entrants as other than human is another aspect of the liminality of the border zone, one which we might reasonably expect given what anthropologists have had to say about liminality in general. Moreover, it is one which potentially opens up these border crossers to other kinds of subjection by the state and its agents. (135)

What is it stake here is the dehumanisation of border crossers and the multiple forms of classification and bodily humiliation this process makes possible and even legitimate, not least on large-scale, institutionalised levels. Speaking about "the undesirability of the alien," Donnan and Hastings pinpoint the rationale behind the discourse clustering around the figure of the border crosser, who poses a threat through the innate nature of his body: "the boundaries of the body become analogous to the borders of the nation and the nation-state; both are vulnerable to penetration and corruption from the outside, susceptible to disease and alien intrusion" (136).

Albeit the conceptualisation of 'otherness' takes on a different guise in the Irish case, "the undesirability of the alien" is a rationale that has had, in mutually exclusive ways, an influence on both the unionist and the nationalist rhetoric focusing on the question of government and the Irish border. In both cases, the political rhetoric appears to be targeted at paramilitary organisations as well as at the respective foreign governments. Examples for this abound, and only a selected few will be touched upon here. Amid the turbulence of Home Rule in the early twentieth century, the ill-fated "Proclamation of an Irish Republic" at Easter 1916 already laid the blame for social division at the door of the British administration in Ireland. The newly declared republic was to be inclusive of "every Irishman and Irishwoman" and dedicated to "the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally, and oblivious

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[19] Donnan and Hastings list a number of examples to substantiate their claim, including the terms "coyote" at the US-Mexcian border, "les loups" at the Strait of Gibraltar, and "snakeheads" in the case of Hong Kong, all three of which denominate those who smuggle people across the border (134). They go on to illustrate that "[i]llegal migrants themselves are often similarly conceptualised in animal categories" (135).

of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past" ("Easter 1916 Proclamation" n. pag.). Similar feelings were activated after the creation of the Northern Irish State within the United Kingdom when nationalists, in rejection of the border, refused to participate in the newly elected institutions for their perceived lack of legitimacy (Buckland 130-31; cf. McKittrick and McVea 19-20). During the civil war, the nationalist perception of an 'alien' administration was projected on British Direct Rule after the suspension of Stormont in 1972, and increasingly on the British troops who were deployed to Northern Ireland in 1969 (Dillon 26-27). On the unionist side of the spectrum, the executive in Dublin has received similar bedevilment. Fears of an all-Ireland government have been variously captured in, for example, the eternal invocation of the Siege of Derry in 1689 and the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 as much as corresponding, strongly spatialised slogans such as 'no surrender' and 'six in twenty-six won't go.' The latter appear to be of special interest in the context at hand, since they highlight the conceptualisation of Irish border as a political bulwark against the anticipated onslaught of hostile forces on national self-determination. As Liam DePaor points out, following the creation of the six-county state, "the many divergent tendencies in Ulster Protestantism were locked into a pose of rigid and perpetual unanimity" so as to face the "dissident Catholic minority" in a united front (184).

It follows that the presence of the political, nationalist 'other' could never quite be discounted, it could only be contained. Hand in hand with this policy of containment went, at least partly, a discrediting of both the Republic of Ireland – the perceived homeland of the republican minority in Northern Ireland – and of the radical elements in republicanism. This could be seen clearly in Ian Paisley's notorious speech at a rally held in front of Belfast City Hall on the occasion of the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Agreement, signed by the governments of the UK and the Republic of Ireland, provided for an Intergovernmental Council that was to be "concerned with Northern Ireland and with relations between the two parts of the island of Ireland" (Anglo-Irish Agreement n. pag.). As Alan Morton emphasises, "Article 2 is the most important and most contentious article of the Agreement, as it provides a consultative role for the Irish Government in the affairs of Northern Ireland" (n. pag.). Paisley would enter history as 'Dr. No' for his then fierce opposition to any involvement of the Republic of Ireland in the political affairs of the North. In a change of heart that has been commented upon many times, he became the First Minister for the DUP in the Northern Ireland power-sharing executive in 2007. This power-sharing executive, set up under the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, explicitly acknowledges the necessity of

the 'Irish dimension' in the politics of Northern Ireland. In 1985, however, his political mellowing was still far away, and Paisley famously exhorted the crowds against the dangers of the agreement: "Where do the terrorists operate from? From the Irish Republic! […] Where do the terrorists return to for sanctuary? To the Irish Republic! And yet, Mrs Thatcher tells us that that Republic must have some say in our Province! We say: Never! Never! Never! Never!" ("Ian Paisley" 0:35-1:19).

It is, however, of continuous importance to also observe the ways in which the state of Northern Ireland itself has been constructed as an internal other in the context of the British Isles, by both British as well as the Irish governments. As Donnan and Hastings have argued,

> The Irish border is thus also in a liminal 'state', because it is the gateway to a province which may be viewed, in its entirety, as a borderland, a frontier zone of disputing nations and ethnic groups, and out of touch and out of synch with both states to which each of the two Northern Irish communities profess allegiance and cultural affinity. (Donnan and Hastings 74)

Susan McKay argues in a similar vein when she points towards the lack of genuine involvement and the *laisser-faire* attitude adopted by both the Irish and British governments following the Good Friday Agreement. In this instance, the liminal "out of synch"-ness of Northern Ireland has manifested itself in a parochial, inward-looking way of conducting politics which Britain and Ireland have been happy enough to accept and support. McKay writes:

> Faced with local intransigence they have, over the years since 1988, apparently given up on any idea of shaping the Good Friday agreement, instead becoming facilitators of whatever the Northern Irish parties would agree. The higher purpose of bringing about reconciliation […] was left aside. (n. pag.)[20]

Without questioning the validity of these findings, it is interesting to observe that, at the same time, substantial political progress had been made in weakening the detrimental impact of the Irish border. Coakley and O'Dowd detect significant change in the Irish cross-border

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[20] As Coakley and O'Dowd summarise, for the half-decade from 1921 onward, British support of partition in Ireland was more pragmatic than ideological. The outbreak of the Troubles led the British administration to review its border policies: "This new awareness has continued to inform British support for power sharing and for the forging of a new and closer partnership with the Irish government in search for a settlement to the Northern Ireland conflict" ("The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 293). On the southern side of the border, as Coakley and O'Dowd point out, the Republic inadvertently lent support to partition through "the border-reinforcing consequences of their state- and nation-building policies" (293). Further, they opine that the Republic's endorsement of partition in the Good Friday Agreement betrays their "own interest in maintaining it, at least in the medium term" (293).

dynamics since partition in 1921. The half-decade following partition was, in their view, characterised by an increasing separation between the two states of Ireland due to the "institution-building strategies of the British and Irish governments and of the pre-1972 Northern Ireland administration" ("The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 296). When the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland joined the EU's forerunner, the European Economic Community (EEC), on 1 January 1973, however, a process of border change[21] in Ireland was set in motion that substituted the hard-border policies enforced during the Troubles. "[A]ccelerated forms of globalisation and membership of the EU," Coakley and O'Dowd write, "promote a border-transcending dynamic which encourages the reconfiguration of the island of Ireland as a shared regional space conducive to the emergence of cross-border cooperative networks" (296). Currently threatened by Brexit, "[t]hese networks have elastic boundaries within the island, but they also span Britain and Ireland generally, as well as the rest of Europe and North America" (296). While it remains unclear whether a hard border will be reintroduced to the island of Ireland in 2020 as a result of Brexit, these "elastic boundaries within the island" and across the Irish sea have been under extreme stress since June 2016.

The cross-border organisation "Border Communities against Brexit" is advocating for these boundaries to be preserved in their elasticity. Organising pickets and protests, the organisation promotes awareness for the economically and socially precarious situation of Irish border dwellers if a hard border were to return. Their efforts to maintain an open, permeable borderland effectively mirror Anderson and O'Dowd's arguments when they explain that

> Cross-border regions may have an underlying cultural unity not congruent with state borders or, alternatively, their *raison d'être* may be the very border that divides them. In other words, regional unity may derive from the use of the border to exploit, legally and illegally, funding opportunities or differentials in wages, prices and institutional norms on either side of the border. (595)

Uniting stakeholders from a number of cross-border sectors such as farming, tourism and civil society, "Border Communities against Brexit" lobbied for the remain vote of the majority of people of Northern Ireland to be respected. They thus illustrated the ways in which "[b]orderland elites and people do help to shape cross-border relations while

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[21] The term "border change," as Anderson and O'Dowd explain (595), can denote two different processes. One is the drawing and/or redrawing of borders as markers of administrational entities. The second concerns the transformation of "the symbolic meanings and/or the material functions of existing borders *in situ* (O'Dowd 1998b)" (595).

interacting with external factors and the wider geo-political environment" (Anderson and O'Dowd 597). The success of their interaction with the outside world was honoured in July 2017, when the organisation received the European Parliament's European Citizens' Prize, which "recognise[s] projects and initiatives that facilitate cross-border cooperation or promote mutual understanding and EU values" ("Border Communities" n. pag.). While the awarding of the prize to this particular body may not have been an entirely uninterested decision by the European Parliament, Northern Ireland's remain vote did indeed express an unexpected degree of "mutual understanding" and of shared interests across the political spectrum. In *The Rule of the Land*, Carr recalls a number of encounters with dedicated "border people" for whom the national periphery has always been, and will continue to be, the centre of their social, cultural and working lives (75). For Carr, the regional and cultural unity they experience on, as well as due to, the Irish border is a source of awe and surprise throughout his walk (see *The Rule* 130, 159, 197, 269, 273).

This regional unity also found expression in *The Yellow Manifesto*, a document that emerged out of a cultural project entitled "Border People's Parliament," which was headed by US-American artist Suzanne Lacy and hosted in "the grand marble hall of Stormont" (Carr, "Ireland's Border" n. pag.). Together with Garret Carr, Lacy "gathered around 150 people from the borderland, aiming for a mix of backgrounds and ages" and "asked [them] to consider various questions about the borderland and their lives on it" (n. pag). Following the gathering, Carr collated the border people's responses, screening them for points of convergence and difference and "distilling them into a single border people's manifesto" (n. pag.). The finished manifesto consists of nine separate points which bear testimony to a set of shared core attitudes towards the border as a social landscape that unites rather than divides its inhabitants, regardless of their political and/or national affiliation. Point five bears this out:

> We could teach you about tolerance. We could teach about the futility of division. Border people have codes; we know how to treat each other in order to keep harmony. The border is where realities can co-exist. Co-existence is essential to the contract we have with each other; it is a higher thing than economics or security. (qtd. in Carr, "Ireland's Border" n. pag.)

There is room for disagreement in this special "contract" that binds border people together, and there is also, concomitantly, an acknowledgement of the work that is necessary to maintain "tolerance" and "harmony." In their insistence on the borderland as a place of "co-existence" that gives rise to a shared culture expressed in "codes," the Border People's

Parliament mirrors what Carr, in *The Rule of the Land*, has described as "a third identity forming between Ireland's north and south" (130),[22] echoing in turn Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of "a third country – a border culture" (25). While the border people's circumstances differ in fundamental ways from those which Anzaldúa has described for the doubly marginalised lesbian Chicana inhabiting the US-Mexican borderlands, they share, on a communal level, what Anzaldúa describes as the *mestiza*'s challenges: "She is willing to share, to make herself vulnerable to foreign ways of seeing and thinking. She surrenders all notions of safety, of the familiar. Deconstruct, construct" (104). In the border people's embrace of different, co-existing realities lies their border culture, a culture that is constituted by the totality of worldviews brought together on a thin stretch of land providing the shared stage of their daily lives. From this border culture, it is but a small step to Homi Bhabha's understanding of hybridity which is synonymous with what he calls "the third space." He writes, "hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom" (211). While the border people do not claim such hybridity for themselves as might transcend their separate social and political realities, they transcend nonetheless the "received wisdom" of national borders and the cultural ideologies that underpin them. Their shared, place-specific cultural "codes" co-exist easily with their other, separate cultural focal points. In point three of the manifesto, they declare "[w]e value the border as a place of mingling, comings and goings, cultural clash and negotiation. [...W]e have relatives across religious and social borders and love our differences" (qtd. in Carr "Ireland's Border" n. pag.). It is from this interstitial position marked by fluidity and exchange that the border people rejected the spectre of a hard border cast by Brexit. Calling for the continuing existence of the border as "invisible" in point seven, they describe the border as a positive place of "cooperation and collaboration" (n. pag.).

During his keynote lecture entitled "Mapping Ireland's Border," delivered at a conference entitled "Space, Place and Obligation" at the University of Maynooth in September 2018, Garrett Carr highlighted the gentle nature that the Irish border had been able to assume as a result of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998: Allowing the citizens of

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[22] Carr employs this phrase to describe Barry McGuigan, former professional boxer and featherweight world champion, who grew up on the Irish border between County Monaghan in the South and Fermanagh in the North (*The Rule* 129-31). Carr makes a further reference to the border as a hybrid third: "Elsewhere other cultures project themselves too and where they clash a third thing is created: borderland" (273).

Northern Ireland to choose if they want to hold British or Irish passports, or indeed both, the agreement effectively draws on the border to create, at least nominally, freedom of national identity. The focus, Carr stressed, could thus be shifted away from rigid questions of national identity, which opened up the spaces for other political discussions to emerge. In a similar yet more general vein, Anderson and O'Dowd have captured the ambiguous, shape-shifting nature of national borders, positing that

> borders […] simultaneously unify and divide, include and exclude. They are coercive, disabling and limiting, including and excluding many people against their will; but they are also benign and enabling, providing the basis for security, dominant forms of identity and conventional representational democracy. 'Prison' or 'refuge', they can facilitate oppression or provide an escape from it. (596)

With the coming-into-effect of the Good Friday Agreement, Ireland's border did indeed become "benign and enabling," sufficiently porous for nationalists to commit to peace and sufficiently stable for unionists to provide the necessary safeguard for the union with Great Britain. It became, to use Anderson and O'Dowd's words, "the basis for security" of a particular kind: it contained terrorism and granted safety from bodily harm as much as from the perpetual fear thereof. It is this element of the border question that appears to be elusive to a number of British politicians involved in the ongoing Brexit negotiations. *Hard Border*, a short film directed by Clare Dwyer Hogg in 2018, criticises and exposes the aloofness of British politicians such as Jacob Rees-Mogg and Boris Johnson, who have made little effort to understand the Irish border on its own terms. The film consists of shots of an unfenced, unfortified Irish border landscape, which is walked by Belfast-born actor Stephen Rea. Rea narrates the film script, a political poem of sorts, oftentimes glaring directly and intently into the camera. It is a difficult set-up that in the hands of a lesser actor might have easily slipped into farce. Rea, however, achieves an unsettling urgency to his narration that is heightened by the film's slightly menacing score. At one point, the film script lauds the great contribution the invisibility of the border has made to safety and peaceful cross-community relations:

> Roads that start here and end there somehow allowing a wound to heal. It's counter-intuitive that nothing to see now is more real than what there was then. Nothing to see means reality. Sounds magical, doesn't it? […] Magic is the absence, sometimes. And there was magic, too, in 1998. A very good Friday. And all the years in-between to make the border disappear: there, but not there. A line of imagination that needed imagination to make it exist while unseen. (02:35-03:45)

Mirroring the concerns voiced in *The Yellow Manifesto*, *Hard Border* stresses the importance of an open, permeable border for the continuation of peace and by the same token highlights

the great achievement of the Good Friday Agreement: It brought about an unlikely squaring of the circle in confirming the political reality of the border while at the same time eradicating the need for any tangible representation thereof. In this sense, the Irish border achieves its most potent presence on the island precisely by virtue of its material absence.

Beyond the Border

John Michael McDonagh's 2011 feature film *The Guard* – an eccentric movie unafraid of political *un*correctness – takes an extravagant stance on policing a potentially insurgent community. At one point in the film, the eponymous southern Irish guard – a rogue cop if ever there was one – meets with a member of the IRA to return terrorist weaponry found in the Connemara boglands. During the exchange, the guard learns about the membership of "gay lads" in the IRA (1:02:07), a piece of information which perplexes him. His IRA contact explains apologetically that "it was the only way [they] could successfully infiltrate the MI5" (1:02:14-1:02:19). The joke quite obviously draws on the Cambridge spy ring and Russian infiltration of the MI5 during the Cold War years.[23] It raises, however, a number of questions very specific to Ireland and its own systems of surveillance and counter-surveillance both during and after thirty years of civil war in the North. Not only does it hint at unabashed collusion between members of state forces and paramilitary organisations on both sides of the conflict (and the border), the existence of which continues to be a source of public debate. It further highlights the ongoing struggle between organised republicanism and the British state authorities who, engaging in reciprocal strategies of surveillance, bypass the official brokerage of peace in Northern Ireland. What is more, it points at a certain set of (in this case sexual) norms that are part and parcel of republicanism as a disciplinary system. The mechanisms of surveillance would thus seem to be working inwards as well as outwards, targeting the exterior as that which is socially and politically 'other' and the interior as that which must be kept walking the line.

Peace-building in the North is, significantly, negotiated not only between the leaders of nationalism and unionism. The socio-political set-up of the province has been complicated

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[23] See Yuri Modin's *My Five Cambridge Friends*, which provides a first-hand account of the members of the Cambridge spy ring from the perspective of their KGB controller. In the introduction to Modin's book, David Leitch asserts that Guy Burgess and Anthony Blunt were homosexual (3). Stressing Burgess' sexual prowess, he writes, "[a]s people were still sent to jail for homosexual behaviour, and several times Burgess came very close, an entirely clandestine gay society provided excellent practice in conspiracy and leading a double life" (3).

by the diverse state authorities of Great Britain, the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, whose involvement is ingrained in the Troubles as a conflict about the constitutional status of Ulster. Further, the achievement of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, a key document establishing a devolved parliament on a consociational basis,[24] gave rise to a peculiar political permeability that has allowed former political enemies to become prominent agents in a shared government. At the same time, it predicated the demise of those parties that occupied the political middle ground, most prominently the SDLP (cf. Wolff 157). While this is a situation not uncommon to post-war societies – the parallel to South Africa, for instance, has been drawn repeatedly – it significantly hampers the development of socio-political trust. Unlikely alliances such as the proximity that seemed to develop between former First Minister Ian Paisley (DUP) and his Deputy Martin McGuinness (Sinn Féin), who passed away in 2014 and 2017 respectively, have generated surprise within (and beyond) political communities that were formerly perceived as monolithic.[25] Confidence in the (relatively) new political arrangements continues to be brokered by means of exchange between multiple state authorities, (former or alleged former) paramilitaries and grass-roots civil-society agents (see McEvoy et al. 81-83, 99). Thus far, the peace process and its trust-building initiatives have not led to an abatement of the debates around the integrity of the unionist and nationalist causes respectively, and the concurrent contestations of place(s). These contentious issues may have been increasingly negotiated by political means, with former paramilitary leaders denouncing violent action as dissident behaviour. Yet, the insistence on the creation of shared spaces is a frightful development to all those who feel bypassed by the peace process, and suspicions of a political 'sell-out' on both loyalist and republican sides keep resurfacing. Further, there can be no doubt that the diminishing practical importance of the Irish border has aggravated age-old unionist fears of besiegement and suppression, especially against the background of the ongoing redistribution of political

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[24] In his essay "The Character of the 1998 Agreement," Brendan O'Leary explains succinctly: "The Agreement's proposed model of devolution was consociational, meeting the criteria specified by Arend Lijphart *namely*, cross-community executive power-sharing; proportionality rules throughout the governmental and public sectors; community self-government or autonomy and equality in cultural life; and veto rights for minorities" (49). He also provides an in-depth explanation of the ways in which the concept of consociation was applied in the Good Friday Agreement (50-62).

[25] While the good-humoured carry-on Paisley and McGuinness displayed on a number of occasions earned them the derisive nickname "the Chuckle Brothers," McGuinness's reaction to Paisley's death in 2014 was met with great respect and applause. To general astonishment he stated: "I think I can say without fear of contradiction that I have lost a friend" (Sinn Féin 01:38-01:42).

power.[26] A mural off the Newtownards Road in East Belfast offers a window on the unionist psyche, which is continuously stressed by post-Agreement encroachments into its spheres of spatio-political power. Headed by the extortion that "[w]e owe it to the future and the victims never to forget the past," the mural depicts seven typeset pamphlet-style pages reminding the onlooker of republican atrocities such as the Claudy bombing in 1972. Underneath these pages, a subheading provides a poignant conclusion: "The price of peace is eternal vigilance." The lesson learned from the violent past, the mural suggests, is that peaceful coexistence depends not on mutual trust but on wariness. By extension, if future peace can only be secured by means of "eternal vigilance," past sacrifice during the civil war must have occurred due to a lack of wariness. These logics seem self-harming in that they suggest a share of communal responsibility for loyalist/unionist suffering. They further convey a continuous sense of exposure to some permanent but obscure threat.

The sense of insecurity and mistrust which is experienced by all stakeholders of the peace process is reflected by the fact that the inherently controversial topics of policing and surveillance have kept smouldering ever since 1998. They are, as Anssi Paasi points out, part and parcel of the ways in which the national border extends its grip across the state's territory:

> Given that the current mechanisms of surveillance and societal control are expanding deep into society, it may similarly be argued that the key *location* of a national(ist) border does not lie at the concrete line but in the manifestations of the perpetual nation-building process and nationalist practices, and the roots of these manifestations have to be traced to the histories of these practices and iconographies. (22)

Paasi's emphasis on the importance of the "histories" of these state institutions or "mechanisms" is highly relevant in the case at hand. In the roughly fifty years between the creation of Northern Ireland and the outbreak of the Troubles, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) tended to be perceived as a 'Protestant force for a Protestant state,'[27] with the government firmly in unionist hands and recruitment carried out almost exclusively among the Protestant population. It is thus not surprising that Darby describes the reform of the police service as one of "a number of serious obstacles [that] remained in the post-accord

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[26] John Darby points out that, in the referendum held in May 1998, "virtually all nationalist voters" in Northern Ireland ratified the Good Friday Agreement, while "unionism was evenly split between supporters and opponents" ("Northern Ireland" n. pag.).
[27] I adapt this phrase from Sir James Craig, the then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, who famously asserted in parliament in 1934 that "we are a Protestant Parliament and Protestant state" (qtd. in "Discrimination – Quotations").

years […] a real and symbolic conflict between unionists and nationalists, and a committee under the chairmanship of Chris Patten was set up to suggest a way ahead" ("Northern Ireland" n. pag.). The 1999 Patten Report, officially entitled "A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland," concluded among other things that the challenges concerning police acceptance in a divided society were less on the practical than on the institutional level: "This brings us to another key point about perceptions of policing in Northern Ireland: the views people express about the police are often essentially political views about the RUC as an institution rather than views about the policing service which they themselves receive" (A New Beginning 13). In an effort to depoliticise the attitudes towards the police force, the RUC was transformed into the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) in 2001. Many of the elder staff were sent into retirement, and new recruits were for a number of years from then on drawn in equal numbers from both the Protestant and the Catholic communities. Beyond doubt, the policing reform has gone a long way in establishing an institution that is acceptable to all strands of society.

From the perspective of the policy-makers, as Liam Kelly and Audra Mitchell have argued, policing and securitisation form part of "the specific strategies of peacebuilding" that endorse "a very specific model of peace: one based on the creation of stable, secure, governable spaces in which the processes of democracy and economic development can unfold" ("'Walking' with de Certeau" 5, 4). This understanding of peace presents "governable spaces" as the necessary arena enabling post-conflict politics to take place, which " has resulted in a trend towards the use of 'post-conflict' reconstruction strategies as a major instrument of peace-building" (5):

> Peace-building is a strategy insofar as it creates a base of power (national or international institutions) which is exerted over a perceived environment of targets and threats: conflict, its perceived causes and its manifestations, largely through the logics of securitization, democratization, governance and development, through which it seeks to transform conflict. ("'Walking' with de Certeau" 7)

These strategies of peacebuilding would thus seem to further the construction of a stable and equitable post-war state. At the same time, however, the institutional transparency propagated by the peace process is challenged by what has been called "the panoptic conundrum": As Jerome E. Dobson and Peter F. Fisher argue, "the principle of open government clashes with the right to privacy whenever personal information is collected and

held by government" (311).[28] Seen in this light, it appears highly problematic that a new building for MI5 overlooking Belfast Lough was opened in Holywood, Co. Down, in December 2007. Loughside, as it is called, is intended to serve "not just to run local intelligence operations, but as a second headquarters for MI5" (Gilmore 6). As such, Loughside plays a pivotal role in Britain's fight against international terrorism but, at the same time, it is part and parcel of an internal security strategy within the province: In October 2007, the responsibility for national security was withdrawn from the police service and assigned to MI5 instead (7). This decision, which asserted the *de facto* Britishness of Northern Ireland, strained the political post-war arrangements. Not only does it reactivate the inherited republican mistrust of the security forces as prejudiced towards the loyalist community (6), it also undermines the integrity of the newly established police authorities. Gilmore asserts:

> Not surprising with all the secrecy in an environment where, for decades, suspicion between communities has undermined security, conspiracy theories on MI5's new role abound. [... C]oncerns remain within Northern Ireland about accountability, about how transparent MI5 should be, and about the effect on the PSNI's ability to tackle crime and criminality now the Security Service is taking the lead on national security intelligence gathering in the Province. In the run-up to the handover, these fears were loudly articulated by nationalists and republican politicians – and by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and the Policing Board (7).

Only two years after this redistribution of powers, the British Army's Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR) was deployed to Northern Ireland. This unit, which specializes in covert surveillance, was created to fight international terrorism ("New Regiment" n. pag.). Paradoxically, the SRR was requested in 2009 to monitor dissident republicanism within a province that still remains British. While the then Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness denounced this step as having "shaken his confidence" in police work, DUP First Minister Ian Paisley, with equal predictability, defended it as a matter of national security and thus not within the remit of the Northern Irish Policing Board

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[28] In "'Walking' with de Certeau" (16-19) and in their later "Peaceful Spaces?" (317-19), Kelly and Mitchell analyse the example of an interface area in North Belfast, which is heavily surveilled by police cameras. In "'Walking' with de Certeau" they observe, "[a]nother powerful strategy of securitization is surveillance, conducted largely by the PSNI and private firms and used as a means for monitoring and responding to acts of violence […]" (16). The constant surveillance triggers various acts of resistance and/or subversion from local residents, counter-surveillance among them. The authors conclude that "informal modes of surveillance may act as tactics which contest formal (state) surveillance, the lack of appropriate policing, or, in the case of some Republican and Loyalist communities, they may act as an expression of distrust or dissatisfaction with policing (Sheehan et al, 2010; Bird, 2010) and thus they actively resist the strategy of securitization" (19).

("Forces Are A Threat" n. pag.). Here again, the political quarrel over the legitimacy of British intervention on 'the narrow ground' was thrown into relief. In January 2014, Secretary of State Theresa Villiers applauded the cross-border cooperation of the PSNI, the Irish Republic's An Garda Siochana and the British MI5 against the dissident republican threat, while a republican figure commented that "[t]he widespread use of this technology [surveillance] gives the British almost permanent eyes and ears in places the dissidents would frequent" (Kilpatrick n. pag.). This top-down form of surveillance, a permutation of power exerted by government institutions over a potentially insurgent population, establishes a sad continuity between the thirty years of civil war and the current post-war period in Northern Ireland.

First published in 1990, Martin Dillon's seminal *The Dirty War* exposes the strategies of surveillance and counter-surveillance used by members of paramilitary forces and state agencies alike. It also reveals the extent to which members of British and Northern Irish security forces infiltrated and cooperated with (mainly loyalist) paramilitary organisations, even though the author stresses in his preface that the engagement of the state forces in counter-terror has been greatly exaggerated: "In a few instances I uncovered evidence which pointed to the involvement of members of the security forces in terrorism but the overwhelming evidence indicated that such involvement was personal and not part of a stated policy" (xx). Official investigations into alleged cases of collusion, however, have become major obstacles on the road to peace. The most prominent case, in all probability, is that of republican solicitor Patrick Finucane who was shot dead in his Belfast home in 1989 (cf. Gilmore 7). According to Sir John Stevens's report, released in 2003, two of the men carrying out the killing were on the British army's payroll ("Britain's Dirty War" n. pag.). Following the report, *The Economist* asserted the government's responsibility

> to respond to Sir John's report by showing that it is determined to find, and hold to account, those in the British state who have aided and abetted murders. And that might have the happy side-effect of edging forward Northern Ireland's stalled peace process. ("Britain's Dirty War" n. pag.)

Ten years onwards, Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams made a related claim, calling for "an international, independent truth recovery process underpinned by law" (Adams, "Britain's Dirty War in Ireland" n. pag.), also with the intention of producing that same "happy side-effect." The fact that calls for the institutionalised establishment of truth coexist with attempts at its obfuscation is one of the legacies that continue to haunt the present and that undermine the integrity of the peace process.

Against this backdrop, it is less surprising that, writing in 2001, Eamonn Hughes found "[t]he political novel […] startlingly absent from Irish fiction and Northern Irish fiction" ("Fiction" 85). Summarising the political evasiveness of the Northern Irish novel, he posits:

> Narrowly defined political issues make their presence felt in the pages of thrillers but usually only in the closing pages when shadowy figures in shadier corridors of power institute a cover-up […] but there are no novels which take as their subject the political discussions and debates which have continued over the whole period of the Troubles. […] Political figures then are rarely, if ever, centre stage in the pages of northern fiction, though this may be more to do with the poor material that they offer to novelists than with the failure of fiction. If fiction depends on uncertainty and dialogue, our politicians, representing certainty and monologue, are fiction's antithesis. (E. Hughes, "Fiction" 85)

The literary landscape seems to have changed since Hughes uttered his impatience with the lack of political fiction in 2001, with cultural production moving increasingly onto political terrain. Hence, it is the purpose of this chapter to analyse the ways in which both verbal and visual texts of the post-war period manage to extend the discursive limitations around the issues of segregation, security and surveillance in Northern Ireland. Two of the three verbal and visual texts analysed in this chapter deal, at least implicitly, with "the political discussions which have continued over the whole period of the Troubles": Steve McQueen's film *Hunger*, released in 2008, pivots around the republican hunger strike of 1981 as a very specific moment of socio-political crisis. Eoin McNamee's novel *The Ultras*, published in 2004, takes a different approach to the challenges of recent history and sheds light on the ways in which the uncontainable violent past keeps leaking into the pacified present. In both cases, individual agency is directed and restricted by the power interests of political regimes, both military and paramilitary, that are beyond the individual's control. It may well be that the relative stability of the peace achieved in the years following the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 provided the breathing space necessary for such direct political engagement in fiction. In this context, it is noteworthy that the much criticised film *The Journey*,[29] offering a fictionalised version of Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness's rapprochement during the negotiations of the St Andrews Agreement in 2006, was released in 2017. Possibly, it was the men's unlikely post-conflict friendship that helped undermine the "certainty and

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[29] See Henry McDonald's article in *The Guardian*, published on 7 May 2017, the title of which hints at the critics' main concern: "Paisley and McGuinness: the Movie. But Is It a Travesty of the Truth?" Donald Clarke, writing in the *Irish Times* on 4 May 2017, is equally unimpressed by the liberties the film takes with historical truth. His review is telling entitled "Ludicrous Retelling of McGuinness and Paisley Paths to Peace."

monologue" which Hughes speaks of, and that allowed for a fictional representation of these Northern Irish politicians. Lucy Caldwell's novel *Where They Were Missed*, published in 2006, differs from the tone set by the two other works of fiction on which this chapter predominantly focusses. As a coming-of-age narrative, it sensitively depicts successful personal development against the odds of socio-spatial division and political disturbance. The power of the institutions and the tight grip of what Foucault has termed "disciplinary régimes" ("Body/Power" 58), however, pervades all three texts under consideration.

Discussing institutionalised "disciplinary régimes" and their role in the regulation of sexuality, Foucault describes a shift away from direct bodily censure within institutions towards less tangible means of reinforcing discipline in the second half of the twenty-first century ("Body/Power" 58). He traces the establishment of "disciplinary régimes" mainly back to "the great nineteenth-century effort in discipline and normalisation," which sought to perfect the order of society according to binary structures (61). This project, as Foucault has repeatedly argued, can be forwarded on by implementing structures of observation and surveillance. Bentham's Panopticon, as described by Foucault, is a disciplinary environment involving a bounded space in which the social is spatially ordered so as to secure maximum visibility, instant recognition as well as the ceaseless flow of information towards the powerful (*Discipline* 200-202). This definition seems to correspond to 'the narrow ground' as a socio-spatial grid that defines which parcels of land are perceived as unionist, nationalist, or mixed territories. This rigid socio-spatial set-up effectively facilitates the exertion of

> individual control [...] according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who he [sic.] is; where he must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.). (Foucault, *Discipline* 199).

Further, as a strategic form of power that necessarily involves a spatial component, surveillance seems to respond directly to the Troubles as a constitutional conflict over the political distribution of land. It offers one possible point of intersection between the conflictual discourses of space, power and knowledge. In the following, I depart from the assumption that the highly segregated geography of Ulster facilitates the Panopticon's characteristic "distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power" (Foucault, *Discipline* 205). The representations of especially urban segregation calling for the policing of communal

territories speak of fearsome geographies in which surveillance concurs with communal notions of the safety of places, of recognisability and homogeneity. Indeed, literary representations of Northern Ireland in terms of "[t]he plaque stricken town, traversed throughout with hierarchy, surveillance, observation, writing; the town immobilized by the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies" (Foucault, *Discipline* 198) are manifold and intersect in multiple ways with artistic interpretations of the civil war in terms of what Kirkland has called an "interregnum" (7). One of the most striking fictional depiction to date of the ways in which the Ulster Panopticon sows intercommunal paranoia and perfidiously undermines individual lives has been provided by Anna Burns's *Milkman*, the much-lauded winner of the 2018 Booker Prize. In it, the female narrator's republican community is kept in a fierce stranglehold by both the state authorities' and the paramilitaries' regimes of surveillance, aggravating the effects of both by spying on one another with casual cruelty. These overlapping "disciplinary régimes" are shown to be destructive of interpersonal relationships and of communal as much as individual health. *Milkman* thus poignantly illustrates a panoptic effect that Foucault terms "malveillance":

> In the Panopticon each person […] is watched by all or certain of the others. You have an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust, because there is no absolute point. The perfected form of surveillance consists in a summation of *malveillance*. ("The Eye of Power" 158)

Worn thin by her community's incessant "malveillance" of her, by their conviction that she must be in an adulterous relationship with a high-ranking paramilitary who pursues her, the narrator is on the edge of yielding to the eponymous milkman's advances when his Troubles-related death saves her in *deus-ex-machina* fashion from a sexual connection she abhors and would not have entered out of her own free will.

The 'interregnum,' which in the case of the Northern Irish civil war is perhaps less characterised by a complete power vacuum than by a proliferation of centres of power, control and surveillance, produces a number of coexisting "disciplinary régimes" (Foucault "Body/Power" 58) that overlap, compete and sometimes also collaborate. The main agents of the conflict consisted of the state's diverse security forces as much as republican and loyalist paramilitaries, with "the non-state actors [being] responsible for almost 90 percent of all fatalities" (McEvoy et al. 82-83). The fictional representations of the regimes of surveillance in which all of these agents are shown participate illustrate what Foucault has

described as "the diabolical aspect of the idea and all the applications of it [Bentham's Panopticon]" ("The Eye of Power" 156):

> It's a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised. […] Power is no longer substantially identified with an individual who possesses or exercises it by right of birth; it becomes a machinery that no one owns. Certainly […] certain positions preponderate and permit an effect of supremacy to be produced. (156)

In this sense, fictional representations of the panoptic machine in Northern Ireland during the civil war tie in with representations of the static geography of division and the spatial manifestations of communal identity and political power. As I will show in my analyses below, the different means of securitization (of which surveillance is only the most prominent one) that the British authorities used in Northern Ireland are repeatedly portrayed as spatialised disciplinary measures "by which the body is reduced as a 'political' force at the least cost and maximized as a useful force" (Foucault, *Discipline* 221). Not only are, as I will show, these state-authored interventions into space shown to have a destructive effect on social and political relationships. They also serve to manipulate the public's 'geographical imagination' so as to nip in the bud any development of a "progressive sense of place" (D. Massey, "Power-Geometry" 64) for the North. The North's inherited socio-spatial ordering will thus be shown to be preserved for reasons of political power because it secures visibility and recognition of people in relation to the spatial arrangements in which they move.

Writing in 1977, towards the end of the first decade of civil war, A.T.Q. Stewart poignantly observed that "[t]he war in Ulster is being fought out on a narrower ground than even the most impatient observer might imagine, a ground every inch of which has its own associations and special meaning" (181). Stewart explains this intricate and highly semanticised social geography[30] with the enduring socio-spatial division of the North's populace as a result of the Plantation of Ulster in the sixteenth century (181). It is the great importance of the internalised "territorial imperative" (181) for the Northern Irish individual which leads Stewart to conclude that

> [t]o understand the full significance of any episode of sectarian conflict, you need to know the precise relationship of the locality in which it occurred to the rest of the mosaic of settlement. But *the chequerboard on which the game is played* has a third dimension. What happens in each square derives a part of its significance, and

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[30] Stewart claims that "[t]he Ulsterman carries the map of this religious geography in his mind almost from birth" (181). However, I find the phrase "social geography" preferable as it does not depart from the religious hypothesis where the causes of the conflict are concerned.

perhaps all of it, from what happened there at some time in the past. (Stewart 181-82, emphasis mine).

The coordinates on the chequerboard are hence determined by a socio-spatial as well as a temporal axis. The fixity of the values on both axes further predicates the preservation of the chequerboard's static patterning, albeit theirs is a constructed fixity that relies on selective readings of place as much as history. The chequerboard is at the same time the metaphorical basis for the conflict that Stewart refers to somewhat cynically as a "game." This game can well be thought of in terms of chess, which is, after all, not only played on a chequerboard but also the archetypal representation of strategic power play, conflict or war.

In his 1996 study *Using Language*, the psycholinguist Herbert Clark proposed a framework for the analysis of chess as a "joint activity." In the chapter of the same name, he posits: "What is remarkable about chess […] is that the current state of the activity is represented in quite a concrete form. The chess board and its pieces are an external representation of the current state [of the activity]" (45). The position of the chess pieces in relation to each other as well as in relation to the different squares of the chess board indicates the progress of the game in continuous fashion. Meaning is thus deducted from the external representation in a process that Clark calls "locational interpretation," in the course of which "[t]he markers are interpreted in part by their spatial location with respect to other markers" (47). In this interpretational interplay, "[t]he squares on the chess board are markers for physical locations, and the chess pieces are markers for imaginary objects" (46). These observations intersect in interesting ways with Stewart's chequerboard metaphor. Applied to the chequerboard of Northern Ireland during the civil war, the chess game of the Troubles would not only emerge as a "joint activity" of sorts. As with chess, the "current state" of the civil war would further be reflected in the ever-changing constellation of agents, or markers, on the ground – in their whereabouts, their movements, their advance into and their withdrawal from certain places, or locational markers.

However, the Northern Irish chequerboard is infinitely more deceptive than an ordinary chess board, and the constellation of agents on the ground was always at least partly hidden from sight. It is in the nature of civil war that a good part of the conflict takes place in the thickets of make-believe and double-cross. In consequence, one agent may arrange their pieces on the metaphorical chess board in such a fashion as to deceive the other players concerning the real state of the ongoing activity. Similarly, Clark draws a distinction between "public" and "private" goals:

> In any joint activity, certain goals become a matter of public record, what the participants are 'on record' as doing in the activity. […] Other goals are *private*. […] In competitive activities like chess or tennis, success hinges on keeping private goals private – even deceiving the other participants about them. People's private goals are sometimes in direct conflict with their public goals, making their adherence to the public goals a sham. (34-35)

This observation holds equally true for the "competitive activity" of civil war, where the disclosure of a military goal or strategy can well deal a hard blow to one of the warring factions. In a civil war, however, the situation is further complicated by the parallel existence of ratified and unratified players. While some players, such as terrorists and double agents, are unofficial participants in the activity and, as such, follow their own set of rules, other players, such as policemen and soldiers, are officially ratified participants and, as such, they are expected to act in compliance with the rule of law. If covert allegiances are forged between official and unofficial players,[31] the state of the game as a "joint activity" becomes increasingly difficult to trace – in this case, the constellation of pieces on the board may no longer offer a reliable "external representation of the current state" of the game. This peculiar complexity of covert operations and collusion during the Troubles contrasts starkly with Clark's observations:

> It is hard to exaggerate the value of these [external] representations. First they are highly reliable representations of the current state of the activity. [… B]ecause the board is simultaneously accessible to both players, they can both assume it to be part of their common ground. It is hard to dispute the position of a piece. This reliability is especially important in adversarial or business activities. […] And second, external representations are a particularly effective memory aid and medium for imagining moves. (47)

While it is, in fact, very "hard to dispute the position of a piece," it may be difficult or even impossible to subject an identified piece to a "locational interpretation" (47) in a situation of civil war. This process of establishing a marker's meaning in relation to its surroundings, i.e. its proximity to other markers, becomes difficult if it is not clear if the marker in question is a pawn, a rook or a knight. It is for this reason that, in the visual and verbal representations under scrutiny in this chapter, the "game" played on the chequerboard of Northern Ireland is not portrayed to be "cumulative" in Clark's sense: "If joint activities are cumulative, what accumulates? I will argue that it is the common ground of the participants about that activity – the knowledge, beliefs, and suppositions they believe they share about the activity" (38).

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[31] Clark elaborates: "When there are more than two participants, as in team sports, there can also be coalitions with private agendas" (ft. 2, 35).

By contrast, in Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras*, as will be shown below, the civil war is rather portrayed as an activity that destabilises and disperses all knowledge, all belief and all suppositions. Heightened exposure to this perverted "joint activity" of the Troubles multiplies only confusion, distrust, disorientation and paranoia. In consequence, as "representation[s] of the current state" of the conflict and, also, of the peace process, the verbal and visual representations of the socio-political geography of Northern Ireland analysed in this chapter offer creative comments on the ways in which the manipulation of the chess board serves to manipulate people's beliefs about the places they inhabit – their own positions on the board. Their 'geographical imaginations,' which inform the ways in which they perceive their environment's past, present and future, are tampered with by all players involved in the conflict. Employing the covert means of guerrilla tactics, collusion, counter-insurgence and surveillance, state authorities and paramilitaries alike are portrayed, in these fictional texts, as physically and psychologically terrorising the citizens they pretend to serve. These fundamental interventions into people's actual and imagined navigation of the space around them make them easier to dominate and control in the game about land and power.

In an attempt at controlling Stewart's "chequerboard on which the game is played" (182), the British administration passed two paramount pieces of legislation that quenched the development of progressive politics and that prevented, concurrently, the formation of a "progressive sense of place" for the North (D. Massey, "Power-Geometry" 64). The first of these pieces of legislation is the 1922 Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (Northern Ireland), which was passed as a response to the civil unrest that unfolded after the creation of the Northern Irish state in 1921. The Special Powers Act is a restrictive and authoritarian piece of legislation that ties in with an understanding of Northern Ireland as a "static society" during the fifty years of unbroken unionist rule from Stormont (McKittrick and McVea 1). The second important piece of legislation is the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973, which superseded the Special Powers Act of 1922 and which dictated to a large extent the rules of the game. Both pieces of legislation restricted individual use of space as well as individual movement across space and were hence attempts at keeping the ordinary citizens quite literally in their places. They enforced a policy of containment and control which aimed at rendering the metaphorical chequerboard of Ulster stable, navigable and transparent for the state authorities.

The Special Powers Act of 1922 was officially "enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, and the Senate and the House of Commons of Northern Ireland" (n. pag.) and, as

such, it served the interests of the unionists elites who had just won the right to their own state in 1921. In her 1969 political autobiography *The Price of My Soul*, high-profile socialist activist and politician Bernadette Devlin ends her description of the Act on the following note: "So total is the power it gives the police and the Minister of Home Affairs that a leading member of the South African Government has said he'd be prepared to swap all his repressive legislation for one Special Powers Act" (113). Aiming at "preserving the peace and maintaining order in Northern Ireland," the Special Powers Act provided the security forces with wide-ranging powers where the use of space (as well as the restriction thereof) was concerned. The powers bestowed onto the "civil authority and any person duly authorised by him [sic.]" under the provisions of the Act included, for example, "the right to access any land or buildings or other property whatsoever"; "[t]o take possession of any land and to construct works, including roads, thereon, and to remove any trees, hedges, and fences therefrom"; "to take possession of any horses, vehicles or mechanically propelled vehicles, or other means of transport […] either absolutely or by the way of hire, and either for immediate or future use" as well as the right to stop and search "any person [he suspects of] carrying any firearms, military arms, ammunition, or explosive substances" (n. pag.). In addition to these formidable special (spatial) powers, the Act further decreed the centralisation of all symbolic power in the hands of the state. For example, it prohibited to "spread [by word of mouth or in writing] false reports […] or spread reports or make statements intended or likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty," and, further, to "produce any performance on any stage, or exhibit any picture or cinematograph film, or commit any act which is intended or likely to cause any disaffection, interference or prejudice" (n. pag.). In this fashion, the Special Powers Act curtailed both freedom of expression and conscience and set the tone for the Emergency Provisions Act which was to follow half a century later.

In 1971, two years before the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act came into action, internment without trial was introduced in response to the deteriorating security situation on the streets of Northern Ireland. 1971 was by not the bloodiest year of the civil war, but its death toll of 174 contrasts starkly with 25 and 13 in 1970 and 1969 respectively.[32] It was also the first year of the civil war that saw a British soldier, Robert Curtis, killed on the streets of Northern Ireland. Internment without trial was a highly controversial security

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[32] Consult Martin Dillon's "Chronology of Major Events in Northern Ireland 1969-1989" for a summary of the Troubles' progression (xxiii-xxxv). He dedicates one concise paragraph to each of the twenty years under his consideration. By the end of January 1990, 2781 people had been killed as a result of the Northern Irish conflict (xxxv).

measure that allowed the security forces to detain terror suspects for prolonged periods without a court sentence or even a court hearing. The implementation of the measure was botched from the start, as Martin Dillon explains:

> Internment in August 1971 failed in that it led to the arrest of innocent men, of people who had left the IRA after the 1950s campaign, and civil rights activists who were classified as subversives on RUC Special Branch files. Internment failed because the Army relied heavily on outdated intelligence files in the hands of the RUC. (32-33)

Instantly, the internment policy drew acrid criticism from civil rights bodies. On the very day the policy was introduced, 9 August 1971, The National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) in London, for instance, issued a press statement in which it emphasised "that the state [wa]s never justified in abandoning the rule of law in order to preserve the law" (National Council n. pag.). Describing internment as "part of the machinery of a police state," the NCCL made the following demands:

> As all semblance of civil liberties in Northern Ireland ends, the NCCL calls on the British Government to fulfil its responsibilities in the situation. The NCCL calls also for the immediate release of those arrested today and the restoration of the due process of law. A continuation of the policies introduced today by the Stormont Government can lead only to more violence by the state and further retaliation by those now in opposition to its policies. (National Council n. pag.)

The faulty implementation of interment by the security forces as well as the arrest of innocent people contributed to the discrediting of a measure already questionable under civil rights aspects. Joining their efforts with other civil rights bodies, representatives of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) personally delivered a letter to Jack Lynch, the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland, on 14 August 1971. Reminding the Taoiseach of a statement he had apparently made two days prior to the letter's delivery, in which he had emphasised "that [his] Government [would] not condone violent action aimed at counteracting the oppressive measures of the Stormont and British Governments" (Gogarty and Stewart n. pag.), the NICRA leadership confirm that only "such legal remedies" will be able "to counter the feeling that is spreading rapidly in the North, that only violence can meet violence" (n. pag.). These fatal predictions were sadly vindicated when the death toll in 1972 rose to a staggering 467. Irrespective of whether the increase in fatal violence was causally or correlatively linked to internment, the heightened perception of state violence as evidenced on Bloody Sunday in Derry/Londonderry on the 30 January 1972 set the tone for the rest of the year (see Dillon xxiv).

In the summer of 1973, the Emergency Provisions Act was passed from Westminster alone as the Northern Irish state had been placed under Direct Rule by 1972. In response to the escalation of violence on the streets, the British Army was called in to support the RUC in August 1969 but ultimately only succeeded in further stoking the flames of civil unrest. Stormont was abolished in 1972, and the fledgling power-sharing executive set up by the Sunningdale Agreement foundered on the rocks of the unionist workers' strikes in 1974. As of the mid-70s, the British administration pursued a threefold strategy known as the Ulsterisation, normalisation and criminalisation policies (Coogan 262; McEvoy et al. 87-88). Ulsterisation was modelled on the US-American policy of Vietnamisation and meant that the responsibility for security was returned to local policing bodies, while normalisation designated a quite literal return to normality in both practice and appearance: destruction inflicted by acts of terror, for example, was cleared away and restored as soon as possible (Coogan 262). Criminalisation, finally, included the abrogation of Special Category status for former political prisoners and entailed the reconstruction of Long Kesh as the Maze Prison (263). The change in the province's political circumstances is implicitly acknowledged in the preamble to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973, which explains that the document

> make[s] provision with respect to the following matters *in Northern Ireland*, that is to say, proceedings for and the punishment of certain offences, the detention of terrorists, the preservation of the peace, the maintenance of order and the detection of crime and to proscribe and make other provision in connection with certain organisations *there* […]. (1, emphasis mine)

The Act appears to be written by and for British readers. The pronounced use of the place adverb "there" as much as the text of the document proper displays a detached, patronising attitude towards events in the North, which would turn out to have been naïve in the long run. The years to come would show that the conflict could by no means be confined to Northern Ireland alone as Irish terrorism made its deathly impact felt in the rest of the UK as well as in the Republic of Ireland. Yet, the Emergency Provisions Act aims precisely at the containment of the Northern Irish predicament; at establishing Northern Ireland as a bounded place that may well collapse on itself. It makes provisions for so-called "scheduled offences," and rules that these crimes be tried in Diplock courts, i.e., courts that do not require the presence of a jury (2). It further legitimises the stopping and questioning of people in the streets for the purpose of "ascertaining that person's identity and movements" (10), allows for arrests without warrant and the detention of suspected terrorists during a period

of up to three days. Just as the Special Powers Act, the Emergency Provisions Act provides extended legislation with regard to space and the use of space: It includes regulations and restrictions in relation to vehicles, railways and traffic, the routes of funeral cortèges and the frequenting of public houses. However, the Emergency Provisions Act also provides an interesting novelty by introducing legal definitions for both "terrorism" and "terrorist" (16). According to these definitions, "'terrorism' means the use of violence for political ends and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear," while "'terrorist' means a person who is or has been concerned in the commission or attempted commission of any act of terrorism or in directing, organising or training persons for the purpose of terrorism" (16).

By means of the Emergency Provisions Act, the British state asserts itself as the supreme "holder of the monopoly of official naming, of the correct order" in Northern Ireland (Bourdieu 734). In this fashion, it counters any attempts, violent or non-violent, at establishing an alternative order to which the hiatus or "interregnum" of the Troubles (Kirkland 7) might have given rise. As will be discussed below, much of the fiction and film dealing with the Troubles have portrayed the Northern Irish police force, the British Army as much as British politicians as officially ratified agents who are nevertheless willing to resort to the "use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear." Especially portrayals of the 'Dirty War' and its stratagems blur any clear-cut distinctions between state power and acts of terrorism and instead display grey zones of power and knowledge.

Border Discourses and Surveillance in the Arts

The Irish border is, and continues to be, a space of ambiguities, contradictions, exclusions and multi-layered power struggles. The contestation of territory and the identity of places within Northern Ireland and at its seams remain of paramount importance for any understanding of the border and for the ongoing and endangered peace process. There is a growing body of Irish border literature that promotes the possibility of sustainable socio-spatial change by offering alternative and often subversive accounts of solidarity, of ethnic belonging, and of the social processes of cross-border perception. In these renderings, the Irish border functions as the primary site for the artistic re-negotiation of national identities and the divisive topography of the above-mentioned 'narrow ground' of Northern Ireland. Questioning the rigidity of national borders, these literary texts serve as indicators for the

state of the peace process. As I will argue in further detail below, the diverse 'geographical imaginations' proposed by these texts comment critically upon the political situations they are set in as well as upon those they were written from.

Derry-born writer and literary critic Seamus Deane has renounced the applicability of the hybrid paradigm of the "third" to the Irish border, both territorial and metaphorical. Writing in 1999, he suggested in a collection of brief, personal opinion pieces entitled *The Border. Personal Reflections from Ireland, North and South*,

> it is even more important to recognise that the Border reproduces itself in every area within the North. It is and has always been a sectarian border; it embraces a fertile progeny of internal borders [...] These are not flexible or porous borders; [... t]hey are prison walls. (Untitled 27-28; cf. Paasi 22)

What Deane depicts here is a delineated space; a space both closed to the exterior and striated by internal rifts that will not allow for hybridizing encounters across the socio-spatial divide. Deane's depressing view on the border is certainly a function of the time and the place he grew up in, and he has depicted the crippling impact of life on "a sectarian border" to stunning effect in his novel *Reading in the Dark*. Published in 1996, *Reading in the Dark* is set in Derry's Bogside in the decades leading up to the outbreak of the civil war. Traditionally a republican, working-class neighbourhood in a loyalist-run council, the Bogside is inexorably woven into the narrative fabric of the Civil Rights movement and the early Troubles. It is also the birthplace of both Seamus Deane and Eamonn McCann and, as Maurice Fitzpatrick has shown, it constitutes the cornerstone of both men's socio-political education.[33] The novel evolves around a Catholic working-class family that has been rendered dysfunctional by constant exposure to what Deane in the above quote calls the "fertile progeny of internal borders." Significantly, Deane's equation of these borders with prison walls allows for a Foucauldian reading of the Irish borderlands. The prison metaphor can be read in terms of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, an architectural arrangement

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[33] In his book *The Boy's of St Columbs'*, which accompanies the documentary film of the same name, Fitzpatrick investigates the impact of the 1947 Education Act on Northern Irish society. He focusses on eight Catholic graduates – Deane and McCann among them – of St Columbs' College in Derry/Londonderry, all of whom were "beneficiaries of the Education Act" (1). In his interview with Fitzpatrick, Deane recalls that "[i]t was made obvious to some of us by some of the teachers that to be from the Bogside, to be from the working class, was a distinct disadvantage; that we shouldn't be here" (80). With regard to McCann, Fitzpatrick summarises: "What comes through strongest in McCann's interview is his involvement in all aspects of the Bogside where he grew up and continues to live" (91). McCann himself tells Fitzpatrick that "[t]he fact that there was a generation of Catholics who had gone to secondary school as a result of the Eleven Plus examination certainly was a material factor in the development of the civil rights movement" (109).

facilitating the exertion of power over each individual inmate through the pretence of incessant surveillance. The wide-ranging analysis of the Panopticon occupied Foucault in his 1975 study *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. "[T]he Panopticon", Foucault elaborates there,

> must not be perceived as dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use. (*Discipline* 205).

While Bentham envisioned the Panopticon as the perfect prison site (*Discipline* 206), the panoptic system functions generally "within [any] space not too large to be covered or commanded by buildings" (Bentham qtd. in *Discipline* 205-206). It appears that even the Irish border, in spite of its 360 kilometres in length, was not too large a space to be subjected to the "political technology" of panoptic surveillance. As Carr points out in *The Rule of the Land*, during Operation Banner,[34] the British Army sprinkled the border with a great number of military watchtowers, the first of which was erected in 1977 (45; 47). Variously termed "Security Posts" or "Spy Posts" (45), the watchtowers were an especially prominent feature of life in the border county of Armagh. Carr summarises:

> From almost everywhere in South Armagh you could see a tower and a tower could see you. Their fields of vision overlapped, […] each tower had line of sight with at least one other. Driving home or working your land it was possible that you were being watched through a 500 mm telescopic lens, or maybe the soldiers were looking into another direction, or nowhere at all. […] The towers gave South Armagh the feel of an open prison. (*The Rule* 47)

This "open prison" of South Armagh, which manifested itself in concrete architectural structures along the border, corresponds uncannily with Deane's term "prison walls." Both accounts testify to the Panopticon as a system that originates from and, at the same time, maintains the border. As Carr's description of South Armagh illustrates, border discourses and the practice of surveillance are inherently interlinked – while the practice of surveillance has multiple fields of application away from the border, the border, in turn, has little tangible existence without the practice of surveillance. The experience of surveillance, concrete or abstract, real or imagined, external or internalised, has been part and parcel of life on the Irish border.

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[34] Operation Banner refers to the British Army's deployment in Northern Ireland and lasted almost forty years, from 1969 to 2007. The first of the border watchtowers was torn down in 2005 (Mark Oliver n. pag.).

Both the practice of surveillance and border discourses are prominent themes in Eoin McNamee's 2010 novel *Orchid Blue*, which testifies to pre-conflict Northern Ireland as a "static society" where socio-spatial change is rendered virtually impossible by the impermeable unionist elites (McKittrick and McVea 1). *Orchid Blue* is the second book in McNamee's *Blue* trilogy (consisting, further, of *Blue Tango* (2000) and *Blue is the Night* (2014), which evolves around the real-life murder case of Patricia Curran, Lord Justice Lancelot Curran's daughter, near her family home in 1952. This second instalment of the trilogy is based on the historical murder case of Pearl Gamble, a young shop assistant from the Northern Irish border town of Newry. Robert McGladdery was found guilty of the crime and executed in Crumlin Road jail in Belfast in December 1961. In the novel, however, McGladdery' culpability is constantly cast in doubt and remains unresolved to the end. As is typical for McNamee's writing, narrative linearity and trustworthiness are undermined by a new historical foregrounding of the selection of sources that necessarily predicates the construction of any narrative account. In the novel, the murder case is assigned to Detective Eddie McCrink, who is struggling to identify Pearl's truthful killer while the unionist political elites appear determined to make an example of executing McGladdery. *Orchid Blue* is an almost entirely 'institutionalised' novel that offers a sinister version of the workings of the unionist state authorities without taking recourse to sectarian paradigms; its concern is with the abuse of class-based power. Focussing on Northern Irish state institutions such as prisons, judicial courts and police services under unionist rule, the novel portrays Northern Ireland as a heterotopic place in the Foucauldian sense. As Foucault writes:

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places […] which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. ("Other Spaces" 24)

In *Orchid Blue*, Northern Ireland under unionist rule emerges as such a kind of place: a place that is "real" but that is, at the same time, "outside of all places," adhering as it does to a rule of law that is exclusive to it. In *Orchid Blue*, the Northern Irish state has clearly been designed to suit and serve the interests of the unionist elites and, as such, it is a "perfect," "meticulous" and "well arranged" heterotopic place ("Other Spaces" 27) if looked at through the prism of unionist power interests. Interestingly, the novel highlights sectarianism as a place-specific instrument of capitalism, and thus taps into the Marxist line of the Irish nationalist tradition. Sectarianism as well as the static condition of Northern Irish society are

depicted as a function of class interest which is criticised from a socialist point of view. John Speers, the RUC detective investigating the murder of Pearl Gamble, voices this conviction explicitly to his colleague. Referring to the unionist political elites, Speers claims that their class interest trumps their sectarian hatreds: "If there's anything they hate more than a taig [a Catholic], it's a commie" (McNamee, *Orchid Blue* 16).

Just returned from the Metropolitan Police in London, Detective McCrink finds himself sabotaged by the unionist elites while his investigative work is further complicated by a particular communal code of conduct that owes its secretiveness to Newry's location on the Irish border. When he asks his Newry lover "if [she] knew McGladdery," her affirmative answer teaches him a lesson about the subtle and sinister Panopticism that is steadily at work along the Irish border:

> 'How come you never told me?'
>
> 'You never asked.' Falling into the town accent, the marsh-town guttural. He sat up in bed and looked at her. Beginning to grasp the town, the frontier place. The people and their infiltrated hearts. The way that information was never offered. You had to go looking for it, the way they worked off the undeclared and the withheld. He had noticed that people in the town answered the phone without speaking. You found yourself babbling into the void. (McNamee, *Orchid Blue* 183)

In McCrink's observation, the local way of speaking, what he dismissively calls "the marsh-town guttural," goes hand in hand with, and even predicates, utterances devoid of meaning and information. This broken spoken language of the border is based on yielding nothing that the interrogator does not already know. What is more, it is meant to de-connect the content of the message from the sender so as to make the source of the information unidentifiable. As such, it is a measure of both self-protection and compliance, of remaining under the radar of the ever-alert powers-that-be. The border dwellers' "infiltrated hearts" are a tangible, internalised result of the panoptic machine along the border, which has turned them into their own most rigorous censors – they have internalised what Foucault terms "the principle of [their] own subjection" (*Discipline* 203; cf. 201-203; 206).

In Eoin McNamee's fiction as much as elsewhere, the theme of surveillance – from within as much as from without – figures prominently. It is a staple in much of the cultural output focussing on the North, where spatial segregation has tended to correlate with the maintenance of "disciplinary régimes" (Foucault, "Body/Power" 58) by each of the two dominant traditions and the corresponding paramilitary organisations. This socio-spatial set-up has necessarily been complicated by the state authorities who pursue the implementation of "a disciplinary society" that will further their own agenda in Northern Ireland. In

Discipline and Punish, Foucault defines "discipline" as "a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy' of power, a technology" (215). Concurrently, the "disciplinary society," which is founded on this understanding of discipline, marks a shift

> from the enclosed disciplines […] to an indefinitely generalizable mechanism of 'panopticism'. Not because the disciplinary modality of power has replaced all the others; but because it has infiltrated the others, sometimes undermining them, but serving as an intermediary between them, linking them together, extending them and above all making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements. (Foucault, *Discipline* 216)

The texts emerging from the liminal position of what Mary Louise Pratt, in her study of European travel literature, has called "'contact zones,' social spheres where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (15) are able to challenge the dominant cultural discourses that determine such hegemonic constructs as national borders and the identities they produce and enclose. They act as counter-discourses to the boundaries of "ethnic opposition" (Smith, *Nationalism* 181) that draw on group-specific cultural "symbols" (182) and "legitimising myths" (183) as "border guards" (182). They can offer sites of resistance that juxtapose, contest and undermine what is deemed an acceptable utterance within of the dominant discourse of the disciplinary society.

Seamus Heaney has made a related observation in his 1989 essay *The Place of Writing*, where he describes the ways in which, in the act of writing, places are discursively defined only to be discursively contested at a later stage. He claims that writing is capable of bringing into existence a certain 'geographical imagination' that might then, within the confines of the same text, be interrogated and challenged. Heaney writes:

> the poetic imagination in its strongest manifestation imposes its vision upon a place rather than accepts a vision from it; […] this visionary imposition is never exempt from the imagination's antithetical ability to subvert its own creation. In other words, once the place has been brought into written existence, it is inevitable that it be unwritten. (20)

These reciprocal processes of constructing and deconstructing a "vision of place" are crucial to many of the texts that deal with border crossings between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Heaney's preoccupation with the ways in which the "poetic imagination" bears on the creation of place implicitly foregrounds his belief in the individual's capacity to imagine and initiate spatial change. Whether this spatial change finds expression in poetic or any other written or, indeed, oral form is assumed to be of secondary relevance in the context of border discourses. Larry Trenton Hickman argues a related point

in the introduction to his doctoral dissertation on *Border Literatures in Twentieth-Century American Literature*. Hickman takes his cue from Henry Lefebvre's 1991 study *The Production of Space*, which explained "the production and reproduction of social space" through the three interwoven processes of "spatial practice," "the representation of space," and the creation of "representational spaces" (Hickman 5-6). While acknowledging Lefebvre's substantial achievement, Hickman critiques Lefebvre's failure to account for "the role of the individual in the production of space, although his macroscopic observations depend on the efforts of such individuals" (7-8). In an attempt to close this conceptual gap, Hickman draws on Michel de Certeau's notion of the "spatial story" which puts "much more emphasis on the role of the individual in shaping a society's space-clearing activity" (8). From this process of conceptual complementation, Hickman draws the crucial conclusion that

> [r]oom exists for individuals in the act of space-clearing, then; indeed, individual stories that help a people collectively 'imagine' their claims to a parcel of land at the microsocial level – even if, as in the case of the borderlands, they have little or no political recognition of this space – allow for the Lefebvrian 'spaces of representation' and 'representational spaces' to arise at macrosocial ones. (9)

In Hickman's assertion, a subtle connection to Heaney's "poetic imagination" becomes discernible. Hickman, too, relies on the power of the individual's imagination in the production of an always contestable vision of place. For the contestation of space, along the border or elsewhere, the individual's "act of space-clearing" assumes special importance. As Hickman shows, from these individual efforts, group-specific discursive practices arise that legitimise the domestication of a shared place and that invest this place with social meaning. But for Hickman, the production of space across the border does not stop here. He goes on to claim that "[a] border space, then, can exist across a geopolitical border or between geopolitical borders that are geographically remote but still share cultural 'contact zones'" (10). In other words, communal spatial stories can be forged irrespective of geographical neighbourhood provided that they "fire a group's collective 'imagination' to the point that they clear mental and cultural 'space' in its mind for such a border zone" (10). For the present study, such a production of communal spaces beyond the immediate context of the geographical border is only of little direct relevance. Nevertheless, it goes to illustrate the importance of individual narrative for the communal 'geographical imagination.' The narrative of space-clearing in Hickman's sense of the phrase features in many of the visual

and verbal texts that centre on the Irish borderlands, while these texts themselves are, of course, instances of this very practice.

In this context, narrative renderings of the border county of Donegal tend to assume a special cultural position. In Irish border narratives, Donegal often functions as what I would like to call a 'space of projection' – a space against which different idealised 'geographical imaginations' of Northern Ireland are constructed, only to be critically subverted at a later stage. For some reason, the border counties of Cavan and Monaghan, which were equally part of the traditional province of Ulster and which the border equally reallocated to the Republic in the south, do not seem to be functioning in this specific fashion. This might partly be due to what Deane terms "the most standard nationalist/republican response to the border in Derry," namely, "that it has cut the city off from its natural hinterland of Donegal and has thereby damaged both places" (Untitled 27). Especially for the nationalist/republican cultural imagination, then, the Derry/Donegal divide might come to represent a point of crystallisation for the rejection of the border and, by extension, the state of Northern Ireland. It is, certainly, of further relevance that substantial parts of Donegal belong to the Gaeltacht, on the oft-mythologised rural West coast of Ireland. In 1965, Harry Percival Swan posited that "the traditional Gaelic way of life is as much in evidence there as it was a hundred years ago" (254). These cultural factors combined with Donegal's geographical isolation – not part of Northern Ireland but also "separated from [the Republic] by County Fermanagh" (Swan vii) – make Donegal amenable to discursive insertions into "specific envelopes of space-*time*" (D. Massey, "Places" 188, emphasis in original). In Northern Irish border texts, Donegal tends to be imagined as a closely delineated place that offers a resource of traditional Irish culture against both which nationalist and unionist senses of belonging are thrown into relief in various ways. It provides a foil against which Northern Ireland can be constructed as a place apart, and against which the border itself is inscribed with meaning, and it is variously depicted, in Anderson and O'Dowd's words, as either "'Prison' or 'refuge', […] facilitat[ing] oppression or provid[ing] an escape from it" (596).

This process of establishing national alterity creates specific subject-positions that can be assumed, negotiated or contested at a fictional level within the broader discourses of communal belonging in the North. Many narratives pivot on decidedly individual encounters with the border as a demarcation of disparate national communities and the authoritative narratives they entail. Invariably, protagonists feel compelled to negotiate their subject-positions with regard to these discursive systems that demand obedience and that are invariably linked to conceptualisations of the land itself. In this context, Anthony D. Smith's

elaborations on "sacred homelands" sheds some light on representations of Donegal as a 'space of projection.' In his view, "there are two kinds of sacred homeland: one is the promised land, the land of destination; the other is the ancestral homeland, the land of birth" (*Chosen Peoples* 137).

Donegal is often cast as an "ancestral homeland" for Northern nationalists, who experience it as an identity resource that sharpens their self-perception as "orphans of secession" (McGarry qtd. in Wolff 28) within the Northern Irish state. Representations of Donegal as an "ancestral homeland" are provided, for example, by Seamus Deane's aforementioned *Reading in the Dark* and Jennifer Johnston's *Shadows on our Skin* (1977). Both novels are border texts that convey a sense of the liminal position of Derry Catholics walking the tight line between the discipline reinforced by the British administration on the one hand and the discipline demanded by their own community on the other. The situation is aggravated by the geographical proximity of the border. The sense of imprisonment inspires escapist trajectories across the border, where the border county of Donegal is imagined as a site of unspoiled Gaelic history. Interestingly, both novels feature the Gaelic ring fort Grianan just across the border and present it as an identity resource for their Catholic protagonists. Especially in *Reading in the Dark*, it becomes a site of Gaelic ancestral history, which is claimed by Northern nationalists through 'spatial stories' and the narrative practices of "space-clearing" (Hickman 9). As part of the traditional Irish province of Ulster which the border reallocated to the Republic in the south, Donegal takes on a central function in embodying contending 'geographical imaginations' and is often cast as the original homeland for Northern Irish nationalists.

Less common is the complementary perspective of Protestant "orphans of cessation" in the southern Irish borderlands, who have to carve out their spaces of articulation against dominant state-centric discourses. One such perspective is offered by David Park's novel *Stone Kingdoms* (1996), which features the family of a Protestant priest serving a sparse Donegal community. The text rings the changes on the theme of 'being under siege,' which is of paramount importance in the unionist grand narrative and which suggests that unionists would be, in a united Ireland, outnumbered by Irish Catholics. The family experience their lives in terms of this conceptual metaphor, feeling deprived of space not only by their Catholic neighbours but also expelled by the actual givens of nature. Naomi, the priest's daughter, experiences her surroundings in hostile terms:

> There should be some magic in growing up by the sea, but I never feel my life touched
> by it [...] whether it is the fine slant of grey rain which mists almost invisibly in from

the Atlantic, or the squalls rattling the loose glass of my bedroom window, it feels as if we are outsiders, interlopers whom the elements conspire to convict. [...] There is always the unspoken feeling that our future is under some kind of threat, and so we watch the world from behind our walls, hug the assurance of our certainties, the conviction of our election. (11-12)

The belief that they are entitled to possession of the 'promised land' by virtue of their Protestant election, their covenant with God, is countered by an almost archaic experience of nature as an absolute force. The absence of a Protestant ancestral history rooted in the land itself precipitates their status as "outsiders" as much as the illegitimacy of any future territorial claims. Donegal emerges as a space equally striated by the inward reproduction of the national border; and here, too, the ethno-cultural boundaries call to mind Deane's "prison walls." This representation of a marginalised Protestant community in the southern borderlands subverts an easy understanding of the Republic as a homogenous entity that out-idealises the conflict-ridden North of Ireland. Also, Smith's differentiation between "the promised land" and the "ancestral homeland" (*Chosen Peoples* 137) makes it possible to analyse the ways in which Donegal is represented as the focal point for contending 'geographical imaginations' and for the corresponding understandings of the border. Donegal becomes a 'space of projection' for contending senses of place, and epitomizes the "contradictions [that abound] at borders" (Anderson and O'Dowd 596).

Other border texts choose to mount their criticism at a more abstract level in that they depict the border as an artificial imposition that disturbs the alleged seamlessness of the Irish landscape, dividing its inhabitants. Derry-born photographer Willie O'Doherty, for instance, pokes fun at the geographical misnomer "Northern" Ireland[35] with his 1988 photograph "The Other Side" (101). It is a black-and-white photograph of a tilled field, at the far end of which lies a town, presumably Derry, and a range of hills beyond. It is taken from the middle of the field and at such an angle that the end of the field divides the photograph in two, separating the foreground (the field) from the background (the town). In white capital letters, the town on the left is embossed with "west is south," and the field on the right with "east is north." The title of the work, "The Other Side," appears in larger letters at the bottom of the photograph. Doherty thus shows the imposition of the border to make the territory un-navigable and illegible. Far from establishing a sense of order, it renders either side 'the other side,' making them equally unrecognisable: it creates a world of insecurity in which

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[35] It is inappropriate since the border cut off Donegal as the most northerly county, allocating it to the Republic of Ireland, or 'the South' (Buckland 127); as Carr remarks, "the new state would have looked tidier on the map with Donegal included" (*The Rule* 217-18).

the cardinal points cease to provide any sense of orientation, and in which linguistic signifiers are deprived of their semantic contents.

In a similar vein, the chaotic liminality they entail makes the borderlands amenable to the purposes of crime fiction. Brian McGilloway's 2007 novel *Borderlands*, for example, draws on the administrative difficulties of cross-border policing. In his text, the border is criticized as an abstract entity which, cutting across social relations, does not coincide with spatially expressed social divisions but only serves to establish two government bodies whose necessary cooperation it undermines:

> The peculiarities of the Irish border are famous. Eighty years ago it was drawn through fields, farms and rivers by civil servants who knew little more about the area than that which they'd learnt from a map. […] When a crime occurs in an area not clearly in one jurisdiction or another, the Irish Republic's An Garda Siochana and the Police Service of Northern Ireland work together […] the lead detective determined generally by either the location of the body or the nationality of the victim. (3-4).

McGilloway's narrative establishes an ironic reading of the border, suggesting that the creation of the border was a badly executed administrative act, which ultimately failed to restore order to an Ireland uprooted by the Home Rule Movement in the 1920s. Here, the border only succeeds at opening up a liminal space of the in-between in which the correspondence of location and nationality as the foundation of the nation-state (cf. Massey "Imagining" 21) is prised apart. This artificial border country is a transgressive space in that it offers a sanctuary for deviant behaviour, which has to be staged at the overlapping margins of Irish societies, both north and south.

2.1 Crossing the Border: Lucy Caldwell's *Where They Were Missed* (2006)

Writing in 1993 on the widening cleft between the Republic of Ireland and its northern counterpart across the border, Eamonn McCann cites the Warrington bomb in March of the same year as one of the points at which this estrangement crystallised. "The protests against the Warrington bomb revived one of the recurring arguments of bourgeois Dublin commentary on the North", he writes, namely "that IRA violence has been the main factor not just in the rejection of the Republican movement by Southerners, but also in the cooling of the South's ardour for a united Ireland" (*War and an Irish Town* 3). While McCann makes concessions to this line of argument, he insists that a simple rejection of political violence alone did not account for the South's increasing disassociation from the North. Always true to his socialist beliefs, McCann considers the question of inter-Irish relations "[f]rom the

working-class point of view" (3), and argues that the presence of the British Army in Northern Ireland has had but little relevance for the social problems faced by the southern working-class population. The doors at which the southern and northern working-class populations respectively have laid their grievances are, to him, utterly different: "When, during the course of the Northern Troubles, Southerners have organized against oppression […] they have not found the British presence in the North standing in their way, but the Catholic church and conservative nationalism" (4). In Northern Ireland, however, the Catholic population sees itself confronted with an administrational apparatus that does not regard them "as equal citizens" and that is, importantly, kept in place by "the British forces" (5).

Another constant and equally important factor has remained unchanged, McCann claims, in the two decades between the first publication of his book and its 1993 edition: "the Southern ruling class has no longer any economic reason for constitutional dispute with Britain. Economic self-interest, not spinelessness, provides the explanation" (*War and an Irish Town* 6). This explanation, McCann argues, is difficult to stomach for Northern nationalists who in turn refuse "to see what's under [their] nose" because it contradicts the much invoked "essence of nationalism – the notion of a common national interest in pursuing the old dispute with Britain" (7). Hard economic facts and figures thus complicate and, in fact, criss-cross the trajectories of allegiance as imposed by traditional national sentiment. McCann argues:

> As with the South, Britain looks different when seen in class terms. […] A caricature account of political and communal loyalties in the North would have it that the Protestants feel an association with Britain but hate the Catholic nationalist South, whereas the Catholics relate positively to the South but hate Britain as the oppressor. As with all caricatures, there's some truth in this. But it's not the only truth. When Catholic workers think of themselves as workers, they tend to look across the water rather than across the border. (57-58)

McCann's fellow Derryman[36] Seamus Deane expresses a similar stance at the very end of *Reading in the Dark*. In the novel, a British soldier is killed by the IRA on the doorsteps of

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[36] As, for example, BBC Radio Ulster's *Stories in Sound* series documented in an episode entitled "Broke City," Derry/Londonderry's experience of disproportionate economic deprivation has its roots in the late nineteenth century. A play-on-words on Derry's byname "Stroke City," the episode "Broke City" references the decline of the shirt-making industry, the impact of the Troubles as well as gerrymander as possible reasons for the city's economic decline. Whether or not the imposition of the border acted as an accessory in aggravating Londonderry's economic position remains unresolved in the programme. While some insist that is the case, highlighting the fact that the border severed the socio-economic ties between Derry and Donegal, others suggest that Derry's economy never catered to the Irish market in the first place.

the narrator's parents in the Bogside when the civil war erupts in the late 1960s. The narrator's father, himself an electrician's mate, feels empathy for the soldier's father, a miner from Yorkshire, "[e]ven if his son was one of those" (232). The shared experience of working-class fatherhood seemingly allows for emotional proximity in spite of mutually exclusive concepts of state authority and legitimacy.

The cross-border perspectives of the two dominant religious communities thus seemingly vary depending on which identity-cap – national or class – they choose to wear. As McCann has persistently deplored ever since he first entered the political landscape as a Civil Rights agitator in the 1960s, workers across Northern Ireland have been slow to re-form their community allegiances according to socialist identity-categories. He continues to argue that

> […t]his also reflects the fact that the North's economy is meshed into Britain's, the trade union laws and economic policies which affect us are made and can only be unmade in Britain, funding for community and voluntary projects is routed through British rather than Irish agencies and institutions, and so on. (*War and an Irish Town* 58)

Admittedly, since the Good Friday Agreement was reached in 1998, much has changed concerning the distribution of funding for community projects, the voluntary sector, and cultural and academic initiatives. Not least the European Union has been crucial in providing substantial financial support for peace-building initiatives, while strong and enduring cross-border cooperation was enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement. The institutions established under Strand Two coordinate those economic sectors that are of common interest to both administrations on the island, such as fishing, tourism and cross-border trade. The Good Friday Agreement thus ensures the enduring participation of both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland in Northern Irish affairs. As the "kin states" of both traditional Northern Irish communities, they are given proportionate responsibility in the process of peace-building (Wolff 3, 31).

Such cross-border peace-building efforts on behalf of one's national "kin" have been hard won. For the longest time after the early seventies, the Republic of Ireland seems to have been perplexed by the violence across the border and, also, eager to wash its hands off it – as if its own moment of national birth in 1921 had not also spawned its twin state in the North. Writing in 2010, Maurice Fitzpatrick observed the deepening divide between both Irish states with regret, suggesting that "[t]his alienation [was] a result of an unconscious acceptance of a divided Ireland by the majority of people in the Republic" (7; also see

McKittrick and McVea 22-24). One of the points at which this alienation tangibly crystallised is highlighted by Glenn Patterson, who recounts a "story" passed on by southern Irish novelist Colm Tóibin. The story relates to Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972 and to the protest that erupted in front of the British Embassy in Dublin as a as a result of it. Only three days later, on 2 February 1972, a body of people "estimated at between 20,000 and 30,000 strong" ("On this Day" n. pag.) set fire to the British Embassy in Merrion Square, Dublin, and burned the building to the ground in response to the killing of thirteen civilians at the hands of a Parachute Regiment of the British Army. Patterson writes:

> That night […] says Colm Tóibin, who was there, was pivotal, not just for him as an individual, but for all of Southern Irish society. There were only two options: you either followed through on the logic of the flames – threw yourself heart and soul into the conflagration that was raging across the border – or you let the embassy fire be an end point. […] In the aftermath of 2 February 1972, the Republic of Ireland […] turned its back on the North and in the same metaphoric motion turned its face towards Europe. (Patterson, "Poles Apart?" 68-69)

According to this story, the Republic of Ireland choose for the time being not to become actively involved in the conflict that would determine the destiny of its brother state. Both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom joined the EEC the year following Bloody Sunday, in 1973, and thus found a stage on which to interact that was not restricted to the political upheaval in Northern Ireland. It is no coincidence, then, that the (later renamed) European Union's involvement in the peace process has in turn acted as a bracket to keep focussed the joint endeavours of British and Irish governments in Northern Ireland during the long-winded political negotiations. It kept the nationalist North in the EEC/EU along with the South of Ireland while safeguarding the union between unionist Northern Ireland and Great Britain. On a less abstract level, it also pumped a substantial amount of much needed funding into regional peace-building projects. Summarising the EU funds that supported Irish cross-border projects during the years from 1995-2013, Cathal McCall concluded in 2011: "Hard economic times limit room for future development, indeed they are likely to result in a contraction of the Irish border region cultural landscape with unpredictable results, not least across Northern Ireland's innumerable internal ethno-national borders" (164). It is in the face of such cuts in cultural funding and, more importantly, in light of Brexit, that literature, and the arts in general, still can and do continue to forge shared cultural landscapes across the border.

This subchapter analyses the representation of geographical and metaphorical border crossings in Lucy Caldwell's 2006 novel *Where They Were Missed* and looks at the specific

'geographical imagination' that is put forward by way of these border crossings. The discussion of Caldwell's novel foreshadows much of the discussion that will further below be dedicated to Steve McQueen's 2008 film *Hunger*. In their treatment of the Irish border, as will be seen, the verbal and the visual text move effortlessly between representations of metaphorical boundaries in the context of personal development, self-determination and communal belonging and, at the other end of the spectrum, representations of Northern Ireland as what Eamonn Hughes has called "a category of one" ("Northern Ireland – Border Country" 1), that is, a place closed in on itself, constricted by definite political lines and surveyed by contending disciplinary régimes that crush any possibility of individual agency. For all their obvious differences, both *Where They Were Missed* and *Hunger* illustrate the correspondences that exists at an individual level between the 'geographical imagination' and that which the philosopher Peter Goldie refers to as "narrative sense of self" (ch. 6; esp. 118-24).[37] He writes: "The narrative sense of self […] is the sense that one has of oneself in narrative thinking, as having a past, a present, and a future. I emphasize the 'sense' in the expression 'narrative sense of self', for it is […] a way of thinking of oneself, or of others, in narrative thinking" (118). The protagonists in both *Where They Were Missed* and *Hunger* experience a rupture in their narrative senses of self that is conditioned by the hegemonic discourses clustering around and, spreading outward from, the national border, and that can only be reconciled by recourse to that very border and to County Donegal beyond. Both draw on what de Certeau calls "spatial stories" to claim a space across the border for themselves and to open up a space of individual agency and empowerment to which they do not necessarily have a territorial or political claim (cf. Hickman 9). In "Spatial Stories," de Certeau writes:

> By considering the role of story in delimitation, one can see that the primary function is to authorize the establishment, displacement or transcendence of limits, and as a consequence to set into opposition […] two movements that intersect (setting and transgressing limits) in such a way as to make the story a sort of "crossword" decoding stencil […] whose essential narrative figures seem to be the frontier and the bridge. (123)

De Certeau's point, namely that the story serves to define the necessary, 'legitimate' frame within which, or beyond which, an action might occur, dovetails with the argument made by Heaney in *The Place of Writing*. Asserting the power of the "poetic imagination" to fashion a "visionary imposition" that portrays a place according to new paradigms, he

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[37] In my 2016 article "Belfast Memories," I applied this theoretical approach to the analysis of place-specific autobiographical remembering in Owen McCafferty's plays.

instantaneously asserts the reverse movement, namely "the imagination's antithetical ability to subvert its own creation" (20). Heaney's notion of subversion seems related to de Certeau's notion of transgression: Just as the poetic vision of a place always already requires its own subversion, the narrative delimitations drawn in a story always already predicate their own transgression. The spatial story is thus capable of combining two opposing concepts, those of the frontier and of the bridge. With his invocation of the spatial story, and of the frontier and the bridge as the pertaining narrative figures, de Certeau seems to have foreshadowed the more recent concern in the field of Border Studies to define the social, economic and political prerequisites that might allow for "[t]he reconceptualization of a border as a bridge" (McCall 155). Writing in 2011, McCall argued that the Irish borderlands began to increasingly function as a bridge, as a shared cultural space, once the "political and violent threats from Irish nationalism and republicanism" began to subside and "cultural differences and commonalities could be explored through local 'grassroots' community contact and dialogue" (158).

In both *Where They Were Missed* and *Hunger*, the protagonists draw on autobiographically meaningful spatial stories to determine and justify their complex subject positions opposite the simplified norms of binary national belonging and communal expectation. Their spatial stories are stories of border crossings that feature the Irish border as both frontier and bridge and that retrospectively offer a "decoding stencil" for their identity-giving life narratives. For both protagonists, their crossing of the border takes place within a communal narrative frame that is ultimately transcended by their personal spatial stories.

Stories of Home and of Retreat

Where They Were Missed (2006) is a highly allegorical coming-of-age narrative that is told from the first-person perspective of Saoirse Pentland. *Where They Were Missed* may not yet glitter with the same stylistic brilliance as, for example, Caldwell's later collection of short stories, *Multitudes* (2016), but it renders Saoirse's childhood and adolescence in all their emotional singularity in a strong and striking voice that lends itself effortlessly to Saoirse's almost seven- and almost-seventeen-year-old selves. Saoirse's first-person narrative is subdivided into three separate parts that coincide with her young life's spatio-temporal trajectories: past, present and, tentatively, future. The first part of the novel is entitled

"Belfast," which is where Saoirse was born in 1971, and takes place in Northern Ireland in the marching season of 1978. The second part, called "Gweebarra Bay," as well as the third and much shorter part, called "Greyabbey," take place in 1988, when Saoirse is almost seventeen. While "Gweebarra Bay" is set in the border county of Donegal, in the Republic of Ireland, the final chapter "Greyabbey" deals with Saoirse's car journey across the border and over the Glenshane Pass, back into her native North, to visit her father and his second wife, who has just given birth to Saoirse's half-sister. The narrative imaginary of Saoirse's young life has evolved around these three spatio-temporal trajectories as its defining axes, and her coming-of-age narrative is intricately linked to the national border that cuts across Saoirse's family and that has fragmented her sense of self as a socially embedded being. In her struggle for self-reconciliation, Saoirse has to carry out the difficult work of individuation not only across outer frontiers, but also across the conflicted contradictions of individual experience and existence.

Saoirse is a reluctant but natural-born border crosser, and this capacity finds expression in her name: While her first name, "Saoirse," is the Irish word for "freedom," her family name, "Pentland," is a contraction of the phrase "penned land" and hence implies constriction.[38] Her name allegorically unites both dominant political traditions in the North of Ireland, paying tribute to the nationalist ideal of 'freedom' from British rule as much as to unionist ideals of holding on to and, if need be, defending the territory of Ulster. What is more, her name foreshadows the seemingly paradox interpretations of the national divide as bridge and frontier at the same time. Saoirse is the offspring of a cross-border, cross-community marriage, with her mother stemming from the Donegal Gaeltacht in the Republic and her father being a RUC man from Greyabbey on the Northern Irish Ards Peninsula. Growing up in East Belfast in the seventies, Saoirse finds herself confronted with the divisive discourses of national belonging from an early age. Living in the midst of a predominantly Protestant residential area, she and her younger sister Daisy are constantly surrounded by expressions of unionist culture in which their Catholic mother does not allow them to participate. By the time the novel opens in 1978, both children have already become the objects of sectarian bullying in the neighbourhood: their southern Irish mother renders them suspect to the community in which they live.

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[38] I am indebted to Eamonn Hughes, who made me aware of the allegorical implication of Saoirse's name and who provided the translation.

As in Caldwell's later novella *The Furthest Distance*, published in 2009, the narrative of *Where They Were Missed* follows the female protagonist's winding path into adult individuation – a path whose course is complicated by disparate parental narratives of national and social belonging. Just as *Where They Were Missed*, *The Furthest Distance* begins in 1978, when the female protagonist, Brooklyn, travels with her parents from her New York home to her parents' native Derry/Londonderry. Even as a young child, Brooklyn realises that "Her mommy and daddy didn't agree what Home was" (*The Furthest Distance* 17) and, as the narrative proceeds, this fundamental difference between the parents is shown to play itself out in different domains until their inevitable separation occurs. Similarly, Saoirse's parents in *Where They Were Missed* do not share a 'geographical imagination' of Northern Ireland, nor do they possess a joint sense of their place in it as a family unit. As the civil war escalates on the streets of Belfast, Saoirse's father becomes increasingly sucked up in the violence on the streets and, as a result, Saoirse's mother comes to resent her husband as much as the state in which they live. In his capacity as a policeman, he comes to symbolise to her, by way of extension, that which is amiss in the political make-up of the Northern Irish state in which she is an outsider and cannot be at home. When Saoirse's father fails to return from work in time for his younger daughter Daisy's birthday celebration, her mother's reaction is dismissive and scornful: "Blame your father, she says again. Then she says, Blame this bloody country" (*Where They Were Missed* 6). As Brooklyn, Saoirse, too, seems to have been named for her parents' joint aspiration, which is shattered on the rocks of the political realities and beliefs that govern their individual and, thus, their separate lives.

In many ways, Saoirse's complicated path into adulthood is an extension of her mother's failed attempt at self-determination and individuation. Saoirse's mother, Deirdre, was seventeen when she met, and fell in love with, her future husband, Colin, after a civil rights event in Derry in 1968. At the age of seventeen, Deirdre was a political young woman from the South who fervently believed in the civil rights movement in the North and for whom loving Colin seems to have been the ultimate expression of her political resistance and protest (see *Where They Were Missed* 104; 147). Both her political involvement as much as her relationship, however, she felt impelled to keep secret from her parents. As Colin explains to his sixteen-year old daughter, "[t]hem living in the Gaeltacht, me a wee Prod from up North, and a 'B Special' to boot – no, Deirdre said it was more than her life was worth for them to know" (148). Deirdre's sense of foreboding was proved right with terrible consequences when her father finally did find out about her relationship with Colin. Unwilling to end her relationship and five months pregnant with Saoirse, Deirdre left her

parental home for Belfast, even though she knew that her father would disown her in consequence. In Deirdre's parents' attitude to the North, the complete degree of the socio-cultural disassociation of the Republic of Ireland from the Northern Irish state becomes manifest. That Donegal's geographical proximity to the national divide does not entail or predicate a cultural proximity, imagined or otherwise, to the people on the other side testifies to the identity work carried out by both Irish states in the wake of the island's the political separation. While Deidre begins her married life in Belfast with all the hunger of one enthused to be "finally free" (209), her mental health is eventually crushed by the anxieties of a life lived in the midst of sectarianism and random violence. By the time the novel begins in 1978, only seven years after Deirdre first came to Belfast, she is suffering from severe alcoholism and her marriage to Colin has already failed. When her youngest daughter Daisy is killed in a traffic accident, Deirdre leaves Belfast with Saoirse and returns to her home place in Gweebarra Bay in Donegal, but is finally unable to stitch the pieces of her unravelled life back together: Following a severe nervous break-down, Deirdre is hospitalised and remains so at her own request. In the end, her initial border crossing does turn out to have been "more than her life was worth."

In her attempt at braiding together the different strands of her life narrative to form one coherent and meaningful account on which to build her own sense of self, Saoirse is compelled to retrace her mother's steps across the border. She is sixteen when she realises that her father as well as her aunt and uncle, with whom she lives in Donegal, have over the years united their efforts in keeping from her the truth about her mother's alcoholism and subsequent hospitalisation. Saoirse grew up in the belief that her mother had abandoned her shortly after they came to Gweebarra Bay and that none of her family knew Deirdre's whereabouts. Triggered by an incident that involved her drinking too much following a camogie match, Saoirse first learns about her mother's alcohol abuse and slowly begins to grasp the fragmented nature of her childhood memories in relation to the totality of her relatives' stories. Further, she begins to realise that her closest relatives perceive her, at least in part, through the misted lens of her mother's weaknesses and failures. Confronted with her mother's alcoholism and her father's worry about her own drinking, Saoirse reacts with the vehemence of one whose sense of self is put in question: "Well, I'm not my mother! I interrupt, and my voice comes out too high-pitched. I'm not – I'm me" (108). Part of Saoirse's dilemma is that she feels compelled to defend herself against an allegation the full extent of which she does not know. The inexplicable absence of her mother is a blind spot in her life that Saoirse cannot frame in a meaningful narrative. This blind spot does not only

precariously undermine Saoirse's most fundamental social relationships, it also puts in limbo her own sense of self: It is impossible for her to identify with or against someone who has been but an imagined, intangible presence all through her adolescence and of whose personality she has no verification. With every question that she begins to probingly direct at the agents of memory at her disposal, she glimpses a little further into the ever widening void of that which she does not know about her own past. Saoirse's budding attempts at self-determination are flawed by the sense that she does not fully know nor comprehend her own life's story. For Saoirse, self-emancipation from her primary caregivers, from her aunt, uncle and father, is thus intricately bound up with the assertion of her "right to know" (111): She thinks that only by extracting from these third parties the missing strands of her family's narrative can she proceed to become a confident adult with a fully developed and intact narrative sense of self.

Saoirse's adolescent quest for self-knowledge is substantially complicated by the web of childhood narratives that dominate her memories of her mother. Her mother was a spellbinding storyteller who fed her daughters a steady diet of Gaelic myths and legends. By way of these stories, Deirdre created a safe narrative space for her daughters and herself, a space that exceeded the narrative certainties of violent sectarianism which dominated their everyday existence in East Belfast. As a southern Irish Catholic, Deirdre feels the impact of the mutually exclusive discourses of belonging acutely, and she is emotionally crushed between what Seamus Deane has poignantly called the "fertile progeny of internal borders" in the North that she, as Deane himself, perceives as "prison walls" (Untitled 27-28). For Deirdre, these prison walls extend beyond the immediate socio-political circumstances in Northern Ireland which increasingly force her and her daughters to stay within the confines of their own home and garden. Within the safety of her own home, she creates a narrative world of Gaelic mythology for her daughters to live and grow up in. Immersing her daughters in this enchanted world of warriors and faeries, which lends itself easily to the embroidery and embellishment of the childhood imagination, she provides them with a valuable retreat from the day-to-day experience of violence and sectarian bullying. At the same time, her stories of Cúchulainn and Tir-nan-Og help her to soothe the sharp pain of her own homesickness and of her own sense of displacement. With the help of these stories, she imagines herself back to an imagined, primal place of belonging that is now forever lost to her. Leaving the Republic of Ireland and her family's home place in the Gealtacht has not brought her the longed-for individual freedom but only isolation and desperation. Her self-

elected exile in Northern Ireland has in the end turned her into an 'inner émigré,'[39] dependent on stories from elsewhere about elsewhere and long ago.

Throughout the novel, Saoirse recounts in detail only one single instance where her mother's storytelling did not evolve around legends from Gaelic mythology. This moment occurs one night after Saoirse's father has already left the family home and shortly before Daisy is killed and, as such, foreshadows the absolute sense of desperation that Deirdre is to experience after the loss of her youngest daughter. After her husband moves out, Deirdre is heart-broken and her alcoholism takes on a graver form, which her daughters mistake for some common illness. The story she tells Saoirse in her desperation that night is an idiosyncratic variation of the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty which helps her to process, by means of retelling, her own acute feelings of fear and abandonment. Having heard her mother tell this story many times before, Saoirse realises early on in the story that this retelling differs in a significant, sinister and frightening way from her mother's earlier, more hopeful versions. Saoirse's attempts at stopping her mother before the story goes too far, however, are in vain and her mother does not fall silent before she has reached the conclusion:

> And then, one day, years later, something happened to the Princess as she was walking alone through the palace. She pricked her finger […] and she fell drowsy on the ground, and lay sleeping on the cool stone floor of an upper room in the north wing, and when she woke up the palace and all its beauty and her childhood life were nothing but a hazy dream, a fantastic story, which she later would tell herself over and over with wonder, and with sickness in her stomach. (47)

While the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty traditionally offers an all-encompassing degree of redemption at the end, when the princess is kissed awake and freed from the curse by a courageous prince, Deidre's account of the fairy tale does not provide any escape from the original curse. The princess does wake eventually, but she wakes alone, and to the faded memories of a happiness long past. The beauty of the place she grew up in has vanished while she was unconscious and her memories of its former splendour seem untrustworthy to herself: They have become "a fantastic story" whose serene content bears no relation to her desperate situation in the present moment and whose claim to her lived past cannot be vindicated retrospectively. As Peter Goldie suggests, "the narrative sense of self does not require any deep narrative coherence in the content of one's autobiographical narrative"

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[39] I borrow the term "inner émigré" from Seamus Heaney's poem "Exposure," the sixth and final poem of "Singing School." In "Exposure," the Northern Irish speaker (who might well be assumed to be Heaney) uses the term "inner émigré" (line 31) to describe his situation as a resident of County Wicklow in the Republic of Ireland, who experiences self-doubt and guilt for having "[e]scaped from the massacre" (line 33).

(123). In his view, one can well incorporate elements into one's narrative sense of self for which no causal chains, or "narrative *explanations*," are offered (123, emphasis in original). For the narrative sense of self to experience coherence, Goldie argues, there is only one crucial and very basic criterion: "[T]here is coherence in your autobiographical narrative in the sense that it is a narrative of *your* life" (123). Acknowledgement of events as having occurred in temporal order in the course of one's life, without necessarily being able to give reasons for their occurrence, is thus sufficient for an individual to possess a coherent sense of self (123-24). It is for this reason that the narrative sense of self of Deidre's Sleeping Beauty seems precarious: The fact that she remembers her childhood as "a hazy dream, a fantastic story" suggests an increasing sense of alienation from her own past, a loss of narrative coherence that results in dissociation.

The immediate autobiographical meaning of this story for Deirdre is implicit in the words she directs at her daughter who is frightened and confused by her mother's strange behaviour after the story has ended. As Saoirse tells us, "she looks at me, and she looks scareder than I've ever seen anyone look ever, and she whispers, Jesus, O Jesus, O Mary Mother of God have mercy" (47). At this point, it becomes clear beyond doubt that the anxiety and desperation conveyed in the story reflect on Deirdre's own state of mind. Sleeping Beauty's impending loss of coherence on her autobiographical narrative mirrors Deirdre's own loosening grasp on her mental health. Drawing on a rather conventional spatial allegory, her story casts the palace, an abode of sorts, as the whole island of Ireland, the Irish nationalist home place. Based on this allegory, the "north wing" of the palace refers unequivocally to the North of Ireland, which in turn provides the setting for the unfolding of the curse. Her long, deep, metaphorical sleep in the North suggests that Deidre now perceives her marriage to Colin to have been a hiatus in her life, which divides the blessed before from the ruined after: Now that her marriage is broken, the palace, both north and south, does not offer a home to her anymore – if it ever did. She realises that she has abandoned a secure existence and stable family unit in the Gaeltacht and, by the same token, forsaken her only chance of happiness and belonging.

At the age of six, Saoirse is unable to grasp the implications of this fairy tale gone wrong, but she does feel bewildered by her mother's desperation. Her mother's account of Sleeping Beauty produces a strikingly different effect for Saoirse from the Gaelic myths and legends her mother makes accessible to her. The recourse to Gaelic mythology allows Saoirse to make sense of otherwise unintelligible events and serves thus its original, primal purpose in Saoirse's childhood world. It allows her, for instance, to process the sudden death

of her four-year-old sister Daisy during the marching season of 1978. Running into the street in front of the family home in residential East Belfast, Daisy is fatally hit by a car whose driver was using the street to bypass Army barricades that had been erected to block the main road. Daisy's death is thus not immediately linked to the violence of the Troubles; the entrenchment of Northern Ireland society throughout the seventies has caused Saoirse's parents to drift apart even before the accident. By the time the accident occurs, they have already separated and are incapable of dealing jointly with their daughter's loss. Told the sugar-coated version that her sister has merely "fallen asleep," Saoirse is able to make mythological sense of this piece of information – "Like the wasting sickness of Cúchulainn" (71), she thinks to herself and draws the corresponding conclusion: "[J]ust like Emer got her enchanted potion and the spell to rescue Cúchulainn from the land of the *Síde*, I have to find a way to bring back Daisy before it's too late" (71, emphasis in original). Even though this narrative places the burden of Daisy's salvation firmly on Saoirse's shoulders, it is capable of providing her with some brief feeling of hope and redemption. This narrative respite, however, is shattered when Saoirse realises that "Nobody will listen" to her explanation of her sister's whereabouts (72). The narrative compass by means of which Saoirse navigates the events that occur in her childhood life is shattered against the reality of Daisy's death.

Deirdre takes Saoirse away from Belfast and returns to County Donegal and, in the process, she takes away the remaining narrative ground from under Saoirse's feet: "Daisy is gone, and Daddy is gone, and although Mammy doesn't tell me so, I know I am not to speak to her of either of them anymore. So now it's just me and Mommy, and me and Mammy are leaving the house, and Belfast, For Ever" (73). The capitalisation of the phrase "for ever" suggests reported speech and indicates that this is what Saoirse is given to understand about the journey. Her final farewell from the thoroughly narrativised place of her childhood coincides thus with her farewells from two of the most important people in her life, her sister and father, whose presences in her life, imagination, and in her narrative sense of self, she is not allowed to acknowledge openly. Her senses of social, spatial and temporal embeddedness and belonging are thus coming under serious threat, a threat which cannot be mitigated by interpersonal exchange or the recognition of what she has lost by a third party. "Aspects of our narrative sense of self," according to Goldie, "can be expressed through narrative thinking, and they can be conveyed to others – in speech or in writing" (119). Saoirse's narrative sense of self, hence, is not directly undermined by her commitment to silence; she can still express it, silently, in thinking. The silence which is forced upon her prevents her, however, from voicing her narrative sense of self in a socially meaningful

context. It equals an outward denial of crucial elements of her life narrative, of the people and the place which have shaped and characterised her life. She is thus subjected to a sense of isolation that only exacerbates the original isolation of her grief for her sister.

In order to start anew in Donegal, Deirdre needs her remaining daughter to negate those parts of her narrative sense of self that might contradict or even thwart Deirdre's own attempts at reinventing herself. At the age of seven, Saoirse does not yet have a life narrative that is independent from her mother's life. The events and circumstances that have marked out Saoirse's life as unmistakably her own are tightly bound up with her mother's. As such, the integrity of the 'new' lives they are trying to establish in Donegal depends on the willingness of the respective other to play along – to underpin the new joint narrative. Deirdre's acute sense of loss and dislocation, however, can in the end not be appeased by the return to her family home in Gweebarra Bay. Her living in-between the hegemonic discourses delineated by the national border and fought out during the Troubles has cost Deirdre her psychological equilibrium. The return to a home that is no longer a home and, by extension, to a past that cannot be regained is destined to fail, it cannot quell her alcoholism and depression. After a serious breakdown some time after her return to Donegal, Deirdre is forced to see out her life in a psychiatric nursing home in Sligo, called "La Retraite." La Retraite, the name of which translates as "retreat" or "retirement," indeed becomes both retreat and retirement for Deirdre: she retreats from social life entirely and, by extension, retires from her burdensome existence as wife and mother. Much like the prison, La Retraite classifies as a Foucauldian heterotopia of deviation where "individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" ("Other Spaces" 25). In this sense, the description of those confined within the heterotopia of deviation dovetails with Gloria Anzaldúa's description of those who inhabit the Mexican-U.S.-American borderlands:

> A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. […] The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal.' (25)

Anzaldúa's account of "los atravesados" is applicable to Deirdre as a political young woman at the time when "Civil Rights was [her] burning passion" (104). Crossing the border into County Derry to participate in civil rights rallies that address discrimination in the North, Deirdre shows no regard for national division in socio-political matters. Meeting her future

husband Colin at a civil rights rally in Derry in 1969, she adheres to her political ideals of equality even though, as a B-Special, Colin is a member of "an entirely Protestant force […that was] viewed with distrust and fear by Catholics in Northern Ireland" ("Ulster Special Constabulary USC" n. pag.). After two years of keeping their relationship secret, she finally abandons Donegal for Belfast in 1971, at the age of nineteen, when her father finds out about the relationship and forces her to choose between her family and Colin and, by the same token, between the South and the North of Ireland.

In a traditionally patriarchal fashion, the discourses of national and familial belonging converge at this point, and Deirdre is marked out, in Anzaldúa's words, as "troublesome," as one who "pass[es] over." Five months pregnant with Saoirse at the time of leaving, her unborn child and wedding in Belfast symbolise to her the shedding of a life that she has outgrown: "*I thought I was escaping* […] *I thought I was finally free*" (209, emphasis in original), she explains to her adolescent daughter in a letter. The North is Deirdre's self-elected exile, where she chooses to make a home of the interstices and to raise her border-crosser's family in a spirit that counters the hegemonic certainties of belonging. It is the tragedy of her and her family's life that such moral freedom is impossible in the inflammatory atmosphere of Northern Ireland in the nineteen-seventies. In the long run, Deirdre is increasingly incapable of bearing the tensions that are implicit in the "vague and undetermined place" that Anzaldúa speaks of and turns to alcohol in her search for an escape from "the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary."

It is for the psychological respite she is offered at La Retraite that Deidre negates the heterotopic nature of her sanctuary. Speaking to Saoirse, she insists: "It's not a hospital here, and it's not a prison either" (189). To Deirdre, the home is a retreat in the literal sense as it relieves her from the exertions of family life as much as from the burden of memory. Without people or places to remind her, she is allowed to forget the failure of her marriage and, more crucially, Daisy's untimely loss in which the neglect of her duty of care played a fatal role. When Saoirse insists on going to La Retraite to see her mother for the first time in ten years, Deidre acknowledges her need to forget as the main reason for abandoning her remaining child: "I can't be with you Saoirse. I can't be around you, seeing you every day, because when I'm with you, I can't forget" (189).[40]

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[40] In David Park's *The Truth Commissioner*, which will be discussed further below, the same thought about the impossibility of forgetting within strong social networks finds expression. There, the Walshe family, whose son Connor was disappeared by the IRA, "[ha]ve drifted apart almost as if being apart might lessen the memory" (65).

The cost for such forgetting comes at a high price. In order to be able to forget the summer of 1978 in Belfast, when she lost her daughter and husband, Deidre has to try to forget that she ever was a mother in the first place. Within the confines of La Retraite, Deirdre is allowed, encouraged even, to neglect both the past and the future and to live in the present moment only. Most days, she passes in a trance-like state of oblivion that is regulated by strong anti-depressants only temporarily perforated by memories of her past as a wife and mother. Difficult though the visit is for Saoirse, it also brings her a degree of closure and of liberation from the tangles of the past: "[A]nd then I think what I haven't let myself think all afternoon: You're not my mammy any more. My mammy's long gone, […] gone even before we arrived in Gweebarra Bay" (193). This realisation that Deirdre has changed beyond recognition is crucial for Saoirse's narrative sense of self and, as such, for her ability to progress into the future with confidence. As Goldie posits in opposition to Marya Schechtman, "the narrative sense of self requires neither emphatic access [to one's past] nor a stable self" (140). For the narrative sense of self to be sufficiently coherent, he argues, "[a]ll we need is the self of personal identity, the self to which we refer when using the word 'I' in autobiographical person narratives" (141). In other words, what is necessary is the self's acknowledgement that the first person pronoun in the narrative, be it about the past or the future, does refer to the singular entity that is the self. It is, hence, Deidre's willed forgetting, her denial that motherhood has been part of her narrative sense of self, that breaks up the continuity of what Goldie calls an "autobiographical person narrative." As a result, Saoirse is able to let go of who her mother is in the present, and successfully integrates her childhood memories of her mother into her own narrative sense of self. This allows her to look towards her own future with the narrative sense of herself, and of her mother-as-was, intact.

Crossing the Border: Bridges, Frontiers and, also, Home

Part Two of *Where They Were Missed* is set in the Donegal Gaeltacht, where the present of Saoirse's narrative unfolds in 1988. After her mother was hospitalised, Saoirse was raised by her aunt and uncle in Donegal, who have allowed her to think that her mother left Donegal without word or trace when Saoirse was seven. Now aged almost seventeen, Saoirse begins to investigate the rupture in her life narrative created by the inexplicable absence of her mother and, also, by her childhood memory of a divided Belfast the spatial politics of which she understands only partially. She realises that she has to go back in time as well as space

if she wants to make narrative sense of her family's past, and to think of herself, by extension, as being able to proceed into the future. The fact that Saoirse cannot connect her past in Belfast in a meaningful way to her present situation in Gweebarra Bay predicates her acutely fragmented narrative sense of herself and, also, of her inexplicably absent mother. The narrative challenge that Kirkland has identified for Northern Ireland during the "interregnum" of civil war is thus one that reverberates allegorically in Saoirse's personal life. Kirkland posits that the "fragmented communal consciousness and the tensions implicit in the essentially spatial distribution of power in the province have problematised any sense of an easy temporal development of linear narratives" (7). The "sense of being on the borders of history as well as on the borders of spatial development," he writes, precludes the formation of confidence in both "the *telos* [... and] the primal beginning" (7). This interstitial position between competing accounts of both time and territory is reflected in Saoirse's own life trajectory.

Saoirse's uncertainty about her very own, small "primal beginning" complicates the development of a conclusive narrative sense of herself and thus obstructs the progress of her 'coming of age' narrative. Her connection to the Northern Irish state, epitomized in her father's profession as a RUC man, renders her suspicious to the Donegal community that she lives in. Even though she feels strongly connected to Gaelic Ireland, her cultural claim to her maternal homeland in Donegal is countered by the rigidly territorial discourses of belonging in the Republic of Ireland. At the same time, Saoirse has grown increasingly detached from Northern Ireland, which she imagines to be a place of social and emotional disruption, the borders of which enclose only past loss and present violence. In her quest for the complete family history, however, her 'geographical imagination' undergoes a fundamental change. She begins to fuse the autobiographical memories of her early childhood in Belfast with the accounts provided by different agents of memory including the Public Records Office, the local library, her aunt and uncle, her father and, ultimately, also her estranged mother. From this arduous memory work, Saoirse collates a pluralist narrative that goes against state-centric forms of belonging. From a theoretical perspective, Saoirse's memory work also illustrates the new historicist claim that truth, or something close to it, is necessarily located in-between the multiple accounts of the one event (H. White 89).[41]

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[41] In his essay "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," Hayden White sketches the inherently selective process by which "a set of casually recorded historical events" are turned into a written historical account or "story" that complies with the characteristics of a certain literary tradition (84). He claims: "The important point is that most historical sequences can be emplotted in a number of

Unlike her mother, she manages to embrace her interstitial position as ultimately enabling, and grows to be "kind of proud to be an Ulster Pentland as well as an O'Connor from the Gaeltacht" (214).

Saoirse's difficult journey towards the final embrace of this interstitial subject position is mirrored in the car journey she undertakes in the third part of the novel to her paternal place of origin in Greyabbey on the Ards Peninsula. She has agreed to meet her father's second wife and newborn daughter at their family home in Belfast, but she is determined to drive on past Belfast first to see where her father's side of the family originate from. Her visit to Greyabbey constitutes an important piece of the identity puzzle that Saoirse is trying to reassemble for herself. Growing up with her maternal aunt and uncle in Donegal, she has remained ignorant of the Northern Irish Protestant part of her family. Crucially, her journey across the border and towards Greyabbey becomes increasingly difficult rather than easier the further she advances into the North.

"The North is a different country" (219), the third and final part of the novel begins, thus marking Saoirse's sense of alienation and unease the moment she crosses the border. Setting out the very moment Saoirse passes from one jurisdiction into the other, the final part of the novel highlights the act of crossing over as the catalyst for her coming of age. Despite her aunt's admonitions and fears, Saoirse is able to drive through the Army checkpoint and across the border with ease: "I prepare myself for questions; but when it comes to my turn, the soldiers wave me through uninterestedly" (219). The ease of her border crossing is at odds with the state of military border reinforcement during the late 1980s.[42] Taking such liberty with historical fact, the novel effectively highlights Saoirse's ability to amalgamate divergent discursive truths; her as yet unconscious at-home-ness on the border. Further, the novel favours the personal over the political by foregrounding the importance of the border crossing for the development of Saoirse's narrative sense of self. It is not the national divide that hampers the collation of Saoirse's identity narrative but the blanks, evasions and white lies in her parents' life narratives. Only by testing the margins of the knowable can Saoirse finally arrive at self-knowledge. By means of her cross-border journey, Saoirse is able to integrate the seemingly disparate geographical and cultural elements of her family history into one narrative of self-reconciliation.

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different ways, so as to provide different interpretations of those events and to endow them with different meanings" (84-85).

[42] I am indebted to Katy Hayward for this point. Also see Cathal McCall 160 and Garrett Carr, *The Rule of the Land* 69.

As Hickman (8-9) argues, Michel de Certeau's concept of the "spatial story" proves of immense value when analysing the ways in which individuals stake narrative claims to cross-border territories. Keeping this in mind, it is enlightening to dwell on the differentiation between two modes of describing places, namely the "tour" and the "map," that de Certeau includes in his essay "Spatial Stories." Summarising the findings of Linde and Labov's 1975 New York study, de Certeau explains that "description oscillates between the terms of an alternative: either *seeing* (the knowledge of an order of places) or *going* (spatializing actions)" (119, emphasis in original). In other words, the "map"-mode provides a static description of the characteristics of a place, while the "tour"-mode provides directions for the actual navigation of a place using action verbs. Teasing out the experiential differences that go to inform the different modes of spatial description, de Certeau suggests:

> The chain of spatializing operations seems to be marked by references to what it produces (a representation of places) or to what it implies (a local order). We thus have the structure of the travel story: stories of journeys and actions are marked out by the 'citation' of the places that result from them or authorize them. (120)

De Certeau's elaborations on the "map"- and the "tour"-mode of describing places and/or movement through places offer a prism for the analysis of Saoirse's cross-border journey. For the most part of her journey, Saoirse relies on the oral directions her uncle Brendan provided before she left Gweebarra Bay. The first part of his directions, charting the way from Gweebarra Bay, through Derry and towards the Glenshane Pass are remembered by Saoirse in the "tour"-mode:

> Uncle Brendan told me to cross the Governor's Bridge and take the ring road around the city: don't drive through for you'll get snarled up in traffic and you might get lost in the one-way system. And you don't want to be lost in the Waterside (or was it the Bogside, did he say?) with Southern number plates. […] Just bypass Derry and get yourself straight on to the motorway. (219).

This part of Brendan's directions tallies with what de Certeau calls a "chain of spatializing operations" (120) that is held together by action verbs such as "cross," "drive," and "bypass." It conveys an acute sense of Brendan's first-hand experience of the route that Saoirse has to take and throws into sharp relief Saoirse's geographical ignorance about Derry/Londonderry just across the border from Donegal. The fact that she is unsure about the socio-political differences between the republican Bogside and the loyalist Waterside implies Saoirse's cultural remoteness from her native Northern Ireland and underlines the border's efficiency as a political bulwark undermining cultural and geographical proximity. Based on Brendan's action-centred spatial story, Saoirse manages to find her way to Derry without difficulty but

chooses to deviate from his directions in order "to see the city where my mother marched, where my mother and father met" (220). Then following the traffic signs, Saoirse relates her way through the city centre of Derry based on a few action verbs producing phrases such as "inch round" and "take the right turn" (220), all the while denoting "the places that result from them" (de Certeau 120). There is a sense of compromised agency nonetheless: Saoirse's progress through the city is depicted as a matter of her being pulled along by the thick traffic she is caught in. The description of her progress through Derry thus implies a position somewhere between the poles of autonomy and heteronomy. Crucially, once she finds herself beyond Derry and on the Glenshane Pass, the terms according to which she frames her journey change once again:

> I'm driving on, on to the Glenshane Pass, which will take me over the Sperrin Mountains, and it's easy from then on in, said Uncle Brendan, because you don't have to leave the road; the same road that takes you past Magherafelt and over the River Bann becomes a motorway a few miles outside of Toome, and goes all the way past Antrim and Newtownabbey and then into Belfast. You can't go wrong […] (221).

Now that she pushes further into the North, Saoirse's account begins to yield increasingly to "map"-like place descriptions. The action taken by Saoirse ("I'm driving on"), initiates the enumeration of places, in an exact spatio-temporal order, which she does not experience as much as remember from Brendan's description. They are like the items on a memorised list that Saoirse can tick off as she proceeds. Corresponding with these static "map"-like descriptions, Saoirse becomes the object rather than the subject of the action: The roads now "take" her towards Belfast, while very little action is required of her: she has little influence over her own spatial progress, she "can't go wrong." Saoirse's journey towards Belfast, towards the origin of her narrative sense of self, is thus characterised by a passive, second-hand experience of space that mirrors the lack of control over her life narrative.

As part of her journey back in place and time, Saoirse has planned to visit Greyabbey Monastery on the Ards Peninsula before meeting her father in Belfast. Greyabbey is the place of origin of her father's family and the monastery itself a staple of her childhood imaginary. Her insistence that she needs "to go there by [her]self, first" (223) indicates her desire to regain unmediated access to the past and to build her future narrative sense of self on first-hand experiences. Indeed, proceeding down the peninsula and towards Greyabbey, Saoirse keeps "remembering silly little things […] that [she] thought [she]'d forgotten" (223). Navigating her way towards her paternal place of origin, however, proves increasingly difficult. Saoirse realises that the North has become an unknown territory to her the

knowledge of which she will have to reacquire through autonomous movement. The place her paternal ancestors originate from does not provide her with any orientation points, neither does she possess socially-embedded geographical information about it. She now has to base her movements on a map, an abstract and de-personalised rendering of space that suggests stasis rather than (a memory of) movement and change.

As de Certeau points out, "[t]he map, a totalizing stage on which elements of diverse origin are brought together to form the tableau of a 'state' of geographical knowledge, pushes away into its prehistory or into its posterity […] the operations of which it is the result or the necessary condition" (121). In other words, maps do not account for the diverse movements across space, or "itineraries," without which any precise geographical knowledge remains impossible. Saoirse journeys on:

> I follow the map to a little town near the ruins of Greyabbey Monastery, where I stop and ask in a newsagent's for proper directions […] I am a Greyabbey Pentland, I want to say; I belong here, too; but like Derry, this isn't a familiar place, either. And so I decide not to stop and see the old abbey. […] I don't want to be disappointed: one of our favourite stories that our father used to tell us was set in Greyabbey, about him and his friends, when they were the age of me and Daisy, playing up in the ruins of the old Cistercian monastery. (224-25).

Crucially, in Saoirse's account, the map is constructed as the opposite of what she calls "proper directions." Proper directions for Saoirse are directions received in a social setting, in an interpersonal exchange, from a person that has first-hand experience of the land. The fact, however, that she requires directions to the monastery at all grates against Saoirse's narrative sense of self. For her, spatial experience and social belonging predicate one another and she feels challenged to reassert her rightful claim to Greyabbey as part of her family history. Realising that her claim to Greyabbey Monastery is more narrative than territorial, however, she swallows her anger. For the time being, she decides not to confront her narrative memory of the monastery with the architectural reality of it. The monastery, as a place that fuelled her childhood imagination, can thus remain an entirely narrative entity for her. She has no first-hand experience of the monastery herself, but she has a memory of absorbing her father's story about it jointly with her deceased sister – a fact that is stressed by her repeated use of the possessive pronoun "our," the personal pronoun "us" and the noun phrase "Daisy and me" all three of which occur in one single sentence. Her father's spatial story continues to contribute to Saoirse's narrative sense of self not only as a border dweller but also, and more importantly, as Daisy's older sister.

Saoirse's journey across the border and back to the place of her childhood is inexorably tied to her shared past with Daisy. She has no memory of Belfast that does not also contain her younger sister. Daisy's death was the family trauma that ultimately and irrevocably broke the family apart and it continues to be an intimate, personal trauma for each of the three surviving family members. It triggered Deirdre's flight back to Donegal as much as it accelerated the deterioration of her mental health. It is, as such, the source of Saoirse's sense of dislocation; of her disrupted narrative sense of self. In order to go on into the future with an intact narrative sense of self that encompasses her being a sister, a daughter, as well as a child of the borderlands, Saoirse revisits Daisy's burial place for the first time since the funeral more than ten years ago. As the only agent of memory that is entirely lost to Saoirse, Daisy is also the only agent of memory that could have assisted Saoirse in collating her narrative of their Belfast childhood. Greeting her sister, Saoirse asks, "Remember the red lights at the top of Samson and Goliath and how we used to think they were the torches at the entrance to the Castle of the Sky?" (229). Samson and Goliath, the yellow cranes of Harland and Wolff's shipyard on the Queen's Island that give Belfast its unmistakable skyline, tower impressively over East Belfast and would have featured as dominant landmarks in Saoirse and Daisy's childhood geography. As East Belfast itself, the shipyards too were integral parts of the city's divided geography and traditionally reserved for Protestant workers. The fact that Saoirse and her sister reimagined them as features of one of their mother's Gaelic legends testifies to the unique imaginary world they jointly inhabited, in which they were free to amalgamate contending discursive imperatives. It is, in my reading, this renewed and joyful memory of the 'geographical imagination' that the sisters shared of Belfast which allows Saoirse at the very end of her journey (and of the novel) to surrender to a feeling of home-coming as she drives towards her native city: "as the hill sweeps downwards, and as the car gains its own eager momentum, I have the sensation of falling, in sudden relief, towards the city's gentle lights" (231). The "city's gentle lights" still carry in them the memory of the legendary torches that Saoirse and Daisy used to conjure up together and Belfast still carries the spatialised memory of past social belonging as much as the promise of future spatial change.

2.2 "The Body of the Condemned": Steve McQueen's *Hunger* (2009)

Bobby Sands, one of the most famous republican terrorists or, depending on one's point of view, freedom fighters of the civil war in Northern Ireland, died on hunger strike on the 5th

of May, 1981, aged twenty-seven. His hunger strike and subsequent death once more focused international media attention on the bitter and unresolved conflict in Ireland (McKittrick and McVea 166-67), an attention which had never quite turned away from the Troubles as a highly sellable news item. Many writers, both fictional and non-fictional, have stressed the great sense of detachment from, and even hostility towards, the mediatised representations of the civil war which did not necessarily coincide with the individual experiences of people living their day-to-day lives in Northern Ireland at the time.[43] In Glenn Patterson's 1992 novel *Fat Lad*, for instance, the protagonist's love interest Anna remembers heaping "dog's abuse" (266) on her late husband, Conor, for having sold a photograph taken at Bobby Sands's funeral to an Australian journalist.[44] "What was he playing at selling photographs to that circus?" (266), she asks him. Her use of the term "circus" criticises the international media for creating a distorted and perversely bedazzling version of reality in Northern Ireland that might entertain rather than inform the various home audiences. Shortly after the quarrel with Anna, Conor is caught in a Belfast street riot that has erupted after the deaths of two republican hunger strikers, identifiable as Kevin Lynch and Kieran Doherty, in the course of the same weekend in early August 1981. During the riot, a petrol bomb is thrown at an Army Saracen from which, as a consequence, one of the back wheels becomes dislodged. The back wheel is propelled towards Conor's car and crushes him to death. Anna submits a claim for compensation for the death of her husband to the Northern Ireland Office, which is challenged before the courts when Conor's camera is detected amid the remnants of the car. As a means of gathering and recording intelligence, the camera renders Conor suspect in the eyes of the state authorities. Part III, Section 20 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973 explicitly prohibited the collection of "information with respect to the police of Her Majesty's forces," be it "by means of photography or by any

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[43] Examples of this abound. In Seamus Heaney's well-known poem "Whatever You Say Say Nothing," the narrator's meditation is triggered when he is accosted by "an English journalist in search of 'views / On the Irish thing'" (lines 2-3). The journalist represents a trade whose sensationalist language is strangely at odds with the trimmed, censored language of Northern Irish citizens. In Lucy Caldwell's *Where They Were Missed*, the BBC hover around the home of a family in the Falls whose father has been killed by loyalist paramilitaries, "juk[ing] at [them] like [they]'re animals in a zoo" (38). In Robert McLiam Wilson's *Eureka Street*, members of the press are scalded for their inadequate response to terrorist slaughter, for "demonstrat[ing] real vigour and real hunger for their job" (230). In Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*, the narrator's parents are "entrapped […] in the propaganda noise of the television inside" (231). See also Fitzpatrick, who argues that the television, with its mass-media fascination of the spectacular and the violent, transmitted "a warped notion" of Northern Ireland, because it "was too caught up in the daily atrocities" (5).

[44] According to David McKittrick and David McVea, Bobby Sands's funeral was a mass event of sorts, with "an estimated 100,000 people attending" (167).

other means" (13). Even though the rightfulness of Anna's claim for compensation is eventually acknowledged by the Northern Ireland Office, the claim itself is "interpreted as an attack on the validity of the state itself" by members of the unionist community (*Fat Lad* 270), who begin to send her anonymous hate mail. Anna's wish to be compensated by the state for a death that occurred during a republican riot appears to imply, to the hate mailers, her allegiance with the republican cause as well as her resistance to the British administration. The fact that, in the face of personal tragedy, this political interpretation is possible highlights the precarious situation of the Northern Irish state in the early eighties and calls to mind Hughes's observation that "[i]t is of course the Troubles, as conflict of definitions, which force us to raise questions of definition" ("Fiction" 82). If the conflict consists in the binary question asking according to whose terms the state should be defined, then any interaction with the state authorities will necessarily resonate with one side of the binary.

The question of definitions is also raised forcefully in the hate mail that Anna receives. Anna is a Protestant, while her husband Conor was a Catholic. Her compensation claim, consequently, which questions the validity of the state's jurisdiction, institutions and authorities, positions her beyond the acceptable in the eyes of the political community into which she was born. The accusations levelled against Anna follow an exact but limited logic, according to which the guilt for whatever atrocity can always, inexorably, be traced back to the other side:

> *Judas*, it said: *What about the Fenian scum that threw the petrol bomb. Did you ever think of suing him?*
> He [the petrol bomber] was fourteen. The police asked him why he did it.
> *'Cause the Brits let your man die.*
> *Your man let himself die.*
> *For the five demands. He was a hero.*
> *He was a pig. He lived in shite.*
> *The Brits made him.*
> *Nobody made him do anything.*
> *They tried to make him wear a uniform.*
> *He was a criminal.*
> *So the Brits say.*
> *He was caught going to plant a bomb.*
> *To get the Brits out.*
> *The Brits are only here because people like your man plant bombs.* (270, emphasis in original)

The answers that the teenage boy spits out in reply to the policemen's questions betray the simplified political truths that he must have been fed since childhood. The RUC men's

retorts, in turn, betray an understanding of the political circumstances that is just as reduced as the boy's: Both are unable to transcend the reductiveness of their political stances, which in turn mirrors the limited world view of the sectarian hate mailers. Their exchange thus devastatingly testifies to a political culture incapable of progressing beyond its own discursive borders. Strikingly, the syntactical simplicity of both the bomber's and the policemen's sentences mirrors the intellectual simplicity of their political convictions. Modelled around a subject-predicate-object/adverbial pattern, the men's sentences allow for no depth or differentiation in argumentative structure. These very tight syntactic corsets highlight to striking effect that the political language of the civil war effectively obstructs critical thinking – it provides no structures in which alternative, more sophisticated concepts might be expressed. The limited linguistic repertoire of sectarian strife thus succeeds in producing and reproducing perfectly conditioned political subjects.

In the hate mail Anna receives, the highly emotive, religiously inflected word choice of "Judas" locates her compensation claim in the realm of religion and suggests that state affiliation, like religion, does not allow for free agency nor individual choice (cf. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* 175). It further underlines that the impartiality promised by blindfolded Justice has no authority in a violently embattled state: Fact-based, impartial jurisdiction does not necessarily ring true when measured against alternative socio-political systems of belief.[45] Such irreconcilable systems belief are also evident in the exchange between the teenage hurler of the petrol bomb and the RUC men interrogating him. "Your man" in this exchange refers to the eighth hunger striker to die, Kieran Doherty, who was elected a TD (a member of the Dáil Éireann) in the early stages of his hunger strike (cf. "The Hunger Strike of 1981 – Chronology" n. pag.). It seems programmatic for Patterson's writing that he chooses to set this pivotal accident for the narrative in the context of the death of Kieran Doherty rather than that of the much more iconic hunger striker Bobby Sands. Tending to write against the grain of well-established Troubles narratives, Patterson often pivots around

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[45] According to Foucault, these socio-political systems of belief might also be called "regimes of truth." In "The Political Function of the Intellectual", Foucault claims that "[e]ach society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth" (13). He defines a "regime of truth" as the reciprocal relationship between social centres of power and the production of generally accepted truths: "'Truth' is linked by a circular relation to systems of power which produce it and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which redirect it" ("The Political Function" 14). I am indebted to Claire Massey, whose paper on "The Space Race – The Librotraficante Movement Creating Pathways for Narratives of America," given at the 2014 MESEA conference in Saarbrücken, made me aware of this concept.

a multitude of smaller centres found in their margins (see Hughes, "Northern Ireland – Border Country" 7-8; cf. "Fiction" 80).

Steve McQueen's 2009 film *Hunger*, by contrast, chooses to focus very intently on the figure of Bobby Sands and, in doing so, follows an un-formulaic approach of its own. It interrogates the immediate circumstances that led Bobby Sands to initiate the 1981 republican hunger strike in HMP Maze/Long Kesh, which between March and October of that year saw the deaths of a total of ten prisoners ("The Hunger Strike of 1981 – Summary" n. pag.). Refusing to paint on the bigger canvas of Bobby Sands' life up to and beyond the moment of his imprisonment, *Hunger* is an unconventional bio pic in that it limits the portrayal of its protagonist's life to the time just before and during his hunger strike. It is mainly confined to the prison's walls and pivots around the very personal convictions that led Sands to pay with his life towards an overarching political goal. Everything that the audience learns about Sands as a politically-minded person in the course of the film comes directly from him in the form of direct speech; the brutal circumstances of his imprisonment are depicted visually, while very little is shown of the world beyond the prison's microcosm – there is no interaction that might show Sands as a socially embedded individual outside the prison. What the film achieves through this limitation of narrative scope is a very intimate portrayal of a radicalised and brutalised individual whose life has been stripped back to the core political motivations that drive his actions.

Embodied States of Resistance

Reporting on the death of Bobby Sands in 1981, the German newspaper *Die Zeit* aptly commented upon the inability of the Northern Irish state to peacefully integrate its divergent political populations. Issuing the statement below, its author proved to be not unsympathetic to Irish reunification and expressed his doubts about the creation of the Northern Irish state as well as his wariness about the institutions governing it:

> [T]he six counties of Ulster have proved an artificial agglomeration that just will not grow into a natural organism. It is not viable on its own and costs Great Britain more money than its membership in the European Union, which is often deemed financially unbearable. Everything suggests that [the island of] Ireland will be reunited one day. (Leonhardt n. pag., my translation).

At the time of writing, more than thirty-five years lie between this statement and the ongoing political negotiation of a socio-political settlement in Northern Ireland. The topics it raises,

however, are still uncannily relevant in the early twenty-first century, even if one chooses to disregard for the time being Great Britain's still highly uncomfortable relation to the EU. Republican hunger striker Bobby Sands has since become a cultural icon of the Northern Irish nationalist grand narrative, having died a martyr's death after enduring almost ten weeks of hunger strike in HMP Maze/Long Kesh (see McKittrick and McVea 165-67). The immediate reasons for the hunger strike were the republican prisoners' demands for political status, the right to assemble, exemption from prison work, the receipt of visits and mail once a week as well as civilian-type clothing (164),[46] which the Thatcher administration chose to leave unsatisfied as part of the criminalisation policy it pursued from the mid-seventies onwards (Coogan 262-63). Criminalisation, significantly, entailed the abrogation of Special Category Status for political prisoners and the reconstruction of Long Kesh prison, which previously had featured huts where groups of prisoners had been held together, as HMP Maze (or "the H-Blocks"), whose new structure put an end to such free mingling (McKittrick and McVea 160). The ultimate nationalist cause, however, has been that of a reunited Ireland, and the abolition of the Irish border remains the impetus for Sinn Féin's all-Ireland strategy.

In terming Northern Ireland "an artificial agglomeration," the article in *Die Zeit* effectively reiterates the traditional Irish nationalist sentiment according to which "the integrity of Ireland" must be preserved (Buckland 94). Insisting that the six counties of Northern Ireland resist any integration "into a natural organism," the article draws on a biological metaphor to highlight the artificiality of the Northern Irish state, the creation of which went against some presupposed law of nature. Similarly, discussing the arduous negotiations that resulted in partition in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Buckland writes that "[n]ationalists had a mystical belief in Ireland as an indivisible garment and insisted that Ireland was one nation, not the two nations suggested by unionist propaganda" (94). On this reading, the border has illegitimately tailored this "garment" to suit northern Protestant self-perceptions as a separate national group, deserving of their own and separate state. While A.T.Q. Stewart argues that the socio-geographical divisions in Ireland predated the drawing of the political border on the ground (159), it is the "chequerboard"-quality of the social geography in Northern Ireland discussed above (see Stewart 182) that precludes a communal understanding of the state as "a natural organism." The very fact that it is possible

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[46] The prisoners' "five demands" had already fuelled the first and unsuccessful republican hunger strike in HM Prison Maze in 1980, as McKittrick and McVea explain (164-65). They opine that this initial failure predicated the fatal outcome of second strike: "From the beginning of the second hungerstrike it was judged highly likely that this time there would be deaths, for Sands and the others believed the fiasco of the first strike had to be avenged" (165).

to perceive a nation-state in terms of a biological organism (cf. Smith, *Nationalism* 178), however, reveals crucial insights into the characteristics commonly associated with the state as an organisational unit. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson posit, conceptual metaphors such as this reveal the "concepts we live by" (453) in that they are linguistic expressions of the way in which knowledge is structured and acted upon in a given culture: "If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical," they write, "then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor" (454). The conceptual metaphor that casts the nation-state in terms of an organism, then, functions according to a "metaphorical systematicity" that makes it possible for the concept of the state to be understood in terms of a body and that, in turn, deflects from other traits of the state "which are not coherent with that metaphor" (458). If understood as a body, the state becomes a concrete and tangible entity with natural boundaries and natural coherence, in which all individual processes are unified to serve the survival and wellbeing of the entity, whose existence is, above all, in the nature of things. Thus, an understanding of the state is revealed that is steeped in the 'geographical imagination' of modernity, which was characterised by what Massey calls the "assumed isomorphism" ("Imagining Globalisation" 21) between the territorial state and the nation as what Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined political community" (6; also see 7).

This allegorical but intimate relationship between the territory of the state and the bodies of its citizens is illuminated in gruelling ways in *Hunger*. *Hunger* offers striking representations both of the political discourses crystallising at the Irish border and of a politically radical way of making narrative sense of oneself, as well as of one's bodily existence, by recourse to this very border. In *Hunger*, Bobby Sands' self-elected starvation as a radical act of bodily self-negation is shown to follow directly from his desire for a reunited, borderless Ireland. Sands' narrative sense of self as an imprisoned republican 'freedom fighter' does not include a future for him as an individual. Rather, it envisions his future as tied up inexorably with the political cause he serves, even if this cause might require him to die a martyr's death. The film's plot unfolds following a subtle tripartite structure. The first part of the film is dedicated mainly to the depiction of the republican prisoners' appalling living conditions during the so-called Blanket- and Dirty Protests, both of which had followed from the abrogation of Special Category Status in 1976.[47] The third part of the

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[47] As of 1 March 1976, those imprisoned for involvement in terrorist activity would no longer be treated as prisoners of war. Losing Special Category Status, the prisoners lost "the right of prisoners to wear their civilian clothes at all times; the right to free association within a block of cells; the right

film, by contrast, focusses on an intimate, almost gentle, representation of Bobby Sands' hunger strike and the fatal progress of his bodily decline. These two longer parts provide a bracket for the second part, the centrepiece of the film, which is provided by a twenty-minute dialogue between Bobby Sands and his West Belfast priest, Dom, in the prison's visitors' hall. Filmed from only four different camera angles, two of which are close ups of the men's faces, their protracted dialogue is the notable exception in a film that relies almost exclusively on the power of sounds other than language as well as on intricate camera work. It is, at the same time, the only part of the film that does not involve bodily harm, self-inflicted or otherwise.

In the course of their dialogue, Bobby and Dom negotiate their respective positions with regard to the hunger strike, which is being declared as they speak. The hunger strike is an issue on which they cannot agree in spite of their cultural and political commonalities as Northern Irish republicans. The mythologised communal narrative of "Ireland as an indivisible garment" (Buckland 94) is not capable of providing a moral common ground between them where bodily self-sacrifice is concerned, even though they share the rejection of British administration on Irish soil. Dom is adamant in his moral refusal of the hunger strike as "a pre-design to die" (57:26); a united Ireland in his view is to be achieved by means of political negotiation, not through blood sacrifice. Both he and Bobby believe in the sanctity of life, but they arrive at very different conclusions as to what precisely this belief might entail in the area of political action. Bobby is prepared to sacrifice his own life, and the lives of his fellow prisoners, to advance his political cause which, for him, is closely linked to self-determination as a precondition of a dignified life. The men's intense negotiation, as much as the film as a whole, begs complex questions about the ethics of politically inspired terrorist activity as well as the institutional responses to it, both of which had, at the time of filming, been thrown into stark relief in the wake of the September 11 attacks in New York. *Hunger* positions itself on a discursive continuum between the historical and cultural appraisal of Irish republican terror in the United Kingdom and a more contemporary but nonetheless enduring concern with the containment of increasingly globalised networks of terror in the Western world.

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not to do prison work; the right to educational and recreational facilities; and the restoration of lost remission of sentence" ("The Hunger Strike of 1981 – Summary" n. pag.). Instead of wearing prison uniforms, a substantial number of republican prisoners decided to cloak themselves in coarse prison blankets. Gradually, the Blanket Protest gave way to the Dirty Protest, during which the prisoners resorted to pasting their excrement on the walls of their cells by way of protesting against the terms of their imprisonment (see "Blanket and 'No-Wash' Protests" n. pag.).

In the first of her three 2011 Reith Lectures, all delivered under the umbrella topic of "Securing Freedom," former Director General of MI5 Eliza Manningham Buller spoke about the MI5's meetings with their US sister organisations following the al-Qaeda attack on the World Trade Center. In the lecture, she divulges that "[…] the United States has many more intelligence resources than the UK, but they welcomed our offer of support. And, of course, after 30 years of conflict in Northern Ireland, we had greater experience of terrorism on our own soil" (n. pag.). Referring to the IRA's attacks on Birmingham and London, Manningham Buller reminds her audience of the UK's previous experience of terror, insisting further on that "[s]ome of the things we learned are relevant to thinking about the very different threat from al-Qaeda" (n. pag.).

Taking his cue from Foucault's analysis of nineteenth-century biopolitical approaches to the "usefulness of bodies" in *The History of Sexuality*, Michael J. Shapiro equally analyses the consequences of the 2001 al-Qaeda attack, arguing that "the contemporary problem of governance – after 9/11 – has been on dangerous bodies […] on the inside who collaborate with or serve as vehicles for enemies of the state" (21). It is not difficult to establish the connection between this contemporary concern with "dangerous bodies" and the Thatcherite strategy of Criminalisation in Northern Ireland, which was equally aimed at marking out certain bodies as criminal through, for example, the abrogation of Special Category status for political prisoners. Referring to the 2001 Patriot Act in the US, Shapiro makes a point that is also crucial for the ways in which *Hunger* represents the republican hunger strike of 1981. He argues that "[t]wo political issues are involved […] when bodies become subject to increased tracking and coercive management" (22). The first of these issues involves simply "distinguishing friends and enemies," while the second and more oblique issue concerns "a struggle between those seeking to control, eliminate, or impose meanings on bodies and the bodies themselves, understood as active agents impelled by their own willed and unconscious determinations" (22). In *Hunger*, the title of which highlights the human body as much as the laws it produces and obeys, Bobby Sands' body becomes the site of a similar struggle in which the individual's will to political self-determination is pitted against the authorities' "coercive management" of his recalcitrant body. The human body's capacity to assert meaning (and to resist the imposition thereof) forms part of the way in which the film is marketed and presented. On the back of the DVD's 2009 standard edition, the film's description reads: "With an epic eye for detail, the film provides a timely exploration of the final act of desperation, when the human body is the last and ultimate resource for protest." In this unequal and fated struggle, for Bobby Sands only

death from self-starvation as the ultimate act of bodily negation can reassert the narrative sense of self that he seeks to assert.

In *Hunger*, the harrowing "coercive management" of the prisoners' bodies is shown to an extreme degree. The film represents state-sponsored harassment and violence inside the prison Maze in harrowing detail. There is hardly any dialogue during the first and the third part of the film, so that the progression of the narrative is almost entirely dependent on the film's cinematography. Entirely confined to the closed spaces of HMP Maze/Long Kesh, the camera switches easily between intimate close-ups of single faces or body parts, wider angles capturing the prison hallways or groups of people and fast-paced successions of agile shots that seem to be moving in-between the events, as if perceived through the eyes of a non-focalising eye-witness. While the film is relentless in its depiction of the unjustifiable brutality levelled at the prisoners, it also hints at the psychological effects of this particular kind of discipline on those who reinforce it.

For instance, *Hunger* makes a point of showing an unnamed prison guard soak his bruised and swollen hands in a sink filled with warm water. Staring at himself blankly in the mirror above the sink, he breathes heavily to alleviate the burning of his skin. The prison guard is shown doing this three times in the first part of the film; the first two times the reason for his aching bloodied hands is withheld (01:12-01:44; 05:36-06:03). It is only in the third instance that this reason is revealed: He is part of a team who cut the republican prisoners' hair and beards, which they have been growing out as part of the Dirty Protest. Employing brute force and blunt scissors, they press the prisoners' heads and faces down on a stool and reduce their scalps and faces to a bloody mess (27:00-29:55). Another scene shows a young soldier hiding from the riot squat to which he belongs, while his colleagues are carrying out a punishment beating of the republican soldiers within the prison walls. He is sobbing, leaning with his back against a wall along the other side of which his unit are standing in a row, baton charging one naked republican prisoner after another as they are sent down a prison hallway, running a terrible gauntlet (41:48-45:07). The frame is composed in such a way that the far end of the wall splits the screen into two halves, one of which is inhabited by the sobbing soldier and one of which shows the punishment beatings. This artistic juxtaposition of cause and effect illustrates the dehumanising element inherent in state-sponsored violence, which does not only negate the humanity of its victims, but also that of its perpetrators. While the riot squat is equipped to face an insurgent mob, wearing full riot gear including boots, helmets and riot shields, the prisoners' naked skin is exposed to their violent kicking and bludgeoning. The uniformity afforded by the soldiers' riot gear

on the one hand and the prisoners' naked skin on the other highlights the fact that the corrective measure is meted out by a disembodied force and equally directed at an anonymous cohort of recalcitrant bodies, not at individuals.

At the far end of the gauntlet, however, the prisoners are subjected to an individually and psychologically more intimate act of degradation. Forced into a crouching position above a mirror positioned on the floor, the prisoners are examined by a rubber-gloved prison ward who makes a point of inspecting their anuses first before forcing his fingers into their mouths. As an act of forced penetration, of breaking the integrity of the body, it is a sexualised form of punishment designed to negate the individual's ownership of his own body. It parades the power of the state's authorities to claim and control the bodies of its citizens, albeit these very citizens might not acknowledge this state's legitimacy. It negates, by way of extension, the republican aspiration to a united Ireland as well as the possibility to map one's own body allegorically onto the whole island of Ireland as one's imagined national territory.

Interestingly, Seamus Heaney's well-known poem "Act of Union" draws on a similar form of allegorical body-mapping. The poem offers a dramatic monologue in which a personified Great Britain that self-describes as "imperially / Male" (lines 15-16) addresses the island of Ireland, traditionally cast as female, whom it has raped – or at least penetrated – from behind. The province of Ulster features as the undesired and insurgent offspring (mis)begotten by this sexual encounter (see lines 21-25). Here, too, the right to bodily self-determination has been violated, while the act of forced penetration has enduringly thwarted the physical integrity of the island of Ireland, which has been split into two separate organisms.

Further, the violent inspection of the prisoners' anuses and mouths calls to mind Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, where the author analyses the form of power exerted and established in the examination. Charting a change of the ways in which sovereign power was expressed, Foucault shows that, during the seventeenth century, the examination entered the scene as a technique of maintaining hierarchy and order. He posits:

> The examination […] is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. […] In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. (*Discipline* 184-85)

It seems that this observation regarding the nature of the examination reveals the true intent at the heart of the superfluous inspection the republican prisoners have to endure. Not only is it a means of humiliation and punishment that grimly parades the prisoners' subjection and objectification, it is also a degrading "ceremony of power" in which the state apparatus displays its full oppressive potential. The "truth" established in the process is the abject-ness of the prisoners' bodies which are undeserving of humane or even respectful treatment. They are the bodies of terrorists, not of political prisoners and, as such, they are classified as what Shapiro has called "dangerous bodies" (22). They are conduit for attacks on the state and thus fall outside the limits of the state's rule of law.

"Space-Clearing" and the Narrative as Self-Empowerment

Dom's visit to the prison occurs shortly after the riot squad have beaten and abused the republican prisoners and Bobby Sands has been taken to his cell wounded and unconscious. At the time of Dom and Bobby's meeting in the prison's visitors' hall, Bobby's face and scalp are still bruised and bloodied. These two episodes, the punishment beating and Dom's visit to the prison, are separated only by one brief scene, devoid of dialogue, in which the unnamed prison guard is shot dead by masked paramilitary men while visiting his demented mother at a nursing home (46:55). Sitting on a chair opposite his mother, the prison guard is shot in the back of the head and the brain matter splashes violently onto his mother's face as he falls forward into her lap. The prison guard's visit to the nursing home as much as Dom's visit to the prison depict two meetings, albeit of different nature, that take place in the name of care-giving and within the confines of an institutional framework. Juxtaposing these two meetings, the film suggest the existence of similarities between the circumstances in which they occur. Both the prison guard and Dom know that they are visiting a dead one walking, one whose end within the institution they anticipate. Both the prison guard and Bobby fall prey to the wider political dynamics in which they operate and which leave them little leeway for autonomous decisions that might benefit them personally. The fact that both meetings occur within the walls of institutions that are, at least superficially, dedicated to the physical maintenance of its inhabitants renders the prison guard as much as Bobby's deaths shocking, futile and absurd. Further, the scene helps to establish the contrast between the prison's impersonal machinery of oppression and the precise, personal revenge that the IRA brings to bear against it. The killing of the prison guard lends a vulnerable, individual face to the

otherwise impersonalised power of the state and complicates any easy sense of identification with the republican cause. As such, it inserts a caveat against the reasoning that Bobby Sands will suggest with regard to the hunger strike in the dialogue that is to follow.

Dom is suspicious of the grand gesture that Bobby seeks to execute by initiating a second republican hunger strike in the space of less than one year when the first hunger strike in 1980 already proved a complete failure. He rejects this second hunger strike as a highly symbolical but, ultimately, pointless act of martyrdom. Dom is convinced that the British administration will not give in to moral blackmail – for him, the hunger strike is nothing but "a pre-design to die" (57:26) and, as such, a sin against life. Even though he is a Catholic priest, Dom does not buy into the orthodox republican mythology that feeds on Christian ideas of self-sacrifice as a means of elevating the righteousness of the republican cause. His theology is of a more benign, forgiving nature. When Bobby tells him that he "always thought that thief [on the cross] next to Jesus got off lightly," Dom counters, "but he recognised his sins" (51:58-52:04). While Bobby seems to suggest that one has to follow one's convictions with unflinching determination unto the bitter end, Dom appears to believe in the possibility of a redemptive change of heart. Involving Bobby and Dom in this ethico-religious discussion, *Hunger* comments implicitly on those republican popular-culture representations of Bobby Sands as a Christ-like martyr. These representations have offered a politically effective portrayal of the British administration as a despotic regime of oppression.[48] Analysing a Derry mural dedicated to the republican hunger strikers of 1980 and 1981, Gerry Kearns posits that "[t]he hunger strike can easily recall Christ fasting in the desert and the long tradition of Christian fasting and self-mortification" (9). Establishing aesthetic links between representations of the hunger strikers in the mural and engravings of famine victims, Kearns goes on to elaborate on this meaningful analogy:

> The British government, the mural suggests, let the hunger strikers die, just as their predecessors had presided over the mortality of the famine. This indifference to Irish life is presented as a stable character of the British, and their relations with the Irish people are, by implication, at times purely colonial. (9)

By way of association, *Hunger* draws on such established representations of republican sacrifice, which allows it to question radical modes of republican self-fashioning while at the same time highlighting the precarious situation of the individual steeped in this

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[48] Cf. Caroline Magennis who, referencing Bill Rolston's *Politics and Painting*, points to the way in which political murals successfully established associations between republican hunger strikers and Christian ideas of martyrdom. She concludes "This results from an intersection of colonial/national and Christian/martyr discourses" (43).

unforgiving mythology of perseverance and self-sacrifice. Sands may have been a political fanatic, the film suggests, but one whose self-inflicted bodily suffering must nonetheless be taken at face value and portrayed sympathetically.[49]

Dom and Bobby's religious and political commonalities are not sufficient to align their views with regard to the hunger strike. Crucially, Bobby introduces geography as a third dimension in which their experiences of life in the North have differed significantly: "We're both Catholic men, both Republicans, but while you were poaching salmon in lovely Kilrea, we were being burnt out of our house in Rathcoole […] life and experience has focussed our beliefs differently, do you understand me?" (58:12-58:22).[50] What Bobby highlights at this point of the argument is that the men's experiences of space, of rightfully inhabiting a parcel of land, during the formative years of adolescence could not have been more different. While Dom grew up in the rural village of Kilrea in County Londonderry, Bobby grew up in, and was evicted from, Rathcoole, a densely populated urban housing estate in Newtownabbey, just outside of Belfast. Bobby's socio-political formation was hence closely linked to the 'territorial imperative' of the civil war; to the experience that one's mere existence in space is always already political and, as such, inherently precarious. When Dom presses Bobby to reveal his emotional response to the prospect of sacrificing his life to a political gamble, Bobby's answer reveals that the hunger strike is not only about the republican prisoners' demand for political status, but more immediately about the legitimacy of Irish partition and the curtailment of personal freedom that the Irish border represents for him:

> BOBBY. I believe that a united Ireland is right and just. [… H]aving a respect for my life, a desire for freedom, an unyielding love for that belief, means I can see past any doubts I may have. Putting my life in the line is not just the only thing I can do, Dom, it's the right thing. (1:01:34-1:01:52)

Responding to Dom's accusation that "life must mean nothing to [him]" (1:00:29), Bobby effectively turns the tables of the argument on Dom: The hunger strike is, perversely, Bobby's expression of the deep regard in which he holds his life, his bodily existence. Equating a united Ireland with his right to self-determination, Bobby projects the territorial

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[49] McKittrick and McVea point remark that "[i]n propaganda terms Sands benefitted from the fact that he developed an aura of victimhood and self-sacrifice" (166). They go on to show that Sands's death brought the Thatcher administration "much international criticism" while locally, rioting and violent confrontation intensified, victimising substantial numbers of people (167-68).
[50] For a detailed account of "intimidation in housing," refer to John Darby's 1974 study of the same name. In chapter six of his study, he examines the case of Rathcoole during the early nineteen-seventies.

outline of the island onto the equally clear-cut boundaries of his own body and, in doing so, taps into an established tradition.[51] This conceptual mapping of the territorial nation onto the individual body argues forcefully that the partition of Ireland is a violation of the body's integrity that must receive a redress in that same body, even if this redress demands the ultimate self-sacrifice. The logic behind this reasoning is at the same time disarmingly simple and recklessly radical, and does not succeed in convincing Dom, who is adamant in his insistence on negotiation and compromise. In his view, the political discourse in the North must be freed from the emotional certainties that are provided by traditional allegorical images.

Attempting to address the disalignment between their moral and political beliefs, Bobby engages in a narrative act of what Hickman has called "space-clearing" (9). Recalling his first border crossing into County Donegal, in the South of Ireland, in 1966, Bobby stakes a narrative claim to the land across the border, expressing an emotion that he knows will resonate with Dom. He explains his current subject position with recourse to his past experience of Donegal, which emerges from his account as the touchstone of his personal and political sense of self. Recounting a 'spatial story' about his first visit to Gweedore in County Donegal, Bobby reveals to Dom those aspects of his narrative sense of self that account for his willingness to sacrifice his own life, and the lives of others, to the republican cause:

> BOBBY. I went there when I was twelve. Big cross-country race for the boys. And we're all in the back of a minibus headed towards Derry one morning. […] This is like international athletics for us 'cause we're racing against boys in the South. And we have this thing to do Belfast proud. Two of the boys are Prods, and the rest of us are Catholics. It's a cross-community event. I suppose the good people in the South think this is great stuff, and let's get this wee team over from Belfast and all that patronising shite. Anyway. We're through the border, and the boys are all singing pop tunes and all, but I'm just in the back of the bus, looking out the window. We're going through them mountains. You know where Mount Errigal is and everything? It's a beautiful sight, Dom. Donegal has to be the most beautiful place in Ireland, I reckon. (*Hunger* 1:02:36-1:03:35)

Temporarily transposing them to County Donegal, Bobby clears an imaginative space for both Dom and himself across the border that will yield, at least for the duration of his narrative, some common ground between them. The rural beauty of Donegal, which partition and border reinforcement have rendered almost inaccessible to northern republicans, is a loss

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[51] Cf. Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* 153. As Smith shows, however, the island of Ireland was traditionally conceptualised in terms of a female figure.

that Bobby suspects Dom will feel as keenly as he does. Not only was Dom raised in the countryside and has a strong desire to return to it. His home county of Londonderry in the north-west of Northern Ireland is border country itself, neighbouring but separated from County Donegal in the west. Hence, Dom has first-hand experience of the cul-de-sac that the imposition of the border has made of his native county and, as a republican, supposedly shares Bobby's desire to reclaim the physical integrity of the island of Ireland. The metaphorical common ground that Bobby prepares by reminding Dom of their joint status as "orphans of secession" (McGarry qtd. in Wolff 28) is at the very same time the actual, physical ground for which he intends to give his life. He effectively forestalls any future argument that Dom might try to bring to bear against the hunger strike.

Paradoxically, Bobby's defiant 'spatial story' manages to establish a common ground between himself and Dom by highlighting their shared ethno-cultural homelessness on both sides of the Irish border, while at the same time clearing a shared space for them across that very border. Insisting on Donegal's sublime beauty, he imagines it as a "poetic landscape" that possesses "life-enhancing and nurturing qualities" (Smith, *Chosen Peoples* 136; 135). As a nationalist identity resource across the border, Donegal remains, however, merely an imagined homeland. It is decisively not a lived space for Bobby, who is bound to Donegal by social relations no more than to any other foreign country and who feels rejected and disowned by "the good people of the South" and their "patronising" attitude towards Troubles-stricken Northern Ireland as a whole. Crucially, the beginning of Bobby's monologue places his space-clearing narrative at a definite point in time, before the outbreak of the civil war. Born in 1954, Bobby Sands would have been twelve in 1966, which was two years before NICRA, the Northern Irish Civil Rights Association, was founded and began its campaign. To Dom, as much as to the implied audience of the film, however, Bobby's reference to Derry/Londonderry on the border to Donegal necessarily conjures up associations of the city's later prominence as "the cockpit of the struggle [for civil rights] in the Six Counties" and as "a focus for Catholic discontent and republican sentiment," as Eamonn McCann put it in 1972 ("What Happened in Derry" 4). Like *Where They Were Missed*, *Hunger* too depicts southern Irish cross-border perception as characterised by a sense of national superiority and essential estrangement. As a number of commentators have observed, Catholic nationalists stranded on the northern side of the border enjoyed the benefits of a welfare system that was superior to that in the South. In the same breath, however, they highlight the circumstance that the Catholic minority in the North was reduced

to political insignificance at the same time (Fitzpatrick 8, 5; Coakley and O'Dowd, "The 'New' Irish Border" 4; "The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 296).

It may be the awareness of his own group's predicament that causes Bobby to anticipate condescending treatment from beyond the border. Crucially, though, Bobby himself presents his experience of his southern-Irish kin as intrinsically 'other': Not only does he document his excitement about taking part in what to him is "international athletics," but he also displays a certain sense of national superiority when he states, dismissively, that the Cork boys he met preparing for the cross-country run "could barely talk, we couldn't understand a word they were saying" (1:04:34-1:04:36). There is, then, a manifest impediment to cross-border communication on a personal level that re-enacts the state of inter-Irish relations. Socialised in their own, disparate national discourses enshrined and enabled by the border, the boys can make no sense of one another although they officially speak the same language.

Suggesting that this estrangement has existed prior to and irrespective of the Troubles, Bobby implies that the political and cultural divisions on an all-Ireland scale are as much concerned with the integrity of the unionist and nationalist causes respectively, as with the South's endorsement of the border as a marker of national alterity – as drawing and confirming a socio-spatial distinction between itself and the North. As an imagined "ancestral homeland" (Smith, *Chosen Peoples* 137) however, Bobby's memory of County Donegal across the border fuels and legitimises his struggle. The struggle itself is fought elsewhere, though. Bobby proposes a redefinition of Irish republicanism according to which working-class, republican Belfast represents the cutting-edge of the movement. Honed by the experience of deprivation and discrimination, urban working-class republicanism has a stronger drive and a deeper claim to Donegal as an identity resource than rural Ireland can comprehend. Bobby reproaches Dom for his opposition to the hunger strike and suggests that Dom would feel differently had it not been for his spoilt childhood in Kilrea which was free from the violence of territorial micro-politics. Bobby's is a metropolitan and ultimately exclusive definition of republicanism that turns against rural Northern Ireland, the administration of the Northern state, and also the Republic of Ireland. Rhetorically and metaphorically, he turns the tables on his own marginalised position and declares himself the pivot of the struggle. In de Certeau's terms, Bobby's spatial story is "delinquent" and it renders the personal and political position he assumes through it equally delinquent:

> If the delinquent exists only by displacing itself, if its specific mark is to live [...] in the interstices of the codes that it undoes and displaces [...], then the story is

delinquent. Social delinquency consists in taking the story literally, in making it the principle of physical existence […] where there is no longer any alternative to disciplinary falling-into-line or illegal drifting away, that is, one form or another of prison and wandering outside the pale (de Certeau 130).

As I have argued above, Bobby draws on his "spatial story" to legitimise his transgression of the various regimes that expect his submission and compliance. It is a means of justifying his hunger strike, which as an act of radical self-neglect is in itself delinquent and which "undoes and displaces" his body as a way of undoing and displacing the disciplinary discourses that focus on his body.

As his spatial story about this cross-border journey unfolds, Bobby manages to trace back the motivation for his current political convictions to this formative event in the past. As Goldie has stressed, narrative thinking about one's personal past and future has an enduring emotional importance for the individual and his or her character development:

> [I]n narrative thinking, as part of a person narrative, one cares emotionally and in other ways about one's past and one's future, and about what sort of person one was or will become. And moreover, this kind of caring implicitly […] acknowledges that the backward-looking and forward-looking emotions that are involved include emotions directed towards oneself: they are emotions of self-assessment." (Goldie 131)

By means of his spatial story, Bobby anchors his present narrative sense of self in a story that he remembers about the past and that legitimates at the same time the political action he is about to take. In this way, his spatial story is not only a narrative of emotional self-assessment but also a narrative of self-empowerment. As de Certeau has argued, the "founding [of space] is precisely the primary role of the story. It opens up a legitimate *theater* for practical *actions*" (125, emphasis in original). It is in this sense that his spatial story of crossing the border makes Bobby readable to Dom and, by extension, to the implied audience of the film. It clears the ground "for the practical actions" of the hunger strike, by which Bobby counters two overlapping disciplinary discourses – one run by the state authorities, one by the IRA leadership – that pursue mutually exclusive political aims. From his spatial story, he emerges as a radical border crosser, choosing to inhabit a politically and morally liminal position which is endorsed by neither authority nor by Dom as a (benign) representative of the Catholic Church. Staging himself as a messianic figure that sacrifices his life for the republican cause, Sands recuperates his body as a site of political resistance, which the British administration, following a disciplinary approach, sought to prevent by their criminalisation policy. At the same time, the hunger strike is a transgressive, personal act of defiance against the IRA's leadership who want him to enter into negotiations with

the governor of the prison. In Foucault's words, Bobby refuses to succumb to discipline as "the unitary technique by which the body is reduced as a 'political' force at the least cost and maximized as a useful force" (*Discipline* 221). On another level, however, his story also references the ultimate goal of a united Ireland. De Certeau posits that "the structure of the travel story" is circular in that "stories of journeys […] are marked out by the 'citation' of the places that result from them or that authorize them" (120). In this sense, the movement indicated in Bobby's spatial story expresses both, the past journey across the border and the present vision of an undivided Ireland that is "authorized" by it.

"Verbal Painting" and Metaphors of Empowerment

Providing the centrepiece of *Hunger*, the powerful exchange between Bobby and Dom takes up almost exactly twenty minutes of the film's ninety-six minutes (47:37-1:08:00). The men's exchange thus claims more than a fifth of the film's total running time, which in itself stresses its importance for the narrative's progress: It provides the bridge that holds together the first and the third part of the film and that guides the audience from the one to the other. It contains a disproportional quantity of dialogue in comparison to the remaining two parts of the film, which favour a stark and poignant visual language over the spoken word. The scene depicting the meeting between Bobby and Dom thus deviates significantly from the rest of film in terms of its mode of representation. The scene derives additional strength from the fact that its entire twenty minutes have been shot in one single go, from only three different camera positions and at straight-on angles. In combination, these cinematographic choices confer an important emphasis on the spoken word and, in this film, on its unique capacity to forge spatial stories. Further, it is cinematographically significant that Bobby's account of his cross-border journey is captured in an uninterrupted, intimately photographed, close-up of his face, even though his memories of Gweedore in County Donegal would have lent themselves beautifully to visuals of the untouched Donegal landscape surrounding Mount Errigal. The close-up of Bobby's face entails, by contrast, a strong focus on his emotional state as he reveals to Dom the part of his narrative sense of self that is relevant to his present situation.[52] In narrating this spatial story, Bobby effectively becomes what Mary

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[52] It is in this sense that the scene calls to mind the ekphrasis tradition, which consists of "an extended description of a rhetorical nature" ("Ekphrasis" 128). The focus in this scene of *Hunger* on Bobby's emotions entails a nod to the ekphrasis: "An ekphrasis generally attempted to convey the visual impression and the emotional responses evoked by the painting or building […]. In an ekphrasis of a painting the author […] was free to discuss the general narrative context, referring both forwards

Louise Pratt has termed "a verbal painter" (202). "The verbal painter," Pratt writes, "must render momentarily significant what is, especially from a narrative point of view, a non-event" (202). Practically, Bobby's description of the Donegal landscape that provides the setting for his spatial story is such a narrative non-event; he assumes that Dom will share his appreciation of Donegal's rural beauty and does not go to any verbal flourish. Pratt writes, of course, about nineteenth-century colonial discoveries that required the translation of "local knowledges" (202) into a language more easily accessible to Western hegemonic discourse. No such translation is necessary in the exchange between Bobby and Dom, nor does Bobby's experience of Donegal amount to a "discovery": Rather, it consists, as Pratt puts it, in the "purely passive experience […] of seeing" (204). The discovery to be made in Bobby's verbal painting is of a purely metaphorical kind that relies on conveying an aesthetic experience and on acting on the insight gained. As Pratt argues:

> [T]he 'discovery' itself, even within the ideology of discovery, has no existence of its own. It only gets 'made' for real after the traveler […] returns home, and brings it into being through texts […] Here is language charged with making the world in the most singlehanded way, and with high stakes. (204)

Taken on its own, Bobby's spatial story has indeed very little revelatory value. The discovery it entails is entirely dependent on the socio-political context in which it is told – one in which the individual is subject to state-sponsored repression, systemic discrimination and urban warfare. Against this background, the elysian qualities of Donegal can be recalled and retold with an urgency that lies outside of the memory itself. Further, Bobby's spatial story is indeed guilty of "making the world" – of creating a specific reality – in a singlehanded fashion. His remembered experience of crossing the border will have to be strong and resilient enough to carry the weight of all the republican prisoners who have volunteered to follow Bobby's lead into self-starvation. Finally, serving to justify the hunger strike that Bobby is about to initiate, his spatial story does involve very high stakes: The loss of human life is not only a possible outcome of the strike, it is its premise. Success will not be measured in the preservation of life but, given the uncompromising position of the Thatcher administration, in that which can be achieved in death. Dom rejects the strike for this cynical logic, depicting it as a one-sided war of attrition against the British authorities. "You start a hunger strike to protest for what you believe in, you don't start already determined to die, or

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and backwards in time" ("Ekphrasis" 128). Remembering a moment of his childhood in order to discuss an event in the future (his hunger strike), Bobby in fact established a narrative context for his present meeting with Dom.

am I missing something here?" (*Hunger* 56:06-56:10), he asks rhetorically, and confronts Bobby in vain with the cynicism of his plan: "so it'll take a couple of deaths, do you think, maybe five or six, but sure there's seventy-five of you" (56:16-56:21).

For all of Bobby's surety and conviction, his spatial story is characterised by an ideological contradiction that seems to escape his attention. According to Pratt, verbal painting is an imperial activity that bestows upon the verbal painter "the power if not to possess, [then] at least to evaluate the scene" (205). While Bobby cannot rightfully possess the territory across the border, he does, quite literally, "evaluate the scene" with an almost arrogant aloofness opposite his peers. In preparation of the cross-country run that is about to begin, Bobby and his team go for a warm-up run through a valley and, together with the team from Cork, they chance upon an injured and abandoned foal lying helplessly in a shallow stream:

> BOBBY. Lying in the water is a wee foal. Four or five days old, he's all skin and bone, and grey colour, and he's got flecks of blood on his coat 'cause he's cut himself up really badly on the sharp rocks. We're just standing over him and you can see his back leg snapped, and he's breathing, he's alive but just about. So this big conversation gets started up between the boys who suddenly reckon themselves the leaders [… b]ut I am looking in their faces and I can see they're either scared stiff or clueless. It's all bravado. […] So it's clear to me in an instant, and I'm down on my knees and take the foal's head in my hands and I put him under water. He's thrashing around a bit to start, so I press down harder until he's drowned. Priest arrives, Dom. He's grabbing me by the hair, dragging me through the woods, promising me a proper hiding. But I knew I did the right thing by that wee foal. And I could take the punishment for all our boys. I had the respect of them other boys now, and I knew that. I'm clear of the reasons, Dom. I'm clear of all the repercussions. But I will act, and will not stand by and do nothing. (*Hunger* 1:05:01-1:06:36)

Drowning the foal, Bobby takes control of the situation and establishes himself as the leader of the group. Crucially, his leadership is established in the moment of his taking action; it is not ratified beforehand. His evaluation of the scene that presents itself to him is now, as it was then, favourable to no one but himself: In his account, confronted with his peers' lack of decision and courage, Bobby alone possesses the presence of mind and the fortitude required to end the foal's agony. Retelling this memory in the present tense, Bobby reveals its enduring importance for his present sense of self and hints at the status of this episode as both a memory and a metaphor for his situation in the present. Only once, toward the end of his retelling, asserting the righteousness of his action, does he deviate from the present tense and uses the simple past instead: "But I knew I did the right thing by that wee foal. And I could take the punishment for all our boys. I had the respect of them other boys now, and I

knew that." It is at this point, when he distances himself from any immediacy of the scene and evaluates it as something past, that his spatial story about Donegal becomes most clearly a narrative of self-empowerment. It is, paradoxically, the use of the simple past that highlights emphatically the relevance of this past experience for the present: What I did then, Bobby affirms, I can do again.

In this narrative of self-empowerment, Bobby asserts his political right to act and grounds it in his claim to Donegal as his community's 'ancestral homeland.' Using the foal metaphor, he stages himself both as agent and as sacrifice in the republican struggle. Obstructing the natural flow of the stream in which it lies, the injured foal calls to mind W.B. Yeats's famous political poem "Easter 1916" in which violent republicanism is cast as "a stone" (line 43) that lies "in the midst of all" (line 56) and blocks "the living stream" (line 44). On this reading, the foal may stand in for a still misguided republican movement that paralyses rather than benefits the life of the community it pretends to serve. If taken to refer to Bobby himself, the foal metaphor vindicates his right to give his life for a united Ireland. In a verbal painting, as Pratt points out, "the aesthetic qualities of the landscape constitute the social and material value of the discovery to the explorers' home culture, at the same time as its aesthetic deficiencies suggest a need for social and material intervention by the home culture" (205). In the aesthetic landscape of Donegal, the injured, dying foal is such a deficiency that demands the intervention of a corrective force, which is offered by what Bobby sees as his courageous leadership. Drowning the foal, he assumes a moral high ground opposite his peers which, by extension, legitimates his current action on behalf of the republican movement. The imperial logic of verbal painting as a cultural practice exposes a significant fault line in Sands' narrative in that it is concerned with spatial rather than with social relations. His 'geographical imagination' remains rigidly territorial in that it does not allow for an understanding of Donegal as a junction of "social relations and understandings" (D. Massey, "Power-Geometry" 66). The fact that the aesthetic 'deficiency' of the foal lies on the southern side of the border implies also that the republican cause is ultimately challenged in the South of Ireland rather than within the British North. This implication of the metaphor threatens to subvert the nationalist imperative of the Irish nation as an 'imagined community' in Benedict Anderson's sense.

The foal metaphor is also, quite obviously, one of embodiment that highlights the physicality of Bobby's predicament in the field of force between the state institutions and the republican movement, a predicament that elicits his individual response of self-starvation. Death, the metaphor seems to suggest, is moral since it ends an unbearably painful

existence that offers little hope of redemption or redress. Using the foal as a conduit, Bobby envisions his own death in Donegal as a nationalist 'space of projection,' and establishes a sense of ethnic continuity that defiantly links him to the mythologised narrative of an ancient Irish nation that predates the drawing of the border. In the moment of entering the hunger strike, he literally and fatally finds himself in the middle of what Pratt has identified as a "contact zone": She uses the term to denote "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (4). The IRA, as the paramilitary organisation Bobby belongs to, have surely perceived themselves as engaged in a post-colonial struggle against a foreign administration on the island of Ireland. Between them, these two negotiate, in disparate "relations of domination and subordination," the rationale behind the national border. The violent burden of this unequal negotiation, however, falls heavily and gravely onto the individual body, which is caught in-between two contending disciplinary forces. While the IRA leadership want Bobby to negotiate with the governor of the prison, he has lost faith in the IRA's tactics and ultimately spites them just as much as the state authorities in his hunger strike, an act of great symbolical reverberation that repositions him in the ongoing power play.

As Pratt has argued, in the 'contact zone' "transculturation" (6) happens. Transculturation denotes the process by which "subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (6). In his hunger strike, Sands appropriates the metropolitan "conditions of coercion" (6), and reflects them outward, under great media attention, turning his emaciated body into a signifier of these conditions. To literally reduce oneself, one's bodily existence, while being placed in the care of the state is metaphorically poignant in that it enacts the impossibility of existence under the conditions created by this very state. It is, at the same time, a resistance to power that seeks to achieve a reversal of the structures of power. As Foucault reminds us, "in our societies, the systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain 'political economy' of the body: […] it is always the body that is at issue – the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission" ("The Body" 172). Targeted at the body, thus, the penal system is employed to create a "series of positive and useful effects which it is [its] task to support" (172). The extreme state violence shown to be directed at the republican prisoners in *Hunger* is obviously gratuitous, and leaves but little space in which to be interpreted as "positive and useful". It is a direct physical response to the bodily recalcitrance expressed in the No wash and Dirty Protests and, as such, an attempt at

reducing to a minimum the attention bodily functions are capable of drawing to themselves. The hunger strike, then, is an unflinching response to both strategies: It draws attention to the body and its most basic needs while at the same time withdrawing this very body from both the impact of (foreign) violence, utility, and, ultimately, life itself. It counters the bodily recalcitrance of the former protests with a perversely heightened yet unwanted form of docility. In *Hunger*, the harrowing violence that is meted out against the prisoners by the prison guards contrasts to startling effect with the gentle medical care that Sands receives from the prison doctor during his hunger strike.

2.3 "Cartographies of Subterfuge": Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras* (2004)

This subchapter begins with a historical excursus intended to elucidate the workings of Northern Ireland as a "disciplinary society" (Foucault, *Discipline* 216) during the almost fifty years of unionist rule between the creation of the Northern Irish state in 1922 and the dissolution of the devolved Northern Irish government in 1972. These fifty years of unbroken unionist domination over the nationalist minority in the province have tellingly been referred to as the "Orange state" (Fitzpatrick 6).[53] As Stefan Wolff has argued, the half-century beginning with partition in 1922 was a period of political stability, where "the system of majority democracy that was in operation […] for most of the twentieth century until the abrogation of the Stormont Parliament in 1972 […] provided Unionists with an overwhelming degree of influence and power" (153-54). It is, hence, as Maurice Fitzpatrick has argued, the period prior to the civil war, from 1922 onwards, which needs attention if one is to understand the immediate causes for the outbreak of the Troubles as a function of segregation and discrimination, the struggle for civil rights and the violent reactions it instigated (5-6). During this time, discrimination against the Catholic minority reportedly occurred in fields such as employment, education, housing and political participation, all of which include a spatial dimension (McEvoy et al. 84, 85-86; Wolff 156). In a similar vein,

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[53] Michael Farrell's 1976 book bears the equation of Northern Ireland with "the Orange State" on its cover; it is boldly (and not uncritically) entitled *Northern Ireland: the Orange State*. In the preface to the book, the author concedes that his "is not an impartial book […]: it is written from an anti-imperialist and socialist stand-point." (12). Michael Farrell is a well-known Irish socialist and a long-time political companion of socialist politicians Bernadette Devlin McAliskey and Eamonn McCann. All three were involved in the People's Democracy in the late 1960s. See Bernadette Devlin's *The Price of My Soul* for an account of the circumstances that shaped her, Farrell's and McCann's political stances. In Chapter Nine, she offers an account of the People's Democracy march from Belfast to Derry in January 1969, a watershed moment in the history of the Northern Irish conflict.

David McKittrick and David McVea speak of Northern Ireland as "the static society" between 1921 and 1963:

> [t]he troubles which broke out in the late 1960s had roots going back many decades, for Northern Ireland never resembled a place at peace with itself. [...] Viewed from this perspective, the troubles can be seen as a more violent expression of existing animosities and unresolved issues of nationality, religion, power, and territorial rivalry. [...] With hindsight the seeds of the later violence can be seen with come clarity. (1)

Already during these "static" decades following partition, it would seem, the seeds had been sown for the civil war in Northern Ireland. Commenting upon the commencement of political negotiation and rapport as a function of the 2007 power-sharing government, McKittrick and McVea write hopefully: "There will certainly be conflict ahead, but the betting is that it will for the most part be confined to the political arena [...] Northern Ireland is never going to be a utopia, but nor is it fated to continue in violence" (x). Their prophecy has since been validated: The social and political upheaval that the Northern Irish populace has been exposed to since 2007 has indeed shown that Northern Ireland will never be a perfect state. If it were, the most recent political deadlock that occurred at Stormont in 2017 in the wake of the so-called "cash for ash" scandal would not have occurred. For three years between 2017 and 2020, Stormont found itself without a functioning power-sharing assembly, while the blame game between Sinn Féin and the DUP called to mind Yeats's stern exclamation in front of an irascible Abbey audience: "You have disgraced yourselves again."[54] So while the province may never be a utopia, it has repeatedly been depicted in terms of what Foucault has called a "heterotopia." Northern Ireland cannot be an utopia since, in Foucault's words, it neither "present[s] society itself in its perfected form," nor is it one of those "fundamentally unreal spaces" ("Other Spaces" 24). On the contrary, the socio-political problems it has posed ever since its conception continue to be eminently real.

For the reasons given above, this subchapter would ideally, but due to its limited scope cannot, extend to works of fiction that deal with a larger timeframe, taking into account the period from the creation of the Northern Irish state to the present time of peace consolidation. More specifically, there are three broad time brackets which are each

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[54] Yeats's exclamation has since become a familiar expression. He used it, as Keating summarises, "reprimand[ing] the audience at the Abbey Theatre on February 11th, 1926, as Sinn Féiner's booed and cursed Sean O'Casey's play *The Plough and the Stars*, which they found deeply offensive to the memory of those who died in the 1916 Rising" (n. pag.).

characterised by the enactment of a paramount piece of legislation:[55] The first of these is the 1922 Special Powers (Northern Ireland) Act, which in many ways laid the foundation for what has been called the "static society" (McKittrick and McVea 1). The second is the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1973, which was passed after, and in response to, the outbreak of civil war in the late sixties. The third instalment in this succession of documents is, perhaps surprisingly, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which paved the way for the current period of socio-political transition. Founded upon the principle of consociationalism, the peace agreement has been criticised by some for inscribing Northern Ireland's inherited social divisions into the new political order (see J. Hughes 1-2). Thus, these three documents arguably constitute successive pieces of legislation that, to very different degrees and to very different purposes, prevent progressive politics and, concurrently, the formation of what Doreen Massey has called a "progressive sense of place" ("Power-Geometry" 64). The socio-political climates conditioned by these three documents have repeatedly been represented as restricting individual movement across space and thus as helping to construct and/or prolong the paradigm of socio-political division.

While a detailed analysis of the literary representations of each of these three time brackets is beyond the scope of this study, this subchapter will focus, with varying degrees of emphasis, on two novels spanning the period of the civil war, from 1968 to 1998, as well as the current post-war period from 1998 onwards. Ciaran Carson's *The Pen Friend* (2009) will be considered here, albeit briefly, as a literary counterpart to Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras* (2004), setting the scene for my extended analysis of McNamee's text. Such literary contextualisation is helpful not least because *The Ultras*, in the framework of this study, presents somewhat of an anomaly: it belongs to the subgenre of "the paranoid thriller" that the literary engagement with the Troubles and their aftermath has produced in considerable quantities (E. Hughes, "Limbo" 139).[56] Different as they doubtlessly are, Carson's *The Pen Friend* and McNamee's *The Ultras* shed light on the machinery of discipline and surveillance that local as well as British security forces brought to bear against a recalcitrant

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[55] Coakley and O'Dowd choose a similar structuring in their analysis of the ways in which cross-border relationships have developed over time: "first, the partition of Ireland 1920-1 and its long aftermath; second, the dramatic changes between the late 1960s and the 1990s associated with the Northern Ireland conflict […]; and, third, the changes consequent of the Good Friday agreement of 1998 and its aftermath" ("The Irish Border in the 21st Century" 295).

[56] Other than David Park's political thriller *The Truth Commissioner*, which is also set in post-conflict Northern Ireland and which will be considered in the second part of this study, *The Ultras* deals with the webs of subterfuge, surveillance and double play that were part of the military intervention in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. *The Truth Commissioner*, while referencing elements of the paranoid, is concerned with the political manufacture of consent as part of the peace process.

Northern Irish population. Both texts portray the devastating effects of an intelligence war on individual lives, highlighting the ways in which surveillance and counter-insurgency as fundamentally spatial activities are capable of manipulating people's imaginary lives as much as their 'geographical imaginations' while effectively negating alternative, non-sectarian uses of space.

Surveillance Creating Opacity in Carson's The Pen Friend *(2009)*

Ciaran Carson's *The Pen Friend*, a post-modern, poetic, near-epistolary novel (Delattre 470) dealing with the finding and losing of love in times of political upheaval, was published in 2009, more than ten years after the Good Friday Agreement. *The Pen Friend* draws excessively on the theme of state surveillance to comment upon the progress of, and the challenges to, conflict resolution and peace building in the North. From the vantage point of the post-conflict period, Carson's protagonist Gabriel Conway draws on autobiographical memory to revisit his native Belfast of the troubled 1980s. His reminiscences are triggered by the first of thirteen postcards his first love Nina sends him some twenty years after their love affair came to an end in 1984. Trying to read sense into her sudden, fragmented postcards, Gabriel reassembles his memories of their shared past and reinterprets them in light of the present. As we have argued elsewhere, the body of text comprising Nina's postcards and the unsent letters Gabriel writes in response form a peculiar kind of materialised border discourse, which "in the act of writing, transport[s] Gabriel into the interstices between the present and the remembered past, between his 'here' and Nina's 'there'" (Frenk and Michely in Weier et al. 80, my transl.). In Gabriel's meandering responses to Nina, reflections on material culture, art history, spiritualism, memory, and the reliability of sign systems such as Esperanto, English and Gaelic, find their way into his writing. Diverse as they may be, all of these subjects had a part to play in the life they shared as lovers as much as in the socio-political circumstances that tore them apart:

> In *The Pen Friend*, the negotiation of Gabriel's and Nina's interpersonal relationship coincides with the negotiation of political boundaries; one discourse provides the context for the other and defines the parameters within which the lovers can move. (Frenk and Michely in Weier et al. 81-82, my transl.)

These parameters within which the lovers can move, however, were and continue to be curtailed by the manifold strategies of state surveillance during and after the Troubles. In *The Pen Friend*, the Ulster Panopticon is portrayed as an all-encompassing mechanism that

overtly pretends to contain conflict and to promote social change, but that covertly operates to cement existing power structures. Obfuscating its own way of working, it fixes people in their positions, renders them recognisable and calculable, and harnesses them inadvertently to serve the interests of a centralised power.

In this context, I do not use the term "Ulster Panopticon" in its strict architectural sense as defined by Jeremy Bentham. Following Foucault, it is used here in a more metaphorical, more systemic fashion, which, as Dobson and Fisher, writing in 2007, claim, is not adequate anymore in an age of enhanced human-tracking technology (314). Unlike previous panoptic mechanisms, they write, this new technology gives rise to "power relationships of all sorts: spouse to spouse, employer to employee, parent to child, and untold others, some of which may even be lateral" (318). Reviewing the development of panoptic structures over the centuries, Dobson and Fisher differentiate "three successive generations of Panopticons," which in turn correspond with three specific purposes:

> In the first instance the surveillance instrument was a specially designed building; in the second, a tightly controlled television network; and today, an electronic tracking service. Each had its own distinctive rationale: first the utopian perfection of society; second, enforcement of absolute tyranny; today, safety and security. (308)

In *The Pen Friend*, the state-sponsored system of surveillance, deploying secret agents as much as nineteen-eighties state-of-the-art surveillance technology, is shown to be a double-edged sword, whose rationale consists in both serving state security as much as extending an oblique form of tyranny across society.[57] What Dobson and Fisher matter-of-factly call "analog means of surveillance" (313, Table 1) – human agents of surveillance such as "spies", "private investigators," informers and secret agents – are ultimately accountable for the failure of Gabriel's and Nina's love. These means of surveillance monitor their targets based on intimate knowledge, interpersonal exchange and even trust. Hence, they operate from a vantage point within the social group they observe.

A recurrent theme in much of the fiction and film on the Northern Ireland conflict, human-based practices of surveillance are represented as the most efficient, given that they

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[57] As Torin Monahan, summarising various approaches to surveillance studies, points out: "David Lyon (2001) made the insightful observation that different forms of surveillance could be positioned along a spectrum from "care" to "control" – from watching over one for purposes of protection to scrutinizing one's behavior in order to enforce discipline, respectively. [… T]his insight also raises to the surface the limitation that such evaluations effectively lend greater validity to the intentions of surveillance subjects, while subordinating the experiences and agency of those monitored as surveillance objects" (497). While this latter observation may apply to the scholarly analysis of surveillance practices, recent Northern Irish fiction and film dealing with state surveillance tend to critically examine the experiences of both the surveillance subjects and objects.

are capable of gaining the trust of their surveillance objects and are thus better equipped to acquire inside information. By the same token, if these analog means of surveillance are uncovered, they are bound to have fatal consequences on social coherence; their discovery breaks up social entities, fosters suspicion and undermines the belief in social progress, political negotiation and in old and new institutions. Arguably, it is for this capacity to catalyse interpersonal dynamics that the portrayal of analog means of surveillance is often given precedence in Troubles-related fiction and film. It offers a powerful motor to propel the plot forward while at the same time being an apt vehicle transmitting the social disintegration and paranoia fuelled by an intelligence war.[58]

Early on in their relationship, Nina tells Gabriel that she is a "field officer" for a fictive British intelligence agency called MO2, apparently in reference to the anthropological Mass Observation project founded in the 1930s through Tony Harrison's observations of the working class in the industrial town of Bolton.[59] MO2 is, as Nina elaborates, "supposed to report both to Home Affairs and the Northern Ireland Office" (*Pen Friend* 45):

> Sometime in the seventies, some bright spark in Westminster decides Westminster doesn't really understand Northern Ireland. This is about the time when the Brits […] decide for once and for all to get shot of Northern Ireland. So the bright spark gets them to set up an MO-type organisation. […] what they decide to do is not Mass Observation, it's more like Focussed Observation […] because they go for selected groups of people, not the ordinary folk […] and not so much the people at the top, but *the people they think might rise to the top. The up-and-coming cream, the incipient meritocracy*. For this is a long-term project. (47, emphasis mine).

According to Nina, it is, interestingly, in the nineteen-seventies that the British state decides to set up a devolved or even independent executive for Northern Ireland. After the power-sharing government foreseen by the Sunningdale Agreement failed due to the Ulster Workers' Council strike in 1974, though, Direct Rule continued from Westminster (Wolff 173). MO2 thus arguably forms part of an organised, concerted effort to establish an executive for Northern Ireland that might not only prevail, but also be amenable to British interests. While Nina clearly understands that MO2 accumulates information in order to

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[58] However, other means of surveillance were also part and parcel of the Army's intelligence effort. As Brian A. Jackson details, the use of "traditional means as airborne sensors with livefeed television, sophisticated photographic devices, and infrared detection systems" was complemented by "[l]istening devices, phone taps, hidden cameras, motion detectors, and technologies that intercepted communications traffic" (80). Martin Dillon's chapter on "The Technology of Surveillance" in *The Dirty War* (398-417) provides further details on the techniques and equipment employed by police and army units to conduct widespread surveillance in their effort to thwart terrorism.

[59] For a detailed account on the background of Mass Observation in Britain, see David Hall's *Worktown. The Astonishing Story of the Project that Launched Mass Observation* (2015).

pursue political aims, she neither thinks of herself as spying on others nor does she question the political ideology of the organisation. Instead, she is led to believe that the information she gathers will be used to implement a devolved power-sharing government and, by extension, achieve a settlement of the conflict that will be acceptable across the whole of society. The surveillance she conducts in her daily job as "a style consultant" (*Pen Friend* 70), however, is by definition characterised by class bias. Targeted at the wealthy, educated section of the population, it carries out the function of "social sorting" which allows for the political categorisation of people "according to anticipated risk and value" (Monahan 497). It thus helps assess their utility for the disciplinary society as well as their suitability for the political structure that is to be established.

Conversely, Gabriel, a Catholic and native Gaelic speaker, has republican inclinations but detaches himself from politics on the nation-state level. He believes in art and aesthetics as universal, unifying themes and ignores the situated ideological power of culture. It is for this reason that he gladly accepts his promotion to Head Keeper of Irish Art at the Belfast Municipal Gallery, which effectively ties him to the institutional apparatus that controls the museum as a local site of knowledge construction. Unable or unwilling to see that even Irish Art can be seized upon by the British authorities to serve their political agenda, Gabriel is blinded as to his own function in the disciplinary system: "As 'Keeper of the Municipal Gallery' in Belfast, Gabriel himself is a servant of the state and necessarily participates in its discursive legitimisation" (Frenk and Michely in Weier et al. 81, my transl.). Gabriel fails to see that this position neutralises him as a potentially recalcitrant political force, and increases his utility for the power structure that seeks to control him (cf. Foucault, *Discipline* 220). Nina, who eventually begins to question her own role in the intelligence-led manufacture of consent, challenges Gabriel's comfortable complacency:

> Well, you said, you wouldn't be where you are now had John Bradbury [from the Board of Trustees] not happened to bump into you that night […] That's because John Bradbury is MO2, you said. And so are you. […] Nina, how can I be MO2 when I don't even know it? I said. You mean without your full knowledge and complete consent? (*Pen Friend* 182-83).

Nina suggests that moral accountability and political consent exist in separate, independent spheres. It is the unthinking participation in the political system rather than the conscious embracement of it that differentiates the politically active from the politically inactive. Gabriel Conway's political quandary in *The Pen Friend* is thus highly reminiscent of that of

his near-namesake Gabriel Conroy in James Joyce's 1914 short story "The Dead," the final story in Joyce's landmark collection *Dubliners*.

Published several years before the partition of Ireland, "The Dead" was written in politically unsettled times: On the eve of the First World War, amid Home Rule debates and on the brink of insurrection against the British administration. Joyce's Gabriel is accused by an old female friend of being a "West Briton" for writing a weekly column in *The Daily Express* (214). His initial urge to respond by "say[ing] that literature was above politics" (214) is akin to Gabriel Conway's worldview in *The Pen Friend*. Being accused by an old Belfast acquaintance of being a "Castle Catholic" for his promotion to Head Keeper at the Municipal Gallery in Belfast (180-81), Gabriel tries to laugh it off but Nina insists: "you really are rather naïve. You really do think that art exists in some superior realm, untouched by politics, without the intervention of the Powers That Be. [… Y]ou think of yourself as uncompromising, and uncompromised" (183). Joyce's Gabriel Conroy, by contrast, does not honestly believe "that literature [is] above politics" and concurrently swallows the remark: "But they were friends of many years' standing and their careers had been parallel, first at university and then as teachers: he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her" (214). In *The Pen Friend*, however, Gabriel has inadvertently become a cog wheel in what Foucault calls the "panoptic machine" (*Discipline* 217), which only intensifies its impact by going unnoticed (also cf. Monahan 499).

The "social sorting" (Monahan 497) carried out by the apparatus of surveillance in *The Pen Friend* assumes a literal and fatal meaning when Gabriel's father becomes the victim of a bomb attack on The Compass Bar, where he runs an Esperanto class. As it transpires that MO2 are responsible for the bomb, it becomes equally clear that "the cause of Esperanto" (*Pen Friend* 236) itself has been targeted. The Esperantist movement, in its essentially decentred, pan-nationalist approach to global relations, poses a threat to hegemonic state power, and challenges the Thatcherite policies of containment. As Foucault puts it, discipline "must neutralize the effects of counter-power that spring from [an organized multiplicity]" (*Discipline* 219). Through the bombing, MO2 is shown to ruthlessly manufacture the political future of Northern Ireland on British terms; it is disclosed as a covert tool of imperialism. The bombing shocks Nina into realising that she is not in control of the information she gathers and that her own private life is not exempt from state intrusion. Terrified, she leaves Northern Ireland and by extension, Gabriel. In *The Pen Friend*, both the surveillance subjects and objects are shown to be no more than pieces in a game the rules

and purposes of which are kept opaque. This disciplinary system is an abstract machine that presents itself as that which its recruits hope it to be while it unerringly follows its aim.

The representation of post-war state surveillance focuses on the recurrent trope of the helicopter, which presumably serves to contain conflict "through the logics of [spatial] securitization" (Kelly and Mitchell, "'Walking' with de Certeau" 7). As Gabriel astutely remarks at one point, "helicopters are about being seen and heard, as much as they are about seeing and hearing. They're a signal that something is happening, or about to happen" (*Pen Friend* 151). At the same time as, thus, as rendering visible some occurrence whose precise nature is as yet hidden from view, they signal that this occurrence is being monitored, controlled and contained. Interestingly, in his lecture "Mapping Ireland's Border," given at the University of Maynooth in September 2018, Garrett Carr made a very similar point. Speaking about the (dismantled) watchtowers that the British Army erected along the Irish border during the Troubles, Carr argued that they were primarily "about projecting an image" (n. pag.). The watchtowers, in Carr's view, formed part of the "architecture of power" along the border that made a visible statement on the legitimate ownership of space. Understood in this way, the watchtowers, like Carson's helicopters, were "about being seen […] just as much as they [we]re about seeing." From this perspective, the helicopter comes to stand as a synecdoche for all forms of post-war surveillance. It, too, lays claim on the post-war urban landscape of Belfast and projects an image of an order-giving, central source of power. It is, to borrow from Foucault, the "visible" tool of surveillance that hints at other, "unverifiable" practices of surveillance (*Discipline* 201). In combining both the "visible" and the "unverifiable," the helicopter achieves the maximum impact of the Panopticon as material structure and as idea. While Gabriel deeply resents the state's intrusion into his private life, his written reflections on the past make him increasingly realise and acknowledge his complicity in the panoptic system:

> So when last night a surveillance helicopter perched itself for some hours in the sky above Ophir Gardens, I could hear the syllables of your name, Nina, repeated in the washing-machine spin-cycle noise of its engines, then I would hear my own name, Gabriel, then both our names together, Gabriel, Nina, Gabriellianina, till they would become scrambled and garbled back into the meaningless chaos from whence they had come. (*Pen Friend* 145)

In this paragraph, Gabriel seems to finally submit to the truth in Nina's claim that he too, has been a participant in the Ulster Panopticon. As both their names become, in Gabriel's perception, acoustically and metaphorically subsumed into the sound of the helicopter, i.e., the workings of the panoptic machine, it becomes obvious that both of them were equally

"caught up in a power situation of which they [we]re themselves the bearers" (Foucault, *Discipline* 201). It is Gabriel who, consciously or subconsciously, wills this audible combination of their two names into being. Into the noise produced by the helicopter's rotor blades, he projects first Nina's and then his own name. At the same time, thus, as associating Nina's name with the state's machinery of surveillance and control, he acknowledges her enduring hold over his imaginary life; she is present even when physically absent. Subsumed into the helicopter's cyclic noise, their two names combined assume a rhythmic, chant-like quality which, repeated "for some hours," provide some measure of consolation to Gabriel's restless, wandering mind. By way of projection, he successfully wrings some sense from the "meaningless chaos" which surrounds him and which was held at bay while he imagined their two names together. As such, this paragraph seems at least partly to redeem Nina in Gabriel's eyes and paves the way for their reunification which is tentatively suggested at the end of the novel.

Analysing Carson's novel *X + Y = K*, Alan Gillis argues that Carson's obsession with the representation of mid-Troubles surveillance regimes never gives way to a unified and singularly oppressive vision of state-centred power: "Rather, the city has become an impossible maze of agencies and counter-agencies that have swamped one another into stasis. There is a totality to this system, but no control or fixity" ("Acoustic Perfume" 267). In a Foucauldian sense, power here is generative of resistance in that the omnipresence of surveillance gives rise to numerous communicative avoidance strategies. Hence, Gillis tentatively concludes that "Carson's vision of history is one of interminable and intractable entropy" ("Acoustic Perfume" 267). This entropy, Gillis remarks with regard to *The Pen Friend*, "is framed within a broader curtailment of agency, as there can never be any definite liberty or authority. In historical terms, there is no foreseeable way out of the political standstill, represented by the seething vortex of the Troubles" (268). It is with respect to the curtailment of individual agency and freedom that Ciaran Carson's *The Pen Friend* and Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras*, almost-but-not-quite epistolary novel and postmodern Troubles thriller, different as they are, shed fascinating light on each other.

Like *The Pen Friend*, *The Ultras* is a disquieting Troubles tale of surveillance and state control. *The Ultras*, however, is less concerned with Belfast than with the whole of the Northern Ireland; here, it is the whole province that is cast as "an impossible maze of agencies and counter-agencies that have swamped one another into stasis." In the novel, the term 'Ultras' refers to a élite special operations unit of the British Army the existence of which the novel both asserts and questions at the same time. The unit's members appear to

operate individually and outside of any legal or military restrictions. Their involvement in the counter-insurgency effort includes cooperation with all agencies on the ground as much as collusion with local paramilitaries, all the while their brief remains known to themselves alone and appears to transcend the conflicted borders of Northern Ireland. As Foucault has remarked, "the effective practice of freedom by people, the practice of social relations" is so inexorably linked to "the spatial distribution in which they find themselves" that "[e]ach can only be understood through the other" ("Space, Power and Knowledge" 166). McNamee's *The Ultras* concerns itself with the governance of social relations through the cunning manipulation of the spaces in which they take place. It offers an astute analysis of the ways in which both state and paramilitary players attempted to curtail the freedom inherent in "the practice of social relations" by controlling "the spatial distribution" in which the citizens of Northern Ireland lived throughout (and indeed beyond) the Troubles. It presents this curtailment to have taken place by means of a precisely planned interference with the ways in which people relate to and make sense of the social spaces they inhabit.

"Paranoid" Recreations of the Past

First published in 2004, *The Ultras* forms part of a long line of Troubles thrillers, many of which present a distorted view of Northern Ireland. As Aaron Kelly has shown in his essay "The Troubles with the Thriller," from the nineteen-seventies onwards, thrillers depicting the civil war have largely been written by outsiders (first by British journalists and later by members of the British Army) and have tended to represent the North of Ireland in terms of the socio-political abject (508). This mode of biased representation has served, as Kelly argues, the purpose of political and social reassurance for a British mainland audience:

> In this very specific usage of aspects of the thriller form, therefore, there is a conflation between certain elements of the genre – not just action and intrigue but also the desire to regulate, police, control and know that which is criminal, threatening, mysterious, unknown – and a dominant British view of the unravelling social conflict in Northern Ireland as the mere product of the ongoing, recidivist irrationality of the Irish. (508)

In the context of the thriller's drive to bestow visibility and order on ever-elusive, recalcitrant social forces, Kelly introduces a Foucauldian line of argument, arguing that, in the hands of British writers, the Troubles thriller has attempted to preserve and/or reinforce the socio-political order of Britain, positing it as the norm from which the North is wilfully and harmfully deviating (511). It adheres to "standard accounts of the crime genre [that] interpret

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it as protecting the status quo in a manner which regulates society through systems of knowledge that serve the power of the state, criminalising and punishing otherness, deviance or resistance" (511). Acknowledging Bentham's panoptic structure and the ways in which Franco Moretti has applied its structuring to crime fiction, Kelly posits that the thriller introduces "an elevated, omniscient gaze which is able to systematize order and criminalize inferior or marginalised constituencies of people in terms of interstices such as class, gender, race and so on" (511). Glossing over systemic malfunctions, the thriller hence generally and generically suggests that crime is the exception to the rule; that crime upsets, or threatens to upset, a well-functioning order that had no part to play in the inception of crime: It presents "crime as a localised and individualised aberration" (512).

The Ultras, however, as Kelly argues, propagates a different pattern. It belongs to a cohort of post-conflict thrillers that expose the unwholesome foundation of the present political order.[60] Kelly contends that "the apparently open, pluralist, tolerant liberal democracy defended by these works lays bare its own suppressed, constitutive and coercive violence" embodied by the ruthless acts of counter-terrorism enacted by state agencies (513). Concomitantly, crime in *The Ultras* originates from both "aberrant individuals" as well as "the British state and its policy in Ireland as the government and the secret services orchestrate a hidden network of violence, coercion, illegality and racketeering" (513). In her essay "Whodunnit or Who Didn't Do It? Authority and Poetic (In)Justice in Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras*, *The Blue Tango* and *Orchid Blue*," Fiona McCann argues in a related vein through the lens of crime fiction. She concludes by stressing, among other things, that McNamee

> uses the detective fiction genre to expose the corrupt authorities which prop up the state and inserts a strong metafictional dimension in order to uncover this poetic injustice. […] It is not so much the violence of the murder which retains his attention as the violence of the establishment as it bulldozes the individual […] in order to conform to a predetermined narrative. ("Whodunnit" 121)

A magnificent but sinister novel offering little hope of redemption, *The Ultras* depicts the covert operations of British intelligence agencies in Northern Ireland from the vantage point

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[60] David Park's *The Truth Commissioner*, Kelly argues, also belongs to this cohort of post-conflict thrillers. Somewhat reductively he claims that Park's novel "seeks to undermine the nominally respectable politicians of the new peaceful dispensation by exposing their violent past. Again such work would appear to bewail the contamination of liberal democracy enjoyed so normally elsewhere with the criminal political violence and networks of the Troubles" (513). While this observation is certainly valid, it neglects, as will be argued in detail in chapter 3, the unique dynamics of reconciliation that in *The Truth Commissioner* takes place at the intersection of the emotional, the political and the spatial.

of former RUC police officer and down-at-heel alcoholic Blair Agnew, who is one of those individuals that have been "bulldoze[d]" by the state authorities. Set in 2001, three years after the Good Friday Agreement was ratified across Ireland and in the very year that the police reform based on the Patton Report was initiated, the novel focusses on Agnew's obsessive-compulsive preoccupation with his own role during the Dirty War in Northern Ireland. The novel thus addresses what Eamonn Hughes, in his joint review of McNamee's *The Ultras* and Patterson's *That Which Was*, has described as

> the consequences of our betwixt-and-between state: the Troubles 'over', peace 'in process'. […] In line with much fiction from the North since 1994 [the year of the ceasefires] there is a backward look in these novels and a sense that the present political situation rests precariously on a foundation of lies, guilty secrets and amnesiac evasions. ("Limbo" 138-39)

This liminal position "betwixt-and-between" two different kinds of socio-political interregna has been, Hughes continues to assert, "the *mise-en-scène* of the paranoid thriller, the dominant form of Troubles fiction, which […] has in many cases been reoriented so that the peace process rather than the Troubles becomes the focus of its delusional semiology" ("Limbo" 139). Creating the impression of an undesirable parallelism between the civil war and the ongoing negotiation of peace, the paranoid thriller presents "the peace process […] as a locus of dark secrets and double dealing which rendered it unstable and vulnerable to the emergence of the truth" ("Limbo" 139). The paranoid thriller thus offers a devastatingly negative image of post-conflict Northern Irish society; one that bodes decidedly unwell for future political development and social reconciliation. In this sense, *The Ultras* seems to bear out a sentiment that Seamus Heaney expressed in his 1995 Nobel lecture, nearly ten years prior to the novel's publication: "It is difficult at times to repress the thought that history is about as instructive as an abattoir; that Tacitus was right and that peace is merely the desolation left behind after the decisive operations of merciless power" ("Crediting Poetry" 456). While Heaney, in his Nobel acceptance speech as in his poetry, comes down on the hopeful and sometimes transcending qualities of human experience,[61] *The Ultras*' take on recent Northern Irish history remains grim, presenting peace as nothing more than the

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[61] See Seamus Heaney's "The Redress of Poetry" for a detailed argument of what he perceives as the primary political and cultural role and remit of poetry. There, he argues that poetry can be a source of fortitude by juxtaposing people's first-hand experiences of the world with alternative representations of the world that possess equal force and relevance: "As long as the coordinates of the imagined thing correspond to those of the world we live in and endure, poetry is fulfilling its counterweighting function. It becomes another truth to which we can have recourse, before which we can know ourselves in a more fully empowered way" (8).

absence of organised terror and counter-terror. Its post-conflict landscape is desolate in so far as it is inhabited by people that have lost all sense of orientation and all hope of redemption.

This sense of hopelessness and confusion finds expression mainly in the novel's troubled protagonist Blair Agnew, through whose thoughts and perspective the narrative is mainly focalised (cf. F. McCann, "Whodunnit" 118). Tried and sentenced for conspiracy to murder, Agnew was dismissed from the police service in disgrace and received a partly suspended prison sentence which saw him spending five years in prison between 1979 and 1984. Almost twenty years onwards at the time the novel is set, Agnew is still trying to determine the precise share of his accountability for the civil war atrocities he witnessed, maybe even supported, as well as the precise moment at which he became involved in the security services' dangerous game of collusion with loyalist paramilitaries. Agnew's state of permanent puzzlement is a constant feature throughout the novel and the precise quality of his personal responsibility remains unresolved to the end; the narrative offers no definite answer as to whether he chose to actively partake in collusion or reluctantly did as he was told. In this sense, Agnew's moral quandary is remotely reminiscent of Gabriel Conway's in *The Pen Friend*, which is triggered when Nina challenges Gabriel's belief that personal responsibility is dependent on "full knowledge and complete consent" (183). Through the character of Agnew, *The Ultras* poignantly reflects upon the undecided, elusive nature of justice, responsibility and morality in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Aged sixty at the time the novel unfolds, Agnew lives permanently on a caravan site in Cranfield, on the Northern Irish side of Carlingford Lough, where he moved shortly before his marriage disintegrated in 1989. Now ten years divorced, he is the father of a teenage daughter named Lorna, who suffers from severe, life-threatening anorexia which, the novel suggests, is a function of her core family's acute dysfunction. Her mother is caught in an unhappy second marriage to a mainly absent man, shows signs of incipient alcoholism and depression, and she is unable to forgive Agnew for not disclosing "the full truth about his past when they were married" (*The Ultras* 104). The novel remains vague on this point, but it seems unlikely that he could have hidden his prison sentence from her. Rather, it might be assumed that her anger concerns his treacherous involvement with loyalist paramilitary players who did not balk at murdering members of the Northern Irish police force when it suited their ends. Agnew himself has been a high-functioning alcoholic for decades and suffers from serious liver damage, which he chooses to leave medically untreated (*The Ultras* 140). Lorna deeply resents her mother's

attempts at exerting control over her illness and, as a result, turns away from her mother and towards her father, whom she describes as

> one of those men who run away from their own countries, defector was the word. Who people feel a bit sorry for because of having no country any more, even though they are spies and betrayers and have sold out all friendship. It was still better to be with him than with a mother who goes through your things when she thinks you are not alert. (*The Ultras* 72)

Lorna appears to have a firm grasp on her father's past as a police man who has forsaken his moral integrity as much as his right to any sense of national and social belonging. For Lorna, her father's social expulsion is a function of his traitorous character, with the weight of his treason increasing as it spirals inwards from country to colleagues to friends. It is the betrayal of intimate, personal bonds that she cannot forgive and it is for this reason that she abhors her mother's incursions into her private space. Her relationship with her father expresses itself as an emotionally complex and mainly inadequate friendship that is based on mutual understanding, near glorification, of the other's irreversible emotional and physical damage. Apart from adding to the novel's pervading sense of stasis and disorder, the co-dependence between father and daughter suggests that the crippling effects of an unresolved, traumatic past continue to reverberate down the generations.

In all aspects of his life, Agnew is, thus, characterised by a reluctance to assume responsibility, and the circumstances of his existence suggest a liminal, unsettled, transitory nature. He has withdrawn to the social and spatial peripheries of the society into which he was born: He lives on the national border, he inhabits an abode that approximates, but is not equal to, a permanent home, he has chosen to live alone while the one person he can commit to is slowly but surely eliminating her own existence before his eyes. Finally, he is utterly unable to live his life in the present; with every day that threatens to carry him further into the future and away from his life as a RUC man, he delves further into the past, trying to ascertain his personal guilt opposite the larger, heavier guilt amassed by the security apparatus of which he formed part.

From his own memories as much as from the novel's overall depiction of the Dirty War in Northern Ireland, Agnew emerges as a mere pawn in the much larger game of collusion that was being played out on 'the narrow ground' of the North – he was "[a]n accessory to mayhem, same as the rest of us," as a former RUC colleague of his puts it laconically and also, reductively (*The Ultras* 21). Hunting down and collecting huge amounts of documents pertaining to the activities of the security forces during the Troubles,

trying to draw from them some sort of explanatory pattern for his own actions during the conflict, Agnew struggles in vain to regain some measure of autonomy over his past. The more spoken and written material he gathers, however, the less is he able to draw a conclusion from the misleading and conflicting information that presents itself to him. As Hughes posits, "in *The Ultras* truth is presented as something occult requiring complex exegesis" ("Limbo" 139).

In spite of his scrupulous efforts, Agnew is not able to perform a task of such complexity but nor can he abandon it. Not only is he unable to let go of his own past in the RUC, he is also obsessed with the death of Captain Robert Nairac, who disappeared in 1977 in obscure circumstances during his tour of duty in the North.[62] Agnew appears to believe that the narrative key to Nairac's disappearance will at the same time deliver him from the unresolved past (cf. *The Ultras* 14; cf. F. McCann, "Whodunnit, 105). As Eamonn Hughes argues, "Agnew is not so much looking for the solution to the mystery surrounding Nairac and his activities, as amassing an archive which is less concerned with fact than with tracking the generation of narrative possibilities" ("Limbo" 140; cf. F. McCann, "Whodunnit" 118). It is the depiction of these myriad "narrative possibilities" that allows *The Ultras* to draw a strikingly inhuman picture of the British military intervention in the North. The multiplication of fractal truths is shown to be part of a strategic, quasi-colonial effort to disorient, confuse and subdue the population of Northern Ireland. In this sense indeed, "power is strong […] because […] it produces effects at the level of desire – and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it" (Foucault, "Body/Power" 58). In *The Ultras*, it is the superabundance of conflicting information that, wilfully spread and harnessed to serve military power, is the strongest asset in the Dirty War waged against paramilitaries and civilians alike.

Agnew's obsessive-compulsive occupation with these many "narrative possibilities" provides one of the instances that anchor *The Ultras* in the realms of the postmodern and of "paranoid fiction – its characters seeking pattern and meaning at all costs" (E. Hughes, "Limbo" 139). As much as McNamee's well-known *Blue* trilogy, *The Ultras* is based on historical events, and as much as the *Blue* trilogy, *The Ultras* outlines the truth about the

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[62] Refer to Martin Dillon's chapter called "Robert Nairac: Hero or Villain" in *The Dirty War* for a detailed account of the historical figure (161-87). It is fascinating to see how narrowly the historical and the fictional are intertwined in McNamee's portrayal of Nairac and his tour of duty in the North of Ireland.

historical past as elusive, untrustworthy and forever amenable to the narrative mode.[63] As Caroline Magennis points out in her study of the literary representations of Northern Irish masculinity, *Sons of Ulster*,

> Eoin McNamee's novels fictionalize key events of the Troubles, such as the Shankill Butcher murders, the disappearance of Robert Nairac and the Miami Showband killings. He creates a dark, almost gothic, mood in his treatment of the murder of Patricia Curran [… T]hese novels were written mostly during the 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century, a time of great transition and reflection for Northern Ireland […]. This attention to the past can be read as symptomatic of a greater tendency towards a valorization of memory in Northern Irish cultural life. (8-9)

Certainly, the artistic preoccupation with the past and with the ways in which an embattled past can be remembered and represented has been growing over the past twenty years. Especially films such as *Bloody Sunday* (2002) and *'71* (2014) as much as bio pics such as *Hunger* (2008) and *Good Vibrations* (2012) have brought these concerns to wider audiences both inside and outside of Northern Ireland. As much of McNamee's other fiction, *The Ultras* too shows an obsession with the constructedness of historical documents, both verbal and visual, and with the ways in which meaning can retrospectively be deducted from them dependant on the contexts in which they are consumed. Inherent in the novel's mode of telling is a new historicist wariness of any account of the past that is presented in a linear fashion and with absolute narrative authority. In a post-modern mode, *The Ultras* constantly pulls out the rug of narrative certainty from under its own textual feet. It recurrently posits one possible interpretation of a past event, and uses it as a foundation on which to build up a narrative strand, only to contest its very premise at a later stage. Often, position and contestation follow immediately upon each other. In this way, *The Ultras* constructs something akin to a narrative palimpsest, where layers of competing voices, memories and perspectives are gathered, laid bare and left unresolved. The make-up of the novel mirrors thus the ongoing quest for the ever-elusive truth of what happened during the civil war in Northern Ireland, which has been carried out by a number of official bodies such as the Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains.

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[63] In her chapter "Whodunnit or Who Didn't Do It? Authority and Poetic (In)Justice in Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras*, *The Blue Tango* and *Orchid Blue*," Fiona McCann offers an insightful and more detailed analysis of the ways in which McNamee's use of the crime genre for his fictionalisations of historical events, "in keeping with the postmodern agenda, invites us to question what we can actually ever know with any certainty" (103). She does so by paying particular attention to both the stylistics and metafictionality of McNamee's writing. See pages 107-09 and 113-19 especially.

The Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains has to date recovered the bodily remains of thirteen "of an original list of 16 Disappeared" who were abducted, murdered and dumped at unknown locations by the IRA (Hilliard n. pag.; see Ferguson n. pag., who speaks of seventeen cases). Albeit each of these so-called "Disappeared" has been a high-profile case due to the unspeakable violence and enduring mystery that characterises them, the case of Captain Robert Nairac stands out due to two interrelated aspects: He is the only member of the British armed forces to have been disappeared by the IRA and, perhaps for this reason, a number of preposterous theories have clustered around his disappearance. Citing Geoff Knupfer, chief investigator of the Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains, Hilliard summarises these incorrect "rumours" consisting in the obliteration of Nairac's body "in a local meat processing factory" as well as Nairac's involvement in "five killings and atrocities" (n. pag.; cf. Ferguson n. pag.). Research undertaken by the commission further led Knupfer to conclude that Nairac "was a very junior officer and would not have had free rein. Neither was he tasked with handling informants, sources as part of that role" (qtd. in Hilliard n. pag.).

Drawing on the historical case of Captain Nairac, *The Ultras* tells a harrowing story of collusion in which the commanding ranks of the British Army are collaborating with the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Ulster Volunteer Force to devastating effects.[64] It does so by placing both Robert Nairac and the fictional character Blair Agnew at the site of the Miami Showband Massacre, which occurred in County Down on 31 July 1975. At the time of the massacre, Robert Nairac was attached to the SAS forces in Northern Ireland and was allegedly carrying out a covert mission the details of which remain largely unknown. It may partly be for the lack of reliable information as to his original briefing that Nairac was said, without proof, to have been involved in the massacre – an allegation which Martin Dillon rejects as "highly dubious if not absurd" (221). On the day of the massacre, five members of the Miami Showband, which was a well-known and well-regarded cover band across the island of Ireland at the time, had been playing a gig in Banbridge and were on their way home when their minibus was stopped at what appeared to be a regular British Army checkpoint. The band members were told to get off the minibus, form a line at the side of the road and to put their hands over their heads. While they were being interrogated by what

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[64] On 1 April 2018, the *Guardian* reported the discovery of a file in the National Archive in Surrey which suggested that the British Army had known about the existence of the IRA unit that would later be responsible for the Disappeared since April 1972. It is unclear whether or not the Army knew about the future intent of this unit, but the find suggests that the disappearances could possibly have been prevented from happening (McDonald, "British Army Knew of IRA Unit" n. pag.).

Stephen Travers, the band's guitarist and a survivor of the massacre, believes to have been a British Army Officer, armed UDR men pretending to search the minibus planted a bomb meant to detonate further down the road. When the device detonated prematurely, the UDR men instantly opened fire on the band members.[65]

In "If Truth Be Told," a podcast forming part of the BBC Radio Ulster's programme *Stories in Sound*, Stephen Travers recalls the night of the Miami Showband Massacre in detail, painting a vivid picture of the roadside ambush:

> We saw a man on the road, with a red light, flagged us down [...] As I got out, I was seeing men in uniforms with machine guns. What I didn't know was that there was two men placing a bomb underneath the driver's seat. The intention was that we wouldn't know it was there and that we'd travel down the road. This thing would've blown up and nobody would've known about the road block and we would've been consigned to history as terrorists. ("If Truth Be Told" 03:12-03:51)

Travers's oral account of the event is harrowing, especially when he proceeds to describe the carnage wreaked upon the helpless band members who were lying at the roadside in the wake of the premature explosion:

> I heard men jumping down after us and they were firing and [...] Brian was shot very quickly [...] and I heard Fran on the ground, crying not to be killed, he said, 'please don't,' but they shot Fran, twenty-two times and I think that about seventeen of those bullets were in his face and also Tony had been shot in the back of the head and the back as well. ("If Truth Be Told" 04:51-05:32)

Three band members, Fran O'Toole, Brian McCoy and Tony Geraghty, were killed, while Stephen Travers and his colleague Des McAlee, though badly injured, escaped death only because the assassins assumed that they had already been killed (cf. 09:14-10:33). Statements made by both Travers and Helen McCoy, whose husband Brian was killed in the ambush, are provided in the transcript of the Public Hearings on the Barron Report, which took place in the Irish Parliament on 26 September 2006 and which was led by a sub-committee of the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights (Joint Committee on Justice n. pag.). This governmental sub-committee, which "studied various atrocities that resulted in eighteen deaths during the mid-1970s [... also] examined the earlier findings of Justice Henry Barron and concluded there was [...] widespread collusion between loyalist terror groups and British security forces in Northern Ireland" (Travers and

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[65] See the transcript of the Joint Committee on Justice Equality, Defence and Women's Rights (Sub-Committee on the Barron Report) debate; the committee's Chairman Seán Ardagh and especially Steven Travers provide a detailed account of the Miami Showband Massacre. Martin Dillon also provides a summary of the night of the massacre (212-14).

Fetherstonhaugh 287). Before the subcommittee, Travers gave an account of the night of the Miami Showband Massacre, which yielded chilling insights into the logics that underpinned the collusion between state forces and paramilitary organisations. In Travers's view, the Miami Showband were attacked precisely because they were so ostentatiously unpolitical:

> Framing people who are obviously innocent, a mixed band of Protestants and Catholics […] is in the interests of people who want to drive a wedge between the communities and perpetuate a war that they feel follows their agenda, however bizarre it is. […] If we had driven off and no one had known about the checkpoint, those people could have said that we were carrying arms or playing a part. Therefore, you cannot trust anybody – from the South, or wherever they come. (Joint Committee on Justice n. pag.)

Here, Travers expresses his conviction that the strategic sowing of distrust and false information was part and parcel of collusion. This guileful war effort is, in Travers's view, aimed at reinforcing the socio-political divisions not only between the communities in the North, but also those between North and South. When asked during the public hearing if he "ha[d] concerns about the level of co-operation given to Mr. Justice Barron by the Northern Ireland Office and the British authorities when he compiled this and previous reports," Travers stated his belief that

> The RUC investigation into the Miami Showband incident put a ceiling on it and was a damage limitation exercise. The foot soldiers were arrested and shown the full rigour of the law, but I believe somebody was issuing orders to this British officer and that it went all the way to the top. (Joint Committee on Justice n. pag.)

Helen McCoy supported Travers's call for the truth, expressing the victims and survivors' need for the facts, stating that "[o]bviously, we think the British Government had something to do with it, but we cannot say for certain. This is what we want to know. We want closure" (n. pag.). Such closure, it seems, remains elusive in spite of all efforts at illuminating the past, institutionalised, academic, cultural and otherwise. In *The Guardian* in March 2018, Susan McKay commented on the harmful shadow of uncertainty and speculation that continues to be cast by the uncertain history of collusion in the North:

> The DUP has devoted itself in recent years to staunchly protecting the record of the security forces in Northern Ireland from legal scrutiny, particularly in relation to allegations of collusion with loyalist paramilitaries, about which disquieting evidence continues to emerge. In the absence of structures to deal with the past, *baroque conspiracy theories proliferate. In this way, though they are over, the Troubles keep getting worse*. (McKay n. pag., emphasis mine)

These "baroque conspiracy theories," the spreading of which is abetted by haphazard approaches to the past, further corrode social cohesion. Beyond a doubt, any interested

defamation of the British security forces in the North, which, as sometimes seems to be the case, only sets out to prove some foregone conclusion, is extremely unhelpful. The unquestioning, and equally interested, support of the British security forces (oftentimes underpinned by references to their honourable sacrifice), however, is damaging the integrity of the Peace Process. Travers's belief that the prosecution of "the foot soldiers" had been a charade to protect high-ranking officials mirrors the recent debate about the prosecution of one single paratrooper who was allegedly involved in the killings in Derry's Bogside on Bloody Sunday. As Eamonn McCann bluntly puts it in the title of his opinion piece in *The Guardian*: "Bloody Sunday was a very British atrocity – the top brass got away with it" (n. pag.). He argues that the responsibility for the killings lies less with the ordinary soldier than with high-ranking Army officials such as Major General Robert Ford and General Sir Michael Jackson, who seem to respectively have played their parts in inciting the soldiers' ruthlessness and veiling the truth of what had happened. This, however, according to McCann, is an unpalatable truth not to be officially acknowledged:

> The point is this – that if Saville had pointed a finger at Ford or Jackson, David Cameron would not have been able to say in the Commons that while the killings were 'unjustified and unjustifiable', no stain had been left on the honour of the British Army or the Parachute Regiment. It was all down to rogue soldiers […]. ("Bloody Sunday" n. pag.)

If it is true that, as McKay argues, that in spite of the absence of organised sectarian violence, "the Troubles keep getting worse," then the costly project of peace building has no hope of ever reaching something akin to a successful end point; what is more, it is led *ad absurdum*.

A concern with the post-war multiplication of what McKay calls "baroque conspiracy theories" also lies at the heart of *The Ultras*. Albeit the novel arguably participates in the manufacture of conspiracy theories, even exploiting them for the sake of weaving a masterful tale of paranoia, mystery and suspense, it comments critically upon the political circumstances that allow for such conspiracy theories at the same time. *The Ultras* does nothing to alleviate the retrospective worsening of the Troubles; it is, indeed, a highly political novel for this very reason. It starkly illustrates the physical and psychological trauma created and maintained in an environment prone to conspiracy and the abuse of power on the part of state forces. As Magennis observes with regard to the works of fiction analysed in her study,

> McNamee's work […] has steadfastly refused to take any political position on the conflict in Northern Ireland. He has, however, at several readings, evoked Oscar Wilde's position on the role of morality in art to explain his controversial

fictionalisations of recent history. However, as has been noted in this book, his paranoid fiction focuses solely on conspiracy theories about the non-Nationalist protagonists in the Northern Irish conflict. (142)

The reference to Wilde's *l'art pour l'art* stance may be surprising for an author who works off Northern Ireland's violent history of conflict and sectarianism. When writing into a void of the ever elusive truth about the past in a post-conflict situation, political or indeed moral neutrality is a difficult stance to maintain, and one that a less crafted writer would be unlikely to achieve. However, *The Ultras* depicts an extreme instance of collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and state forces. In this manner, the novel speaks out against the abuse of power as it fictionalises the conspiracy theories that have allowed "the Troubles [to] keep getting worse."

Counter-Insurgency and "Cartographies of Subterfuge"

As Caroline Magennis has rightfully argued in her discussion of Eoin McNamee's fiction (mainly focussing on *12:23* in this instance), "McNamee deals with Northern Ireland as a post-conflict landscape, offering it the same sort of cachet as other regions with a violent past, like the way in which Eastern Europe is a nexus for Bond villains" (76). While the 'cachet' bestowed on Northern Ireland is of a dark, dubitable nature, given that McNamee tends to portray the North as a place corrupted and damaged beyond redemption, it well befits his peculiar concern with state surveillance and counter-insurgency. In *The Ultras*, Northern Ireland is depicted in terms of what Brian A. Jackson calls "a COIN theatre" (78) – a place where state forces carry out counter-insurgency against terrorist organisations. Representatives of these state forces not only seek to make a name for themselves in the process, they also embrace Northern Ireland as a welcome terrain on which to experiment with knowledge gathered and practices observed in other COIN theatres around the globe. As Magennis, again, observes, "[p]aranoid theories are linked with other discourses of international conspiracy and McNamee's novels have tied these discourses to recent Northern Irish history" (125). Indeed, in *The Ultras*, references to military operations in Germany and the former USSR recur, often in connection with the perceived threat of communism.

While *The Ultras* thus timidly hints at an opening up of the literal and metaphorical boundaries around the North by inserting it into a broader network of international political structures, it both questions and affirms more traditional representations of Northern Ireland

as "a category of one" (E. Hughes, "Northern Ireland – Border Country" 1), as a place of socio-political deviance. This dialectic suggests that the North is not any more nor any less deviant than other international COIN theatres, but still insists on Northern Ireland's necessary boundedness. Being a COIN theatre, it must have precise geographical outlines, which in turn makes it legible and navigable for the military institutions.

When early on in the novel, at the beginning of chapter four, David Erskine is first introduced to the reader, his admiration for the military approach in East Germany is emphasised. As the other military men in the novel, Clyde Knox and Robert Nairac, Erskine appears to be interested first and foremost in the playful, game-like character of the British intervention in Northern Ireland. This game appears to have no set rules and hence to be open to adjustments as a function of the players' preferences, which seem mostly to be a question of *style*:

> He had spent time in Berlin and *was attracted to the historic aspect* of operations there. It seemed to him that the East Germans had a *more advanced sense of continuity*. He liked the *studied grimness* of their checkpoints. There was *a poetry* of harshly lit installations, conscripts in ill-fitting uniforms. […] It was important *to cultivate* levels of intrigue. He thought about bringing in surly conscripts with *blunt Slavic features*, sending them out on the streets in lorries *with canvas tops*. He thought that the city would benefit from a Middle European dimension to things. (*The Ultras* 25, emphasis mine)

In this paragraph, Erskine is depicted more along the lines of a military buff, a collector of military paraphernalia, than a serious military strategist. His attraction to the East German military seems to be founded mainly on the particular aesthetics that guide the performance of their role. For him, the real importance of their role lies less in the task they perform and more in the style with which they publicly perform it: the nouns "aspect," "sense," "poetry" and "features," used in conjunction with the verb forms "attracted," "studied" and "cultivate" clearly emphasize the predominantly aesthetic pleasure that Erskine derives from watching them. As representatives of the power they serve, the East German soldiery legitimizes that power by carrying out an outward projection of historical "continuity" and "grimness" that does not allow for doubt or resistance. In the same covert way that in *The Pen Friend*, Gabriel in his capacity as Head Keeper of Irish Art and Nina in her capacity as "style consultant" (*Pen Friend* 70) are employed by the British authorities to encourage political consent through promoting an ideologically informed aesthetics, so does Erskine favour a certain kind of military style to exert a subtle influence over the Northern Irish population. The peculiar kind of 'benefit' to Belfast that the introduction of a "Slavic," "Middle European"

military aesthetic would yield is directly connected with the "cultivat[ion of] levels of intrigue" that he pursues.

A member of the PsyOps unit deployed in Northern Ireland, Erskine concerns himself with the gathering of intelligence by means of psychological manipulation, interference and blackmail. His exact brief is never fully revealed, but he describes his own line of work as "the psychological, work on the mind, dig up a bit of dirt" (*The Ultras* 27), in the execution of which he seems to be given free rein. His intelligence operation mainly centres on a Belfast brothel with the name of Gemini, where professional audio-visual recording equipment is permanently installed to not only document intelligence but mainly to facilitate blackmail (33-34). At Gemini too, Erskine is aware of the psychological import of cultivating the right kind of style for the purpose at hand. The exterior as much as the interior of Gemini, from its location in the basement of a house "behind rusted wrought-iron railings," to the "stairs […] steaked with dirt," the "threadbare" flooring and the "smell of damp" have all been carefully chosen and arranged (29). Creating a very particular aesthetic experience and a very particular environment for the exchange between his sex workers and clients, Erskine seeks "to promote themes of solitary self-abuse. It was important that a client started to feel detached from his former life. […] That was what made somebody vulnerable. That was when they could be turned" (29). The intelligence that Erskine gathers is channelled into what is called "the corridor," which, apparently occupying one entire floor of an office building, provides the base camp for "[a]ll the intelligence agencies" employed in Northern Ireland including "MRU, PsyOps, 14th Int, MI5" and also MI6 (26). While this is where members of the many diverse intelligence agencies mingle and collaborate in outwardly fraternal fashion, the intelligence gathered by each appears to underlie clear ownership structures and restrictions. The complex web of "narrative possibilities," to use Hughes's phrase ("Limbo" 140), is held together by Clyde Knox, a high-ranking and highly intelligent MI6 official, who describes the intelligence agencies as jointly involved in a project of "low intensity warfare" (*The Ultras* 27).

As sinister as he is cynical, Knox effectively "encourage[s] the entry of other branches into the field," thinking it beneficial for there to be "inter-agency rivalry, people working in layers, laying false trails for each other" (36). It is Knox, too, who has recruited Agnew to serve as an agent for the intelligence agencies, to act as go-between for their dealings with the loyalist paramilitaries, especially with Robin Jackson as the first among them. Jackson is another historical figure in the novel's eminent cast. Dying of cancer in the same year that the Good Friday Agreement was ratified, Jackson was not only a member of

the Ulster Defence Regiment but also of the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force. As Kevin Dowling reported upon Jackson's death in 1998, Jackson is not only "widely believed to have carried out the bombing of Dublin in 1974 and dozens of slayings since," but he also "led the loyalist team which ambushed the Miami Showband, on their way home from a gig" (n. pag.). Dowling quotes Colin Wallace, whom he describes as "one of the principal Deception Planners employed in the Information Policy Unit at the Army's Lisburn base during the formative years of The Jackal's career," and whose statement affirms the extent to which collusion went on during the Dirty War:

> Everything people have whispered about Robin Jackson for years was perfectly true. He was a hired gun. A professional assassin. He was responsible for more deaths in the North than any other person I knew. […] The State not only knew that he was doing it. Its servants encouraged him to kill its political opponents and protected him. (Wallace qtd. in Dowling n. pag.)

In *The Ultras*, Agnew becomes of these state servants who, briefed by their Army handlers, facilitate and cover up Jackson's killings. Tellingly, Knox recruits Agnew out of the closed ward of an addiction clinic, a treatment to which Agnew appears to have committed on his own accord (*The Ultras* 38). Putting on performances of insanity for his own amusement, pretending to be mentally more severely unstable than he is, Agnew appears to welcome his hospitalisation as an opportunity to withdraw from his life in the police force (39). In a Foucauldian sense, he jettisons his life in one disciplinary institution – the police – for another – the mental clinic –, where it is possible for him to relax into mental illness as an acceptable form of deviance: "He began to spend time with the paranoids. He found that there were areas of agreement between them, matters of common concern" (39). Paradoxically, he seems to find respite from the casual, ubiquitous paranoia of the civil war, which impresses itself continuously on the everyday, by immersing himself more fully in a clinically acknowledged state of paranoia. The relief, apparently, consists in not having to struggle against paranoia any more but in finally being able to give in to it in an environment where such affliction produces no other harm than self-inflicted harm.

In this haven-of-sorts far from the realities of the civil war, Knox stages a surprise appearance, ambushing Agnew in the consulting room where Agnew expects to meet with his psychiatrist. Confronting Agnew with the photograph of a roadside bombing in which two of his fellow policemen have died, Knox submits Agnew to emotional blackmail (*The Ultras* 40-41). Appealing to Agnew's sense of duty, he also suggests that Agnew's involvement could yet make a difference against the odds of chaos and terror. Even though

Agnew is aware of the mechanism at work, and even though he knows that in yielding to it, he will end up "conducting an unsanctioned checkpoint, wearing civilian clothing, the body of a man lying at your feet" (40), he is seduced when Knox hands him his service revolver, which to Agnew holds the promise "of avowal and consequence" (41). In instances such as this, *The Ultras* repeatedly highlights male vanity, ambition and self-dramatization as crucial ingredients in the perpetration of military and paramilitary violence. The COIN theatre of the North – Magennis speaks of a "hyper-masculine environment" (123) – provides the perfect stage for toxic masculinity and narcissism.

Such is the toxic military environment in which Nairac finds himself in *The Ultras* and, as Magennis has pointed out, he is well suited for it by virtue of displaying "a masculinity that is synonymous with militaristic, particularly colonial, conflict" (74). McNamee depicts Nairac as a man with a mission, even though the precise nature of the mission remains – ironically, and also historically correct – unclear. No one in the novel has certainty about who he answers to or what military organisation he is attached to; his institutional affiliation remains a matter of speculation among diverse members of the state's authorities (*The Ultras* 35). McNamee draws Nairac's character along the traditional lines of a tragic hero, whose fatal character flaw is hubris in the face of better knowledge. The novel's very first pages outline the immediate circumstances of Nairac's disappearance following an abduction from a pub in the Irish borderlands between Co. Armagh in the North and Co. Louth in the Republic. The fatal end of Nairac's tour of duty in Northern Ireland is thus not only associated with the Irish border, it is also forestalled at the very beginning of the novel: "Robert's body was never found. There are tales of night and dreadful murder. Some accounts speak of the body being buried in Ravensdale Forest. However, the most compelling evidence points to the disposal of the body in the nearby Anglo-Irish Meats plant" (*The Ultras* 4). Right from the beginning, the novel thus invests Nairac – and the narratives that cluster around his mission – with mystical qualities; as much as the details of his brief, Nairac's personality is portrayed as unknowable and elusive, so much so that his character invites the projection of characteristics and narratives. As Caroline Magennis observes,

> McNamee ensures that Nairac embodies almost unrealistic hyper-masculine qualities, reflecting the shifting nature of the historical appraisals of both this man and other military figures. The book opens with his death at the hands of shadowy assailants, so we get a sense of a doomed and fatalistic man throughout the novel, adding to his mysterious allure. […] Knox, a higher ranking army officer specializing in military intelligence, notices this quality in Nairac as he 'had detected a potential

for larger themes in Robert, something classical, the stark fatalist outlines of a blood narrative' (89). (73)

Nairac's quality as a conduit for dark, doomed narratives finds further reflection in his obsession with the Irish border. McNamee depicts Nairac as embracing the borderland enthusiastically, walking its fields and woods, stalking its inhabitants, acquiring their accents and turns of phrase. The border is portrayed a kind of natural habitat for Nairac; it is an impenetrable, unknowable and deadly landscape that fascinates Robert and that mirrors his own "mysterious allure" as much as the violent role he assumes in the effort of counter-insurgency. "[O]perating on the border most of the time" (*The Ultras* 162), Nairac regards the border as the epicentre of the struggle from which the Army's counter-insurgency war has to extend inwards. The paramount importance that he attributes to the geography of the border for the military effort is made clear at the beginning of the novel, where Nairac is shown to ponder over a map of the border indefinitely:

> Robert would sit in his room and stare at the map until it became an abstract thing. He tried to get beyond the actual terrain of the border. He tried to see it as cartography. He related the names of informants to contour lines, looking for patterns, edgy formulae of the peripheral. He thought in terms of substrata, edging his way in into a zonal framework. He thought that Major Kitson's work on low-level intelligence gathering was seminal. (*The Ultras* 4)

Trying to amalgamate his experience of "the actual terrain of the border" with its cartographic representation, he attempts to achieve a deeper understanding of the borderland. In mapping his informants against the contour lines on the map, he hopes to achieve another, more detailed representation of the border, one that accounts for the interdependence of human behaviour and geographical characteristics. What he seeks is a socio-spatial map that charts the terrain of the border as much as the social substrata it both protects and predicates. This map, it becomes clear through the reference to General Frank Kitson, author of such military literature as *Low-Intensity Operations* (1971), is to provide a guide for his project of intelligence gathering, which, as Jackson points out, is the primary touchstone for military counter-insurgency (74).[66]

Crucially, Nairac understands the border in terms of a social environment rather than in terms of mere geographical features. It is his persistent interference with the geography

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[66] As Éamonn Ó Ciardha has summarised, military presence was high, especially in urban areas and the Armagh and Fermanagh borderlands: "Britain deployed enormous resources in 'low intensity' military operations against the Irish Republican Army […] in Derry's city-side, west Belfast, south Derry, east Tyrone, south Armagh's and on the Fermanagh/Monaghan border, putting more boots on the ground than she subsequently deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan" ("Border Gothic" 75-76).

of the border, however, that is ultimately responsible for his violent death. Tellingly, the paragraph cited above appears as a stand-alone paragraph, set off from the preceding and succeeding paragraphs by blank lines, in the midst of, but apparently unrelated to, an account of the night of his murder. By way of juxtaposition, the novel establishes a correlation between Nairac's obsession with the border and his killing, setting the tone for the narrative that is about to enfold.

Throughout the novel, Nairac's absurd degree of identification with the COIN theatre in which he operates is referenced. During one meeting, for instance, Agnew tells Knox, the MI6 agent who recruited Agnew for covert operations (see *The Ultras* 38-41), about Nairac's obviously transgressive behaviour: "He goes on patrol with the regular army. Carries a shotgun under the arm. […] Walks along like a squire. Calls the locals by name. They all think he's not wise. He goes into the local bars and sings for them" (35). The camaraderie that Nairac enforces between himself and the locals is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it is clearly aimed at impressing the regular troops by means of his authority and superior knowledge of the area. Accompanying them "like a squire," he passes himself off as the holder of exclusive insights, favours and privileges. On the other hand, it well exceeds the requirements of the British Hearts and Minds policy in Northern Ireland, as Nairac himself admits: "'Hearts and Minds' is fine, but it's not for me. Hearts and Minds is about getting people to like you. I want to get inside their heads, fuck it" (44).

Mimicking the locals' ways, trying to acquire a set of mannerisms, behaviours and ways of speaking that will enable him to pass off as one of them, Nairac tries to make his name as an irreplaceable asset in the intelligence war. The harder he tries, however, to amass secure knowledge of the border, the more he realises that the border not only eludes his grasp, but that it effectively undermines any established certainties. In his attempts at grasping the peculiarities of the border landscape in which he operates, Robert eventually tries his hand at cartography. Apparently unsatisfied with the limited insights yielded by officially commissioned and approved cartography, Nairac expands the Ordnance Survey map according to his own first-hand experience of the border. When he and his comrade Tony Ball are snowed in at their quarters in Castledillon in the border county of Armagh, Robert begins to inscribe his own knowledge and understanding of the borderland on top of the Ordnance Survey map:

> He drew lines on it, put small Xs beside isolated border farmhouses. At first Ball thought that he was targeting known PIRA individuals, but as the snow persisted the markings became less clear. Question marks were added, lines looped around

geographical features for no discernible reason. Cryptic acronyms were added in a minute hand. […] Lines were added in different-coloured pen. Many of the lines petered out" (*The Ultras* 165).

Focalised through Tony Ball's perspective, Nairac's manic involvement with the border becomes obvious. Interestingly, as Ball notices, Nairac's annotations become opaque as the snow continues to veil the landscape. While this could be a function of the passing of time, it is also an allegorical expression of Nairac's identification with the border landscape. As the borderland itself is rendered increasingly featureless and indistinct, Nairac's mental map of it too begins to slip. Nairac's annotations turn the Ordnance Survey map into a palimpsest where layers of colonial knowledge compete with each other. The lines and punctuation that Nairac superimposes, however, make no sense to Ball; they are legible to Nairac only and document his sense of himself as the lone interpreter of the border. He assumes an almost godly stance in his (re-)creation of the border, trying to render the landscape intelligible to his own singular consciousness.

In spite of his painstaking efforts, however, the socio-spatial peculiarities of the border remain elusive to Nairac. When he exclaims, irritated, "I can't get bearings on this bloody border," Ball responds dismissively: "It's just a line on a map" (165). This brief exchange reveals their understandings of the Irish border to be diametrically opposed. To Ball, the border is nothing but a line demarcating the end of one jurisdiction – and military field of intervention – and the beginning of another, possessing no meaning beyond the discipline of cartography. In Ball's reductive understanding, the border exists on the map merely as the representation of a piece of common geopolitical knowledge with no bearing on the world of social relations. For Nairac, however, the border is not a sharp line, but a border*land* – a region in its own right, replete with complex social movements and relations that make it recalcitrant to the exact and divisive mapping of nation states:

> He [Ball] watched as Robert moved his finger down the legend. Legend meaning explanatory words. River. Contour line. Antiquity. His lips moved as he read. He had a puzzled expression on his face, as if it were another, more detailed and clandestine legend elsewhere. One that gave reference points to the shifting nature of the place. The zones of infiltration. The cartographies of subterfuge. (*The Ultras* 165)

Nairac's difficulty with getting his bearings on the border, to form a complete, meaningful mental representation of it, is opposed to his "extensive local knowledge" of the human geography of urban Belfast (*The Ultras* 89). Nairac provides solace and guidance to other soldiers on patrol whose nerves are worn thin not only by the Army's harsh regime but also by the ways in which the IRA's urban guerrilla warfare tactics require an acute socio-spatial

knowledge that apparently eludes them. On his own account, Nairac assumes the role of a geographical mediator between his fellow soldiers and the Belfast environment in which they operate: "He would go through streets, house by house, reciting the names, the political allegiance. […] He took their street maps from them and explained the geographical context. He seemed to be able to trace lines on maps that no one else could see" (89).

His uncanny ability to read practical meaning into the cartographic representations of Belfast, to establish, explain and interpret patterns that "no one else could see," makes Nairac not only an invaluable military asset, it also gives him an extraordinary degree of autonomy, of freedom of movement. It suggests that the conflicted city-space instils a feeling of easeful at-homeness in Nairac that sets him apart from other soldiers and officers and, crucially, also from the natives of Belfast whose sense of ownership is increasingly undermined by the conflict. Concerning mappings of the border, however, Nairac is acutely aware of the discrepancy between the static, reductive representation of the border's geographical features on the map and its military and social actuality. The border proves a recalcitrant field of military intervention because of its "shifting nature" that undermines any predetermined action. Even though the "zones of infiltration" originate from the military itself, its COIN agents find it increasingly difficult to trace their own web of infiltration the closer they move to the border. Rather than rendering connections and oppositions more binary and more distinguishable, the border renders them more complex, oblique and dangerous. The innate subversiveness of the border seems to counteract the subversive purposes of enemy infiltration, adding layers of subterfuge that are legible and navigable to local agents only, who finally succeed in killing the intruder Nairac.

Nairac's inability to fully grasp the geography of the borderlands (as well as his baroquely gory death) is at least in part attributable to the gothic nature of the Irish border, which is conducive to and complicit in "tales of night and dreadful murder" (*The Ultras* 4). In his essay on the Irish "Border Gothic," Éamonn Ó Ciardha argues that the geographical peculiarities of the Irish landscape in conjunction with centuries of political upheaval have been conducive to gothic modes of representation in literature (74). Focussing on the fiction of border writer Eugene McCabe in his essay, Ó Ciardha applies this argument to "the Fermanagh/Monaghan border," whose "damp, dark, rural hinterland of bogs, drumlins, lakes and rivers provides a suitably 'Gothic' backdrop to the tragedies and travails of its inhabitants over four centuries" (74). In *The Ultras*, the border is not only rendered as a liminal space in which "dreadful murder" can be perpetrated without fear of legal persecution, it also emerges as an agent in the perpetration of crime; as a field of force within

which the occurrence of violence becomes inevitable. As Fiona McCann has argued in her analysis of the "Gothic topographies" in *The Ultras* and two other McNamee novels,

> The staples of Gothic fiction […] draw attention to towns and land haunted by a past which has been fossilised into a folkloric expectation of violence and, on the other hand, mock through their pervasiveness a postmodern excavation of the past in which the uncanny, the spectral and the resurgence of the repressed emphasise […] the mutability of the past and the textual traces thereof. ("Whodunnit" 105)

This "mutability of the past" to which McCann testifies becomes obvious in the novel's rendering of the Miami Showband Massacre, in the plotting of which the presence of the border plays an important part. The novel suggests that Nairac was not only present during the massacre, but that it was he who planned the operation in collusion with high-ranking UVF men in Lurgan. During their first meeting, Nairac, responding to Agnew's insistent questioning, begins to brag about his approach to covert operations in the field and parades an arsenal of unregistered, untraceable weaponry. From this, Agnew gathers that "the unattributable, the deniable" were crucial ingredients in the "shadowy grandeur implicit in each operation" (172). In keeping with the gothic mode, Nairac seems to look for experiences of the sublime in covert operations (spell "killings") that are carried out 'beautifully.' This perverted notion of the sublime and the beautiful resonates also in Nairac's reference to the Miami Showband:

> Robert said that the targets would be miles away when the final part of the operation took place. That was part of *the beauty* of it. The other part was that the targets would have crossed the border from one side to the other. It was important that the border itself was brought into play. There were powerful ambiguities associated with the idea of the frontier that could be drawn on. The targets themselves were unimpeachable. (172, emphasis mine)

Here too, "the beauty" of the operation lies in its unattributability, in the fact that it cannot be ascribed to any agent in particular. The explosion of the band's van, had all gone according to plan, would have occurred long after the band had passed the fake checkpoint, allowing speculations – never to be confirmed or denied – about the band's paramilitary membership to proliferate. The operation would hence have reinforced the general sense of social disintegration, heightening the feeling that, as Stephen Travers put it, "you cannot trust anybody" (Joint Committee on Justice n. pag.).

In this context, the gothic locale of the border further increases what Nairac perceives cynically as the beauty of the operation. By adding a sense of ambiguity, the border fuels multiple interpretations of the event that will become narrativised in the gothic mode. There will thus emerge a reciprocal relationship between the operation and the locale in which it

occurs: the border will add to the event a gothic element, thus hinting at a spurious spiritual dimension, while retrospective accounts of the event will reinforce public perceptions of the border as an essentially gothic place of violence and murder. It thus contributes to a particular process of border change that does suit British interests as Nairac sees them. Offering a fictionalised account of the Miami Showband Massacre in the gothic mode, *The Ultras* indeed highlights, as Fiona McCann argues, "the mutability of the past and the textual traces thereof," calling into question its own "postmodern excavation" of the event (105). It simply offers another narrative take on the event, complementing those other accounts that speak of collusion and testify to the victims' innocence, and it aestheticises a factual truth that cannot be established.

Counter-Insurgency as Disjoint and Disjointing

Analysing the apparatus of surveillance employed for reasons of securitisation on the Limestone Road, an interface area in North Belfast, Kelly and Mitchell find that the place is rendered liminal by the presence of the cameras and, more precisely, by the use that the police make of them ("Peaceful Spaces?" 318). In interviews with local residents, the authors learnt that the intelligence provided by the cameras was acted upon by the police in ways that suggested self-interest. Locals believed that the footage was used against them when it suited the police but that it was equally ignored when it might have benefitted them (318). The authors conclude,

> In this sense, the state and its disciplinary power is both present and not present: it appears only when its rules are broken and recedes again once it has imposed order. The inconsistency and unevenness of the form of discipline promoted by surveillance, then, compounds the sense of liminality that pervades this space. (318)

Even though Kelly and Mitchell's object of study is the social impact of spatial peacebuilding measures on North Belfast, their findings shed fascinating light on the representation of the apparatus of surveillance in *The Ultras*. Like Kelly and Mitchell's study, *The Ultras* represents Northern Ireland during the Dirty War as a space that is rendered liminal by virtue of the overlapping regimes of surveillance that are spanned across its totality. While, as has been shown above, the disciplinary power in *The Ultras* is, to use Kelly and Mitchell's terms, inconsistent and uneven, the pervading sense of liminality stems rather from the peculiar nature of the apparatus of surveillance as portrayed in the novel. Nothing ever goes unseen in the Ulster Panopticon, the novel suggests, but the identity of

the seer remains forever elusive.[67] The existence of one unifying force tying together the strands of intelligence remains unclear; its existence is ultimately a matter of belief, and it lends itself to being relegated to the supernatural realm of the gothic. The elusive, god-like character of this force ties in well with and partly explains the many references to the occult and/or spiritual in the novel.

In the same vein, Mitchell and Kelly describe the "air of uncanniness" that the installation of video surveillance produces in the area: "it is clear that it is highly securitized, but it is unclear to what extent and to what end" ("Peaceful Spaces?" 318). This sense of uncertainty contributes to the prevailing sense of insecurity and danger. The very presence of surveillance suggests that there must be some unstated, implicit reason for such surveillance. "The very structures and functions of these mechanisms," the authors argue, "act as artifacts of past and future (or predicted) violence" ("Peaceful Spaces?" 318). In this context of engendering a sense of impending danger, of rendering the use of certain spaces as unsafe, Herbert Clark's analysis of chess as "a joint activity" provides a useful framework for analysis. The manifold surveillance and counter-insurgency activities as portrayed in *The Ultras* mainly serve to obfuscate agency as much as existential and spatial certainty. As mentioned above, Clark's observation that "[t]he squares on the chess board are markers for physical locations, and the chess pieces are markers for imaginary objects" (46) dovetails partially with A.T.Q. Stewart's chequerboard metaphor (182). Clark claims that the players are able to deduct meaning from the constellation that presents itself on the chess board through the process of "locational interpretation," which means that "[t]he markers are interpreted in part by their spatial location with respect to other markers" (47). If applied to the chequerboard of Northern Ireland, the "current state" of the Troubles would become legible in terms of the "external representation" of agents, or markers, on the ground (47) – in their whereabouts, their movements, their advance into and their withdrawal from certain places. Some players, such as paramilitaries and secret agents, are unofficial participants in the activity and, as such, follow their own set of rules. Other players, such as policemen and soldiers, are officially ratified participants and, as such, they are generally expected to act in compliance with the official rules, such as the rule of law. Clark draws a distinction between "official" and "unofficial" moves that occur in the course of a joint activity, with the

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[67] Mitchell and Kelly argue that "the position of power held by the unidentified surveillor […] also enhances the sense of deterritorialization – the surveillor is anonymous, distant, and operates 'from above' and outside the site in question" ("Peaceful Spaces?" 318).

"official" moves being those that effect changes to the constellation on the chess board in compliance with the rules:

> In most joint activities, the states and events that become public […] divide into those that are officially part of the activity and those that aren't. The division is clear in chess. Chess moves M_i are official parts of the game because they are added to the official trace, alter the official board, and advance the game. […] Keeping track of which public states and events are official and which aren't is essential to the orderly advancement of any joint activity. (41-42)

While the moves of unofficial participants are hardly ever traceable in spatial terms, the motivation behind their moves, and the results that they have, might indeed have a spatial dimension (as is painfully obvious in terrorist bombings, for instance). When, in addition, covert allegiances are forged between official and unofficial players, the state of the game as a "joint activity" becomes increasingly difficult to trace on the board – in this case, the constellation of pieces on the board no longer offers "highly reliable representations of the current state" (47) of the game.

Seen through this lens, collusion in *The Ultras* in general and Knox's recruitment of Agnew in particular become observable in terms of interventions in social space. The activities of the intelligence agencies on the ground, which effectively constitute unofficial moves that "advance the game" without "add[ing] to the official trace," drive a wedge of fear, distrust and disorientation between the civilian population of Northern Ireland and the places they inhabit. When Agnew accepts Knox's offer, he is fully aware of leaving the chartered ground of official law and order. Clark argues that "[p]eople entering a joint activity presuppose a great deal about carrying out that activity. That information is represented in chess as rules, regulations, and etiquette" (44). What Agnew, however, rightly presupposes about the activity he is about to enter is precisely the opposite of such regulatory information. He commits to a blurring of his traces on the board and to rendering the chequerboard of Northern Ireland increasingly illegible and incalculable. Not knowing that Agnew is part of the counter-insurgency machine, Nairac confirms that the British agencies do not underlie the common law when they first meet: "Rest assured, Sergeant Agnew, we're doing what we can. We don't have to operate within conventional frameworks. We're playing a long game here and local men like yourself are vital" (171). Interestingly, Nairac's reference to "a long game" does not only affirm his understanding of the ludic character of the Dirty War, it also calls to mind Nina's observation in *The Pen Friend* that "this is a long term project" (47). Both Nairac and Nina's statements on the protracted nature of the game tie in with Brian A. Jackson's observations on the protracted nature of COIN operations (83-

84). In COIN, there are not only "long-collection-and-analysis cycles" of often low-level intelligence (84). It also "entails a shift from decisive to patient operations," allowing not for successive military strikes but instead "for other action along other lines of operation" that may result in a political settlement (84). Nairac's insistence on the crucial role "local men" have to play in this context further mirrors Jackson's observations on the importance of "detailed local knowledge" in COIN theatres (78). Since the moves of covert, unofficial players such as paramilitaries are difficult to trace, only close, first-hand knowledge of the locality "provides the basis for detecting anomalous behavior" (77).

Erskine, who is involved in the project of counterinsurgency on behalf of PsyOps, apparently subscribes to General Kitson's theory according to which "high-grade intelligence," such as is collected through "infiltrators or informers," must be supplemented by "large amounts of low-level intelligence," which is easier and less risky to harvest (Jackson 77). For this reason, he establishes "an information office in the annexe to the corridor" where members of the public can come to consult with him. Stocking the office with all sorts of informative material and hiring "a civilian secretary," he makes it "resemble a pensions office, a branch office of civil administration, open and guileless. The word PsyOps wasn't mentioned" (*The Ultras* 84). While this office projects an image of educated and disinterested exchange, it is an elaborated charade to cheat members of the public into providing the low-level information Erskine covets. It is hence a cynical distortion of the maxim that Jackson formulates: "In COIN, image matters. The population's potential to provide valuable information means that perceptions – the public image of security forces and their activities – have operational consequences" (Jackson 79). Like Nina in *The Pen Friend*, Erskine perceives friendly mingling with people of local relevance as an integral part of his job. Organising "drinks receptions for local journalists and local Special Branch men" (*The Ultras* 84), he attempts to forward on the public image of his office as "open and guileless." Mahood and Cooper, two local Special Branch men with whom Erskine has built up a solid working relationship and from whom he procures information, accost him one day about the proliferation of military agencies on the ground. Claiming "that the Ultras is running round over here now," they express their exasperation:

> 'You know the problem?' Cooper said. 'You got far too many security services. Too many people involved. You got MI5, MI6, you got 14th Int, G2, Unit 126, Group 13, MRF. […] You get my drift? All of a sudden you have this little bit of civil unrest in a place like this, some internal dissent, and they're all piled in all of a sudden, looking to make a name for themselves. Makes things a bit difficult for the natives.' (*The Ultras* 84-85)

Apart from expressing the RUC's feeling of resentment towards the British forces, which, as Jackson summarises, often stemmed from British intelligence classification practices (76), Cooper also appears to experience a sense of quasi-colonial spatial dispossession. Using the term "natives" to refer to Northern Irish people such as himself, he unwittingly betrays a degree of colonially informed self-deprecation, and is immediately corrected by Mahood who interjects the term "locals" (85). In their eyes, their "bit of civil unrest" is hijacked by the British forces for reasons of vaingloriousness, which effectively exacerbates the conflict rather than contributes to its resolution. In so doing, British involvement only succeeds in highlighting the colonial nature of the conflict and puts additional stress on the border as the literal and metaphorical pivot of the conflict. Thus, the bounded nature of Northern Ireland, the fact that its borders enclose a relatively small territory with very few urban centres, is conducive to the diverse British forces' project of honing their respective skills and strategies at the cost of the Northern Irish population.

Cooper and Mahood's sense of spatial dispossession is exacerbated by the involvement of the Ultras, who, as they suspect, "are getting themselves involved with local paramilitaries for reasons known to themselves and we get caught in the middle" (85). What takes place through the intervention of the Ultras is, in Herbert Clark's terms, an unofficial increment to the game, which while "advance[ing] the game" is not "added to the official trace" (41). Hence, there can be no "orderly advancement of [the] joint activity" (42) of containing republican terrorism through a coordinated institutional effort. As a result, the board on which the war is carried out becomes increasingly illegible to locals such as Mahood and Cooper; they are deprived of any common ground between themselves as the local players and the British security forces as external players. Necessarily, local and British security forces arrive at different "interpret[ations] of the chess board and the pieces on it" (Clark 43). For Cooper and Mahood, this situation throws up questions not only of territorial ownership but also of interpretational authority, which Cooper tries to assert when he affirms: "The city is the city. The province is the province. […] This is the least communist place in the whole wide fucking world, so if these Ultra boys want to resist communism let them fuck away off to Moscow to do it" (*The Ultras* 86). In Cooper's line of argument, the province of Northern Ireland evolves around the city of Belfast, figuring almost as an extension of it, which seems to imply that knowledge and control of it necessarily lead to knowledge and control of the other.

Being stationed at Castlereagh in East Belfast himself, Cooper effectively reclaims his interpretational authority over the "chess board" of Northern Ireland. Using the

politically significant term "the province," he stresses Northern Ireland's belonging to the British 'mainland' at the same time. In only a few short sentences, Cooper puts considerable weight behind his assertion that first, there are no communists Northern Ireland and second, there is no communist aspect to the conflict. Denying the international dimension of the conflict, Cooper also denies the necessity of the British Army's involvement while stressing the spatial boundedness of the civil war. Following this line of argument, he attempts to square the circle of national affiliation and territorial belonging: Northern Ireland is British, he seems to say, almost but not quite – at the same time, he insists on its status as a place apart, knowable and policeable only by locals.

Hence, in *The Ultras*, the "game" of counter-insurgency played on the chequerboard of Northern Ireland is not "cumulative" in Clark's sense. Clark asks, "If joint activities are cumulative, what accumulates? I will argue that it is the common ground of the participants about that activity – the knowledge, beliefs, and suppositions they believe they share about the activity" (38). In fact, *The Ultras* portrays state-sponsored counter-insurgency as an activity that destabilises and disperses all knowledge, all belief and all suppositions. The novel thus asks the fundamental question of who plays the game of counterinsurgency on the basis of what knowledge and belief. Participation in this particular kind of "joint activity" not only multiplies confusion, distrust, disorientation and paranoia; in fact, they seem to belong to what Clark calls its "dominant goals" (33). "In many activities," Clark posits, "one person initiates the joint activity with a dominant goal in mind, and the others join him or her in order to achieve it" (33).[68]

Contemplating the great number of security forces operating in Northern Ireland alongside one another without any top-down coordination, Knox is portrayed to not only welcome but to effectively pursue "inter-agency rivalry, people working in layers" as much as the epistemological uncertainty produced by such ways of working: "Knox knew that confusion was important. A sense of unstable government was vital to good intelligence work. You wanted there to be shifting patterns, shadowy allegiances, overtones of corruption and sexual scandal" (*The Ultras* 36). It is interesting that Knox favours this "sense of unstable government" not only for the civilian population but also for his fellow security agencies. His assumption of what promotes "good intelligence work" is thus diametrically

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[68] Herbert Clark differentiates between "public" and "private" goals. Public goals are such goals as are "openly recognized by all the participants"; only they can become "joint goals" (35). It follows from this that Knox as much as other military players pursue a mixture of public and private goals, with even the public goals only ever being public to certain (never all) of the other players.

opposed to the need for strategic coordination of the diverse forces in the field that has been identified as crucial for successful COIN (Jackson 76).[69] What is more, Knox's insistence on the importance of "shifting patterns," on the wilful dissemination of conflicting knowledge and narratives, negates any meaningful integration and analysis of the intelligence collected by different military forces (Jackson 81-82). Creating conflict and confusion among the agencies on the ground, Knox apparently seeks to thrive on the chaos of the civil war. A further extension of the power vacuum in theatre, so his cynical logic, might in the end heighten the might of the military through processes of quasi-natural selection. His is a darkly Darwinian world, where the survival of the fittest – i.e., most adapted to the ever-shifting situation on the ground – is the one rule overriding all the others.

Knox's "dominant goal" of spreading confusion applies also to the general public. In his labyrinthine transactions with different military (and paramilitary) players, pursuing a number of goals that never become quite "public" (Clark 35) to all participants alike, he succeeds in manipulating the civilian population's 'geographical imaginations.' At Knox's behest, for instance, Erskine begins to apply a variation of what Jackson calls "disruption operations" (82) to the population at large. As Jackson explains, in these operations, intelligence of impending terrorist action "was often used to frustrate rather than strike directly at PIRA […] shap[ing] the environment so PIRA would choose to abort the operation" (82).[70] Knox encourages Erskine to carry out such "shaping" of the spaces in which ordinary people conduct their lives as he thinks that internment without trial and the Special Powers given to the state forces do not sufficiently upset and unsettle the population any more: "He felt that they had settled into low-intensity urban warfare, random house searches, arbitrary arrests. He felt that their fears needed to be awakened on a deeper level" (61). What Knox is after is a cranking up of the public's anxieties and insecurities through the invention of 'interested' stories, which are intended to further contribute to the spreading of confusion – in an environment that is already recalcitrant to causal narratives and linear emplotment. Instructing Erskine on these psychological operations, Knox identifies the Catholic population as the group which is to be mainly targeted: "'You have to remember that you're dealing with the Roman Catholic mentality,' he said. 'There is a culture of miracles, rosaries, virgin birth'" (*The Ultras* 151). Further proof of Knox's – and by

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[69] Clark concurs. He posits, "[e]very joint activity requires coordination among its participants" (35).
[70] Erskine's unit, PsyOps, which carries out psychological operations as part of the COIN effort, is reminiscent of what Henry McDonald refers to as a "propaganda branch, known as the Information Policy Unit (IPU), [which] was tasked with spreading information including fake news to undermine the credibility of insurgent groups such as the IRA" ("British Army" n. pag.).

extension, the British forces' – colonial approach to Northern Ireland, he suggests that the "Roman Catholic mentality" can be fitfully exploited to suit the British agenda on the ground:

> [Knox] said that it was worth remembering there was a belief in transubstantiation out there and that historically occult events were associated with civil unrest. He suggested crude daubings of pentacles and other satanic symbols in bus depots and other public spaces. He talked about making ouija boards available in shabby second-hand outlets in the city centre. Anything that made mothers hold their offspring closer. You wanted to see teenagers whispering fearfully at bus stops. (*The Ultras* 151)

The inherent 'otherness' of the Catholic population, which in this line of binary reasoning is also essentially un-British, is implicitly identified as the root cause of the conflict as the Protestant mentality goes unmentioned and thus passes as the norm. Fiona McCann has argued in a different context: "Knox betrays the very colonial attitude which presents ethno-nationalist conflicts as atavistic and inherent to a particular national psyche" ("Whodunnit" 111). Here, this is the assumed Catholic psyche. Using a parallel syntactical structure involving two relative clauses, Knox effectively equates "transubstantiation," one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic faith, with "occult events." In doing so, he displays not only his condescension towards the Catholic population, but associates both Catholicism and the occult, via a dubious historical connection, with public states of disorder and insurgence generally.

It is this Catholic susceptibility for the irrational, however, that in Knox's view makes the Northern Irish Catholic equally susceptible to satanic manipulations of their lived environment. Dotting mixed, non-sectarian urban spaces – such as bus stations and the city centre in general – with pentacles and Ouija boards, Knox wants to spread, anonymously, oblique symbols of horror in spaces that would generally be perceived as being controlled by the state authorities. Unlike other symbols and acronyms of communal belonging that mark out loyalist and republican territories respectively, these satanic symbols are harder to make sense of. They bypass the divisive logic of the civil war in that they cannot be traced back to any of the ratified players of the game. As such, they hint at the existence of other, unidentifiable but vaguely spiritual dimensions to the violence for which there is no readily available explanation, thus rendering the conflict even more uncanny.

In the context of the military's psychological operations, Magennis observes that "McNamee, in *The Ultras*, describes the literature published by British Intelligence to disturb Northern Irish civilians and, in doing so, actually offers an apposite synopsis of his

own work: 'Fiction with psycho-sexual overtones. There were themes of mild fetish' (*TU* 151)" (113). In the same vein that PsyOps crafts narrative realities to produce a feeling of dislocation in the (Catholic) population, so does *The Ultras* provide a disturbing account of military intervention and collusion that, in adding yet more layers of suspicion, further complicates the post-conflict quest for historical truth, or merely for the facts. In the novel, the diary of Agnew's daughter Lorna adds to this textual hall of mirrors. Bearing testimony to her private thoughts and actions, Lorna's diary is represented as a counterpart to the archive that Agnew has created in relation to his own past. Perhaps unwittingly, he makes Lorna his accomplice in his obsession with the past, in his paranoid conviction that he is not the author of his own past but that rather, the truth about his past has been snatched from him by the state authorities who have used it to construct a narrative that suited their ends. Lorna's personal diary complements and, in a way, upstages her father's search for a stable account of his past. Her voluntary starvation, like that of Bobby Sands in *Hunger*, is a fatal means of asserting authority over her life's narrative, a narrative that is impinged upon by her parents' self-seeking as much as by the dictates of the social trauma narrative in which she grows up (cf. Magennis 43). Lorna guards her diary with the same jealousy with which her mother wishes to read it, so that the diary itself becomes the site of a power struggle between mother and daughter: a struggle pivoting around one's desire for autonomy and the other's desire for submission and control.

Agnew is more respecting of his daughter's right to autonomy and self-determination; indeed he "almost admires his daughter's self-restraint as she slides into starvation" (Magennis 43). His respect, however, also conceals a reluctance to assume his partial responsibility for Lorna's condition. When the opportunity presents itself to him one night, he decides not to read the diary, "[b]ecause you did not know what you would find once you started" (*The Ultras* 140). He continues, however, to contemplate the question of the diary:

> He wondered if she concealed the diary to protect her own thoughts as they were written or to protect those who would read it as the hidden words began to clothe themselves in lore, drawing authority to themselves, that a teenage girl's diary had gathered in aloofness and mystery by making itself a sought-after thing. He wondered if the diary would provide an explanation for her illness, or was the book, the text the thing that was driving her, its unseen liturgy, each sentence she added to it picking up on the stealthy cadences, the jurisdiction of the unseen. (140)

Agnew's contemplation can also be read as a reflection on the covert working of the military machinery during the Troubles as well as on the ongoing negotiations of the truth about the

past as part of the peace process. Silence, the withholding of information, is one of the military's greatest means of power in the novel. It is what both enables the ultimate narrative authority and allows for the mushrooming of what Eamonn Hughes calls "narrative possibilities" on the ground ("Limbo" 140). Agnew also recognises and describes the hypnotic power that is inherent in the creation of a narrative, so much so that the continuation of the narrative itself can become the major motivation for any action. Like Erskine, he too acknowledges the importance of style when referencing "lore," "liturgy" and "cadences." Likewise, Agnew's musings seem to call into question the benefit of the historical truth for the peace process; he is unsure if reading the book could fully account for Lorna's "illness." In one possible reading of the paragraph, Agnew's musings suggest that the narrative qualities of any event follow their own laws and their own logic, however perverted, which no retrospective reading could successfully or satisfactorily hope to explain.

3. Geographies of Transition

In 2012 and 2013, three prominent events illustrated the ways in which the redistribution of political power, an integral part of the peace process, challenges traditional patterns of the social use of space. Political interventions into the ways in which people *are*, or are *allowed to be*, in the public space available to them strongly inflect their relationship to the polity in which they live. This certainly seemed to be the case during the unionist Flags Protests in December 2012, which drove home just how precarious the political situation had started to feel in some quarters of the unionist/loyalist community. Belfast City Council had decided to restrict the flying of the Union flag above the City Hall to 'designated days,' which evoked public outrage – an outrage that might have seemed grotesquely exaggerated to impartial onlookers. Yet, it illustrated the sinister accuracy behind Eddie Izzard's satiric jibe "no flag, no country" (Izzard 0:34-0:36). The protests seemed to stem from a strong unionist sense of political and geographical dispossession, and much of the debate centred on the perceived institutionalised onslaught on unionist culture and identity. It does not require a stretch of the imagination to see how the political developments since the ratification of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 must have been much more frightening to the unionist/loyalist community than to their nationalist/republican counterpart. Indeed, in her essay on "Post-Conflict Discourses on Peace-Building," Komarova argues that her interviews with representatives from unionist/protestant Belfast suggest that among the concerns regarding the creation of "shared space" (151) is the "fear of 'the other' as definitive for community in territorially contentious spaces" as much as "the erosion of communal identity" (152).

In 2013, more tinder followed to stoke the flames of the debate around the rightful ownership of or, rather, the appropriate of use of public space. For one, the Parades Commission, established under the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement, ruled that "a contentious stretch of the Crumlin Road" was not to be included in an Orange march on the twelfth of July (Williamson n. pag.). As Williamson summarises, "[i]n response to the determination, loyalists set up a protest camp at Twaddell Avenue with lodge members vowing to retain a presence until they were granted permission to complete their parade" (n. pag.). When, in April 2016, the camp had been in existence for a thousand days; the enduring deployment of the police in the area had already cost the taxpayer the fortune of approximately £18 million. While such stamina may seem astonishing, the rhetoric employed in the public debate gave evidence to the emotional importance of the issue. In the eyes of the Belfast Deputy Grand Master, for instance, the protest could be dissolved "if the

lodges were allowed to return home" (Williamson n. pag.). The use of the word 'home' ties the original route of the Orange March to the idea of a wider journey, a journey whose collective importance is rooted in an "allegorical landscape" (Kirkland 5). Moreover, the Deputy Grand Master's statement offers an insight into the personal and emotional impact of the spatial politics of the peace process, and it stresses the feelings of political and geographical dispossession and that are at stake.

Finally, in October 2013, the much discussed redevelopment of the site of HMP Maze into a peace and reconciliation centre stalled when the European Union saw itself forced to withdraw the £18 million grant it had planned to dedicate to the project (Gordon n. pag.). The prison's redevelopment had been much discussed – it was a matter of course that there should be political controversy over the future use of the prison site, which, after all, had been the location of both the blanket protests and the republican hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981. The EU's decision was an unexpected and hard blow even though it only acted in response to adverse developments within Northern Irish politics: The then First Minister Peter Robinson of the DUP had removed his support of the project, gratifying those among his political base camp who feared the peace centre would function as a monument to republican terrorism. The cancelled redevelopment scheme of the Maze prison site is yet another deeply politicised instance of what Jess and Massey call the "contestation of place," in the course of which "rival claims to define the meaning of places, and, thereby, rights to control their use or future" are staked (134). Unable to agree on the socio-cultural meaning of the former prison site, the power-sharing parties were rendered equally unable to commit to an agreed future use of the Maze, thereby depriving the entire Northern Irish community of a promising redevelopment.

In the three instances listed, the management of public space as carried out by the authorities inevitably contributed to a (mostly unionist) sense of dislocation and alienation from the state and its institutions. All three, the Flags Protest, the protest camp at Twadell and the controversy around HMP Maze, centred on the contentious assertion of cultural practices that reproduce the identities of place as well as the ideologies that underpin and crystallise at the national border. It was against the backdrop of these intricate issues that US diplomat Richard Haass and his colleague Meghan O'Sullivan returned to Northern Ireland in 2013. The US envoys co-chaired "a Panel of Parties in the NI Executive to recommend ways forward on parades and protests, flags and emblems, and the past" and they dedicated "nearly six months, including 33 days of meetings and negotiations, and involv[ing] some 100 meetings with 500 people and 600 submissions from interested groups and the public"

to the achievement of their onerous task ("Factsheet" n. pag.). Commenting on the imminent Haass talks in September 2013, Eamonn McCann, always in true socialist spirit, drew a comparison to a workers' strike in which he had participated in 2006. The strike had been carried by employees of the Belfast postal service and it unified people from the notorious Falls and Shankill Roads. McCann criticises the sectarian pressure that more often than not has succeeded in keeping people apart, while highlighting the potential for such non-sectarian unison by lauding a number of events where joint action had been taken for common benefit:

> Had any of these occurrences lasted, there would have been no call for the return of Richard Haass. Each was a glimpse of what's possible, always snuffed out by a resurgence of sectarian feeling drummed up and drawn out by those who saw unity along these lines not as a harbinger of hope but as an appalling vista. ("Haass Talks" n. pag.)

From his early days as civil rights activist to his appointment as an MLA for People before Profit, McCann has always spoken out, often uncomfortably, in favour of non-sectarian socialist politics, and this he did also in the present case. McCann questions if truly progressive politics can be forged in a context where social division is accepted as the necessary starting point of all and any political negotiation: "The best strategy for building peace would be to urge support for those who follow the lead of the postal strikers. Some of the most passionate peacemongers prefer things the way they are and wouldn't be seen dead at a strikers' demo" ("Haass Talks" n. pag.).

Writing in the *Belfast Telegraph* in September 2013, Liam Clarke, another prolific commentator on the state of the North, did not spare the institutions either. If the Northern Irish 'past' is to be dealt with in a proactive manner, according to Clarke, sincerity will have to come forward from quarters not usually given to it. Referencing the murder case of solicitor Pat Finucane, Clarke demands that both the British and Irish governments pay the price of reconciliation instead of paying lip service to the imperatives of the peace process only: "If governments adopted a policy of disclosure and acknowledgment, that would create a space for understanding to grow" (L. Clarke, "Haass Talks" n. pag.). He further highlighted that "[t]here will be a pressure on non-state actors, including paramilitaries and political parties, to openly acknowledge their own responsibilities, instead of constantly pointing the finger of blame at others" ("Haass Talks" n. pag.). Caught in a circuit where currents of reproach shoot from one socket to the next, it is indeed hard to see the electric network to which the house is wired. The short circuits affecting the system are more often than not

caused by the countercurrents of the past. Speaking at the Tim Parry and Jonathan Ball Peace Centre in September 2013, the late Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness expressed his regret at the failure of the Maze Peace Centre:

> For many, given the journey we have all trodden and the changes that have come about and our work abroad as advocates of peace building, it beggars belief that we cannot agree on the building of a peace centre.
>
> But what it is [sic.] that has tripped us up? What has tripped us up is the past, how we speak about it, how we present it, and how we address it. And its role in reconciliation. (Speech n. pag.)[71]

McGuinness sketches out an upended world, where the traditional coordinates for the navigation of both time and space do not hold true in a consistent fashion. As Lakoff and Johnson have argued in one of their analyses of conceptual metaphors, "time in English is structured in terms of the TIME AS A MOVING OBJECT metaphor with the future moving towards us" (468). This entails that "time receives a front-back orientation facing in the direction of motion, just as any moving object would. Thus the future is facing toward us as it moves towards us" (468-69). In McGuinness's speech, this specific "orientational metaphor" (461) combines with the metaphorical term of the 'peace process' as he casts the abstract notion of peace in more concrete terms as the future destination of a communal "journey."[72] The upended nature of this spatio-temporal journey lies in the fact that the past as "a moving object" moves recurrently and at will in-between the travellers, causes them to fall and obstructs their progress towards the future and thus towards peace. Further, the journey metaphor imagines the past as a stretch of road already travelled, and the future as a stretch of road that lies ahead. In the context of the peace process, one may duly wonder how many more crossroads can yet be taken, how many more miles yet be journeyed, in a province of only six counties. The vision of the road that imposes itself is that of an ever-wriggling elastic band, which necessarily questions the adequacy of the metaphor at play. If I am continuously 'tripped up' by a part of the road I have already travelled, I might be caught on a circular route which condemns me to revisiting the past every single time I have snatched a glimpse of the future.

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[71] Commenting on the Haass talks in 2013, Liam Clarke chooses a similar language: "The past is more difficult, as the Maze debacle showed. Seemingly innocuous terms like victim, combatant and conflict now carry so much baggage *that people trip over them*" ("Hass Talks" n. pag., emphasis mine).

[72] According to Lakoff and Johnson "[m]etaphorical concepts provide ways of understanding one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience. Typically this involves understanding less concrete experiences in terms of more concrete and more highly structured experiences" (486).

In the context of the ongoing peace process, where there is a pervading sense of the political future still being negotiated and malleable, public space as well as the perceptions thereof must remain evolving entities. Posing the question "*what does 'peace' actually mean for Northern Ireland?*" (143, emphasis in original), Komarova analyses the responses made by a diverse set of actors to "the government's Strategic Policy on Good Relations (OFMDFM 2005) and associated attempts at conceptualising and creating 'shared space' in Belfast" (143-44). In the context of the present study, it is of particular importance "that various identity discourses bear in divergent ways upon an understanding both of the conflict in Northern Ireland, and of 'good relations' […]." Komarova posits that "by extension […] such discourses also bear on the practical task of developing and participating in shared space" (147). In other words, the fashion in which people make sense of the conflict, of intercommunal relations and of the use of space is determined by the discursive identities to which they subscribe. Concurrently, "[t]he spaces and places within which [social] identity is constructed, (re)negotiated and in relation to which it is narrated, constitute an inseparable part of those identities" (151). Komarova's recent findings thus intersect in interesting ways with A.T.Q. Stewart's analysis of "the roots of conflict in Ulster" put forward in *The Narrow Ground*. As detailed above, Stewart illuminates the ways in which the spatial division of society initiated by the plantation of Ulster has fostered the development not only of different spatial identities, but also of two communal identities which are themselves strongly spatialised (181). He captures this spatial predicament in the phrase of the "territorial imperative" (181), and shows how the handed-down knowledge about a place's past has informed the interpretation of any event that occurred in this place during (and before) the civil war (182). In addition to event and place, he identifies "a third dimension" – the place's past – all three of which have to be considered to grasp "[t]he perduring quality of local patterns of reaction" (182) As, for instance, the Maze controversy has shown, Stewart's "third dimension" of place-specific memory, in its manifold permutations, continues to have an impact on peace-building initiatives and on the creation of a geography of peace. If the spatial entrenchment of society has played a crucial role in the genesis of the conflict, then peace-building in post-conflict Northern Ireland necessarily seems to have a spatial dimension, or at least to presuppose a change in communal as well as personal 'geographical imaginations.'

From "Envelopes of Space-Time" Towards a "Progressive Sense of Place"

In their collection of essays entitled *Post-Conflict Literature*, Chris Andrews and Matt McGuire, focussing on the literatures of Northern Ireland, South Africa and South America respectively, are concerned with a set of questions that also guides this study in general and the present chapter in particular. Their collection testifies to a need of shifting the bulk of critical and creative attention away from Troubles fiction and towards an emergent host of fiction and film that has not only been produced during the peace process, but that also deals with the progress towards peace (Andrews and McGuire 4, 6). At the very beginning of their introduction, the editors frame their concerns by posing three crucial questions: "What is the role of literature in the aftermath of political conflict? Can literature help us to understand the legacies of a traumatic and violent history? How might thinking about literature inform the broader process of reimagining the past and realigning the co-ordinates of the future?" (1) The last question points right at the heart of the concern that guides the present chapter. In their very different ways (and expressing very different takes on the socio-political present), the three verbal and visual texts addressed in the present chapter share a common ground in their attempts at imagining "the co-ordinates of the future." Elaborating on the interstices "between the disciplinary logic of literary studies and the conceptual vocabulary created by Peace and Conflict Studies" they hope to create in their collection of essays, Andrews and McGuire list "restorative and transitional justice, truth and reconciliation, the cost of conflict, human rights, post-traumatic memory, gendered peace, therapeutic storytelling and discourses of victimhood" among those terms that can be "illuminated and sometimes questioned by the reading of particular literary texts" (4). In a particular, narrowed-down version of these concerns, the present chapter will focus on the fictional negotiations of truth, reconciliation and traumatic memory through a geographical lens. Glenn Patterson's *Gull* (2016), David Park's *The Truth Commissioner* (2008) as well as Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Five Minutes of Heaven* (2009) imagine restorative or transitional geographies that challenge the 'territorial imperative' as perpetuated through inherited narratives. Offering a stage for alternative cultural narratives, these transitional geographies are shown to condition socio-political change as well as the emergence of truth and reconciliation in significant ways. As Doreen Massey has argued in 1998 as part of her Hettner lecture, "[t]he spatial in its role of bringing into contact distinct temporalities generates a provocation to interaction, which sets off social processes" ("Imagining" 14).

Massey's understanding of place as characterised by the dynamic co-existence of divergent narratives will serve as the implicit theoretical foundation of this chapter. In her Hettner Lecture, she voices her impatience with the erroneous conceptual narratives of "the relation between space and society" as propagated by both modernity and globalisation ("Imagining" 21). While modernity envisioned "an assumed isomorphism between spaces/places and cultures/societies," globalisation propagates an unbounded "space of flows" (21). In an argument that seems to be steeped in new historicist thinking, Massey claims that modernity as well as globalisation have framed their respective conceptualisations in "stories which in fact annihilate their spatiality, where spatial differences lose any possibility of autonomy by their discursive arrangement into temporal sequence" (21). This argument becomes more lucid when considering the reciprocal interaction Massey assumes between the spatial default narrative of modernity and that of globalisation. Modernity understood space as carved up into different "envelopes of space-*time*" ("Places" 188, emphasis in original). These envelopes contained and defined places, which could not only be cartographed with precision, but which were also framed by certain historical narratives that determined their character and established social cohesion.

While these defining narratives exist to frame 'envelopes of space-time' in what is very much an inward perspective, there are also outward-directed narratives that serve to frame the relationships that exist between different places. The factors that account for uneven development across space are deliberately glossed over in this process: "That is to say differences which are truly spatial are interpreted as being differences in temporal development – differences in the stage of progress reached. Spatial differences are reconvened in a temporal sequence" (D. Massey "Imagining" 13). Hence, it becomes possible to think of places, or indeed of any spatially-defined community, in terms of progress or temporal development. This temporal ordering of the global sphere ultimately benefits Western hegemony, as "Western Europe is understood as being 'advanced', other parts of the world as 'some way behind' and yet others as 'backward'" (13). This biased perception of economically, politically or socially disadvantaged regions seems to effectively put the onus of development on those on the receiving end of inequality. The absorption of all difference under the sign of the temporal further results in a narrative straightjacket, as the homogenisation of time and space preclude the emergence of alternative narratives:

> Ironically, then, not only is this temporal structuring of the geography of modernity
> a repression of the spatial, it is also the repression of the possibility of other

temporalities […]. Indeed, it is in these terms – that is, about the existence of other temporalities and stories – that the argument against modernity's dominant formulation is usually posed. In other words, for different temporalities to co-exist, there must be space. (D. Massey, "Imagining" 14)

Massey is anxious to stress the relations of hegemonic power that come to bear on these narrative frames, the exposure of which was achieved by "the post-colonial project of spatialisation" (12). Post-colonial scholarship has undertaken a "globalisation of the story of modernity" (10) and has significantly revolutionised inherited assumptions about spatial relations in the process. Among its main achievements, Massey lists its challenge to "modernity [… as] the unfolding, internal story of Europe alone" (10). While Europe is discarded as the narrative pivot of the story of modernity, which now incorporates global perspectives, "'[c]olonisation' [… becomes] a crucial moment in the formation of the identity of 'the West' itself" (10-11). Concurrently, Massey argues, the premises of the story of modernity are called into question as its focus on Europe is revealed to have been conditioned by narrative bias (11). Importantly, the dominance of the European take on modernity also entailed the power-fuelled spread and normalisation of European ideas of space and place:

> It is through that Euro-centric discourse of the history of modernity that the (in fact particular and highly political) project of the generalisation across the globe of the nation-state form could be legitimated as progress, as 'natural.' Moreover, that project […] was just one aspect, though a particularly powerful one, of the development of a way of imagining 'cultures' and 'societies' more generally and in particular of conceptualising them as having a specific relation to space. (11)

This apparent homogenisation of space did not entail, not in today's period of unfettered capitalism, not in the age of colonisation, social equality across space. Rather, what it did entail was a "geography of power" (13).

In the Hettner Lecture, Massey returns to her preoccupation with the "power-geometry of time-space," a topic she has also examined in her earlier article "Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place" (1995). Departing from the postmodern occurrence of what Harvey has called "time-space compression" ("Power-Geometry" 59), she explains that "[t]ime-space compression is a term which refers to movement and communication across space. It is a phenomenon which implies the geographical stretching-out of social relations […] and to our experience of all this" (59-60). Challenging the view adopted by Jameson and Harvey, Massey argues that it is not capitalism and global cash-flow alone that predicate the continuity of this development. Among the most important factors that bear on "our understanding and our experience of space" she counts "ethnicity

and gender" (60) and, further, the socio-spatial distribution of power (61). Attempting a cursory summary of the physical and metaphorical forms of movement across space, she lists the connections created by the many means of communication, technology, media and logistics. Inherent in this map of all possible connections, she argues, is

> the power-geometry of time-space compression. For different social groups and different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. […] Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway-differentiated mobility: some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. ("Power-Geometry" 61)

Basically, Massey explains how, in the board game of global movement, the winning (or more powerful) party can influence the overall movement on the board. The move of a single playing piece can restrict the ability of the other pieces to move with the same degree of flexibility: "Differential mobility can weaken the leverage of the already weak. The time-space compression of some groups can undermine the power of others" (62). Even though dissatisfied with the simplified dichotomy according to which the postmodern experience of space-time compression has ushered in a concurrent and "reactionary" desire for the experience of place "as Being" in the Heideggerian sense (63), Massey confirms the abundance "of some problematical senses of place, from reactionary nationalisms to competitive localisms, to sanitized, introverted obsessions with 'heritage'" (64). This observation has lost none of its potency more than twenty years after its first publication. Only recently, such "problematical senses of place" were expressed in the political rhetoric surrounding Donald Trump's election campaign, the Brexit campaign as well as the Syrian refugee crisis. They also continue to bear on the ongoing negotiation of shared space in Northern Irish culture and politics. Indeed, it seems as if the need for "an adequately progressive sense of place" (D. Massey, "Power-Geometry" 64) has become ever more imperative. "The question is," Doreen Massey asks, "how to hold on to that notion of spatial difference, of uniqueness, even of rootedness if people want that, without it being reactionary" (64).

In an attempt to solve this impasse, Massey suggests four determinants that make it possible to think about places in a progressive manner. Her basic premise is one that decisively counters any unchanging definition of place and that envisages the identities of places as ever-emerging, provisional and until-further-notice. Places, she argues, are embedded in "particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations, social processes, experiences and understandings" that potentially exceed and transgress this place

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at which they come together (66). An appreciation of this embeddedness gives rise to an understanding of place that unyokes it from discursive strictures while acknowledging its diachronic constructedness:

> Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings. And this in turn allows a sense of place which is extra-verted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local. ("Power-Geometry" 66)

Four basic tenets follow from this form of imagining places: The most obvious of these is that places are procedural (66). Further, the focus on relationality questions the import of boundaries as definitional prerequisites (67) and denies the existence of "single, unique 'identities'" in favour of "internal differences and conflicts" (67). In this understanding, "the specificity of place" derives from the ways in which a place is socially and culturally connected to elsewhere, in a peculiar network, the interpretation of which is always also inflected by pre-existent, historical connections (68). This conceptualisation of place, Massey argues in her Hettner Lecture, insists on "the spatial as the sphere of the juxtaposition, or co-existence, of distinct narratives, as the product of power-filled social relations" which are, in turn, "embedded in complex, layered, histories. This is place as open, porous, hybrid – this is *place as meeting place*" ("Imagining" 21-22, emphasis in original).

3.1 The Transitional Text: Glenn Patterson's *Gull* (2016)

The Dunmurry site where John Zachary DeLorean, of DeLorean Motor Cars Limited, established his short-lived DMC-12 factory in 1978 was, as Frances McDonnell reports in the *Irish Times*, successfully resuscitated by a French manufacturer of automotive components in 1989 (n. pag.). By the end of 2015, this French manufacturer was in (apparently friendly) negotiations of a takeover proposed by a Canadian counterpart. Aptly enough, the article reporting the negotiations was published only a day before the 21st of October 2015, which "was the date the time travelling DeLorean whisked Marty McFly and Doc Brown to save the past in the future." With this reference to the *Back to the Future* trilogy, which would secure a lasting cult status for the gull-winged DMC-12, McDonnell ends her article on a happy note. She concludes that "Montupet's Belfast plant might not quite be able to manufacture a time machine yet but its workforce will be determined to show any new owner that it definitely has a bright future" (n. pag.).

For a short period of time, the future had also appeared bright for the Dunmurry site when the DeLorean enterprise, heavily subsidised by the British government, promised to bring employment and high-end engineering to economically deprived and conflict-ridden Northern Ireland. An unlikely prospect from the start, it lifted the spirits of the people in the area who were hoping against hope that their past, too, could be saved in the future: In a thrilling autobiographical account of his time with DMC Limited, Nick Sutton captures the initial disbelief, asking on their behalf,

> [w]ho was this man, John DeLorean, arriving like manna from heaven in an area of high unemployment where to dream was the territory of the unwise? His film-star looks, his beautiful wife and a car from the next century all seemed too good to be true. All this was coming to Dunmurry. Who could believe it? (137)

But to Dunmurry DeLorean did come, and on terms that were hard to reject: In only four years, between the start of the construction works in 1978 and the factory's untimely closure in 1982, the Callaghan and Thatcher administrations (the latter, admittedly, to a much lesser degree) had between them invested £77 million of public money in the company (Rutherford n. pag.; cf. Sutton 237).[73]

In her 1975 speech "Let me give you my vision", Margaret Thatcher, the then leader of the Conservative Party, had denounced the socialist economic creed with characteristic fervour. Arguing in favour of what she called "[o]ur capitalist system" (410), she boasted of the achievements of Western capitalism in general and of the British industry in particular. The economic vision she proposed was essentially a liberal one, based on privatisation, self-regulation and the individual's drive for self-improvement:

> Let me give you my vision: a man's right to work as he will, to spend what he earns, to own property, to have the State as servant and not as master – these are the British inheritance. They are the essence of a free country and on that freedom all our other freedoms depend.
>
> But we want a free economy, not only because it guarantees our liberties, but also because it is the best way of creating wealth and prosperity for the whole country […]. (Thatcher 412)

Thatcher's economic vision (praising enterprising men) was hardly amenable to Northern Ireland during the nineteen-seventies and -eighties. There was little paid work to be had, the acquisition of property was governed by sectarian rules, the British authorities were trying to contain the situation, and the definitions of "the British inheritance" and of "freedom"

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[73] Ó Gráda's calculation is higher still. He claims that "in the end the project cost the British taxpayer £85 million (or a phenomenal £10.000 per car produced)" (134).

themselves were fuel to the conflict. John DeLorean, however, was both Thatcher's best economic dream and worst nightmare moulded into one. He seemed to fit Thatcher's idealised vision of a new generation of captains of industry, whom she described as those "with special gifts who should also have their chance, because if the adventurers who strike out in new directions in science, technology, medicine, commerce and industry are hobbled, there can be no advance" (Thatcher 412). John De Lorean certainly did not lack the drive for self-improvement, nor capitalist industriousness, but his self-interested understanding of the "State as servant" clearly overshot the mark.

Luckily for John DeLorean, James Callaghan, the Labour Prime Minister of the time, had less of a problem than Thatcher with state-subsidized industry. In 1978, when the Labour administration brought the production of the DMC-12 to Northern Ireland, the region was ten years into the civil war and six years into the period known as Direct Rule from Westminster. The attempts at establishing a power-sharing executive under the Sunningdale Agreement had failed in 1974. What followed was a time marked by violence, both military and paramilitary, and destitution, both psychological and political. In his Nobel Lecture entitled "Crediting Poetry," Seamus Heaney summed up the predicament with characteristic clarity:

> [U]ntil the British government caved in to the strong-arm tactics of the Ulster loyalist workers after the Sunningdale Conference in 1974, a well-disposed mind could still hope to make sense of the circumstances […]. After 1974, however, for the twenty long years between then and the ceasefires of August 1994, such a hope proved impossible. The violence from below was then productive of nothing but a retaliatory violence from above, the dream of justice became subsumed into the callousness of reality, and people settled in to a quarter century of life-waste and spirit-waste, of hardening attitudes and narrowing possibilities […]. (455)

For the Callaghan administration, the investment in the DeLorean enterprise was part and parcel of an economy-based attempt to battle "the callousness of reality" and to pacify Northern Ireland (Sutton 6-7). Acknowledging the political force of this economic argument, Glenn Patterson describes the "the value of the factory to Belfast" from the point of view of Roy Mason, secretary of state for Northern Ireland in 1978:

> He told Labour prime minister James Callaghan that it could save soldiers' lives, because if you gave people jobs – 2,000 of them – you gave them hope, and if you gave them hope then maybe, just maybe, you gave them less cause to lend their support, however tacit, to the IRA. ("John DeLorean" n. pag.)

Whatever the political motivation, Northern Ireland's local economy was indeed in need of both industrial employment and foreign investment. As Ó Gráda summarises,

"[e]mployment in foreign-owned plants in the North dropped by half between 1973 and 1990, while the net decline in the South was mild" (134). He concedes that "[t]he Troubles probably account in part for the contrast," but also stresses the importance of "Southern tax incentives to multinationals" and the "decline in employment in British-owned plants specializing in more low-tech industries such as textiles and clothing" (134).[74] Concurrently, Kennedy, Giblin and Hugh find that "Northern Ireland's initially strong manufacturing base proved to be heavily concentrated in activities subject to structural decline" (98). For a fifteen-year period from 1970 onwards, they even register a disparate spread of unemployment in Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the UK (100). The DeLorean factory could only briefly alleviate this situation. It reached its full production capacity in 1981, but almost immediately experienced dire financial difficulty. It was officially placed under receivership early in the following year and closed down entirely in June (Rutherford n. pag.). The legacy of the DeLorean enterprise in Northern Ireland, at least in economic terms, leaves but little room for benignant interpretation. As Rutherford summarises, "[d]espite ambitious plans to create a car empire, just 9,000 DeLoreans were produced before the plant closed, taking with it 2,500 jobs and millions of pounds of public cash" (n. pag.).

While Robert Zemeckis's *Back to the Future* trilogy has doubtlessly contributed to the DMC-12's permanent lease in (pop-)cultural memory, the larger-than-life persona of its inventor must also be part of the equation. Before its relaunch in recent years, the DeLorean Museum used to dedicate an extensive web page to "The Man" himself and, mostly, to his professional biography.[75] The golden child of the US-American automotive engineering industry of the sixties and seventies, DeLorean made a breath-taking career within the General Motors family: During his time with their Pontiac division, he revolutionised the brand's stale image with the development of the Pontiac GTO, and later on, the Firebird. Following his successes at Pontiac, DeLorean was promoted to GM's Chevrolet division as General Manager, where he was responsible for the Chevrolet Vega, another successful

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[74] In *Gull*, the North's inability to attract foreign investment is linked to the atrocities of the civil war. The novel recounts the historical case of Grundig manager Thomas Niedermayer, who was abducted and killed by the IRA in 1973 and whose corpse was detected seven years later on a West Belfast rubbish dump. Referencing a 1987 paper by Canning, Moore and Rhodes, Kennedy, Giblin and Hugh state that "[t]he estimated impact of the violence on manufacturing employment was very severe, involving a loss of 40,000 jobs from 1971 to 1983" (112). Conceivably, the abolition of the Northern Irish Assembly in 1972 and the failure of the power-sharing executive in 1974 further questioned the credibility of Northern Ireland as a reliable industrial location (cf. Kennedy et al. 109).

[75] This web page was still online when I accessed it on 1 April 2016. The museum's homepage has since been redesigned and now gives precedence to the provision and collection of historical DMC documents and vehicle-related information.

model. DeLorean resigned from GM in 1973, having been "appointed to the position of vice president of car and truck production for the entire General Motors line" only the year before ("The Man" n. pag.). He went on to establish a company of his own, hoping to produce bespoke gull-winged sports car the design for which had been provided by the renowned Italian automotive designer Giorgetto Giugiaro (who also designed the first VW Golf). As his obituary in the *Guardian* put it,

> DeLorean assembled a team, formed a company, and the design became the vehicle that seduced the British government after DeLorean met with Northern Ireland officials in 1978. They signed an agreement 45 days later, DeLorean got $97m, and the government – and numerous others – spent over 20 years trying to retrieve it. (Reed n. pag.)

Far from a eulogy, the obituary goes to some lengths spelling out the diverse crimes (including "fraud, embezzlement, tax evasion or defaulted loans" and a "shocking record of dishonesty") that the "world-class conman" DeLorean was involved in (Reed n. pag.). Among the allegations of fraud connected to the DMC-12 enterprise in Northern Ireland figures DeLorean's Panamanian shelf company which allowed him to profit personally from the subsidies offered by the British government (Sutton 9).

One of the climaxes of this high tale of a biography features DeLorean's alleged implication in a $24 million drug deal involving the smuggling of cocaine (Reed n. pag.), which also features at the end of *Gull*. As the DeLorean Museum elaborates, he had been lured into the deal by an FBI informer while he was trying to bail out his Belfast factory in 1982 ("The Man" n. pag.). He was cleared of all the charges on grounds of entrapment in 1984, by which time the Dunmurry site had long been closed. In the same year, as Sutton chronicles in *The DeLorean Story*, the tools that had been used to press the DMC-12's stainless steel panels were finally put to other purposes. While some "were moved to various scrapyards in Europe," others were "bought by Emerald Fisheries, who took them to Kilkieran Bay in County Galway. There […] they sunk the tooling to the bottom of the seabed, using them as anchors to hold fish cages in place for salmon farming" (Sutton 235). There, they appear to lie hidden from view and alien to their original purpose to this day, as an apt metonymy for the erratic DeLorean enterprise, whose gull-winged product is for many so much more associated with US-American popular culture than with Northern Ireland and its recent history.

In Northern Ireland itself, however, the DMC-12 has left deep cultural traces, as two recent events illustrate. A team from the School of Electronics, Electrical Engineering and

Computer Science at Queen's University Belfast, for one, recently converted a DMC-12 into an electric car. Receiving much attention of the local media, the electric DMC-12 was presented to the public in October 2015, on "the exact date that Marty McFly and Doc Brown time-travelled to in the 1989 sequel Back to the Future II" ("Back to the Future" n. pag.). The leader of the team, Dr. Michael Laverty, explained that "[t]he DeLorean was the obvious choice because of its strong connection to Belfast and its starring role in the Back to the Future movies" and that it "represent[ed] everything about the enthusiasm for engineering and the future" (qtd. in "Back to the Future" n. pag.). In May 2016, the DeLorean Eurofest was held in much the same spirit, when approximately 250 DMC-12s were reunited in Belfast to mark the 35th anniversary of the start of production. On the occasion, their owners went to places associated with the cars' past (Dunmurry) and the city's future (Titanic quarter) (McCurry n. pag.). While the DeLorean cars as well as their inventor have achieved a lasting position in national and international cultural memory, by the time she became Prime Minister in 1979, Margaret Thatcher would supposedly have loved to forget that she had ever set eyes on either of them.

While the splendid and controversial character of John DeLorean alone could provide material enough for an epic tale, his bold (if never selfless) entrepreneurial move in conflict-ridden Northern Ireland makes offerings to different genres, including comedy, tragedy and political satire. In Glenn Patterson's novel *Gull*, published in 2016, the story acquires a subversive potential that is fuelled by the combined energy of all these three genres. From comedy, it takes its incredible verbal wit, light touch and good humour,[76] from tragedy, it takes the character flaw and, inevitably, its unhappy ending, while it invokes political satire by exposing the political power game played in Northern Ireland throughout the thirty years of conflict. *Gull* covers, with different degrees of emphasis, the ten years between 1972, DeLorean's final year with General Motors, and the scandalous demise of his own company, DMC Limited, in 1982. The narrative's main focus, however, lies firmly on the four-year period during which the Dunmurry factory site near Belfast was developed for and operated by DeLorean's company. As is Patterson's wont, in *Gull*, Belfast is the geographical anchor to which the different strings of the narrative are tightly fastened. Accounting for this point of narrative anchorage, Patterson recalls how his artistic interest in the story started out with a radio play. In the course of a conversation with a director who "mentioned DeLorean as a

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[76] In his review of *Gull* in the *Irish Times*, Eoin McNamee writes that "[t]he early production of the sports car is structured as an Ealing comedy" ("Gull" n. pag.).

possible subject [… he] began to understand that there were three DeLorean stories – DeLorean the man, DeLorean the car, DeLorean the factory – and that the only place where they all overlapped was Belfast" ("John DeLorean" n. pag.).

Despite its precise temporal and geographical setting, *Gull* is not *a priori* a Troubles-narrative. From US-American to French to (proposed) Canadian ownership, the historical factory site at Dunmurry has a considerable recent history of foreign investment and it had already been linked to the world of international trade for twenty years before the local sectarian strife found a formal end in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. In its fictionalised account of DMC Limited's Belfast venture, Patterson's novel draws on the international connections of the site (and, one might add, of its remains, scattered across Europe) to offset the social and political forces in a divided Northern Ireland that cannot be contained by submitting them to the one-size-fits-all paradigm of globalised capitalism. Rather than criticising the forces within Northern Ireland, *Gull* mounts its criticism at the higher level of both the British administration and at international trade and finance; the workings of both frame the events of the Troubles. To a large extent, national politics and international money determine the events in this theatre of war – and exact their toll on individual lives. Counterweighing the intricate international financial and economic network that its jet-setting owner is engaged in, the Dunmurry site functions as the spatial pivot of the novel, and as the point at which the biographical and geographical trajectories of the novel's protagonists converge.

By the same token, it acts as a site of crystallisation for the tensions between the British administration in Northern Ireland and local Northern Irish political culture. As the political and the capitalist discourses are shown to intersect at a single site, the systemic fault lines of both are highlighted. Set during the period of Direct Rule from Westminster, during which Northern Ireland was literally and metaphorically relegated to a liminal and often abject position in the political discourse, *Gull* highlights the lighthearted and often hilariously dysfunctional nature of the factory site which it uses as its spatial centre. This narrative centring subversively imitates the Ulsterisation policy that, modelled on the US-American policy of Vietnamization, had been implemented by the British government in the second half of the 1970s (Coogan 262; Dillon xxvii). As a security measure against the IRA's activity, Ulsterisation saw the British forces increasingly withdraw from Northern Ireland while the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment took over from them, following an approach that Coogan paraphrases as "letting the natives do the fighting" (262).

In *Gull*, the DeLorean sports car as an internationally recognised icon of US-American popular culture undergoes a process of narrative Ulsterisation in the course of which Northern Ireland's global connections are highlighted while the political discourse of containment is challenged. The ingenuity of the narrative process and the geographical setting in *Gull*, however, lies not least in the fact that the power regulating the factory site itself is politically uninterested; its only motivation is capitalist self-interest. The company's locational policy follows the rationale of globalised capitalism and is juxtaposed in interesting ways to both the containment policies of the British government and the identity politics of the local communities. The company's management, in fact, struggles against both and sheds light on the spatial politics at play in Northern Ireland in the process. What emerges from the interplay of these different forces and interests is a spatial constellation in which modern and postmodern elements are shown to coexist. While *Gull* is not a postmodern novel, neither formally nor structurally, it hints towards inherently postmodern concerns about the nature of capitalist consumerism. In his essay "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," Jameson describes postmodernism as

> not just another word for the description of a particular style. It is also […] a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order – what is often called modernization, post-industrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism. (3)

If understood as "a periodizing concept," the postmodern then does apply to both the temporal setting of *Gull*, and to the intermingled economic and cultural innovations that are shown to affect the fabric of society. As will be argued below, the DeLorean factory implicates its employees, at least briefly, in "the emergence of new type of social life" that is predicated on new aesthetic experiences and on the "new economic order" that the factory is part of. In the process, the convergence of the cultural and the commodified is shown to be spatially and temporally significant. Within the factory, postmodern consumer society is juxtaposed with society in the form of thoroughly spatialized and historicised communities. In the process, the relatively stable narrative paradigms that cluster around Northern Ireland are shaken up and give way to a portrayal of a region in a state of creative unrest.

Cars, Consumerism and Snapshots of the Past

In his seminal "Manifesto of Surrealism," André Breton eloquently laid out the role and remit of this new aesthetic movement that he propagated. Although in fact in pursuit of neither – and in propagation of a third –, Breton defends "the materialistic attitude" over "the realistic attitude" for being "more poetic" (n. pag.). Although it seems to stem from what he calls "a kind of monstrous pride" in the person inclined to it, "it is not incompatible with a certain nobility of thought" (n. pag.). Breton goes on to declare his disdain for "the realistic attitude," which he finds "hostile to any intellectual or moral advancement" and characterised by "mediocrity, hate, and dull conceit" (n. pag.). Apparently not a stranger to personal pride and vanity himself, John DeLorean, the aspiring automobile magnate, would seem to count as a proponent of the materialistic attitude. What he did lack was perhaps rather the good sense necessary to make his enterprise a success. While the Belfast location for his factory might have been chosen out of opportunistic and capitalist deliberations, the DeLorean project in Northern Ireland did have its poetic moments. These conflicting qualities of the DeLorean project as well as the many noble and ignoble impulses that motivate human behaviour are given their due consideration in *Gull*. Through its focus on the microcosm of the car factory, the novel also sheds some light on the human condition as revealed in adverse circumstances.

Covering the turbulent four years between 1978 and 1982, *Gull* fictionalises the rise and fall of the DMC-12 factory in Belfast and depicts the laborious (and often hilarious) enterprise of setting up a top-notch sports car factory with an unskilled workforce in a time of civil war. Unsurprisingly for a novel focussing on a snapshot of automotive history, *Gull* is very much concerned with mobility, and with the different guises mobility comes in – socially, spatially and sexually. While the equation of movement with freedom may appear clichéd, *Gull* problematises this old equation in startling ways. Dealing with access to mobility or the lack thereof, it scrutinises the conditions that allow individual agency to arise in whatever limited parameters. This scrutiny is put in place most prominently through the fictional protagonists Randall and Liz, who function jointly as the focalisers of this heterodiegetic narration. Randall, a disgraced Vietnam veteran and a divorced father of a little girl, leaves his broken home in the USA to become DeLorean's right-hand man in Northern Ireland. Liz, on the other hand, is a decently married stay-at-home mother of two, who seizes the first opportunity to apply to the new DeLorean factory in her native Belfast. The employment at the DeLorean factory challenges both Randall and Liz to acquire a new

spatial script that is familiar to the respective other. Randall has to learn to navigate the divisive geography of Northern Ireland, and Liz has to learn to navigate the capitalist geography of the DeLorean factory. For both of them, this spatial adaption brings with it a radical break with life as they knew it. *Gull* thus offers both an inside and an outside perspective on the rise and fall of the DeLorean enterprise in Northern Ireland that coincides with views of the company from the foreign management's (Randall's) and the local workforce's (Liz's) positions.

Importantly, the novel is not told through John DeLorean's eyes. While this predicates a certain amount of distance from his business demeanour and a vote of mistrust ingrained in the very fabric of the novel, it is also crucial in relation to questions of mobility. Patterson's DeLorean, who in real life "made very few overnight stays in Belfast" for fear of being harmed or abducted (Sutton 16),[77] is in Eoin McNamee's apt description "a high-octane outline, a glittering absence, always on the move" ("Gull" n. pag.). It is for two reasons, thus, that DeLorean disqualifies as narrative focaliser. *Gull* is a novel about life in Belfast – about encounters with the city and its citizens – and as such it includes experiences that DeLorean was unlikely and unwilling to have. DeLorean's excessive consumption of space and travel time, his life as a jet-setting, hail-fellow-well-met man of the circus, stands in stark contrast to the rigid socio-spatial positions of his Belfast workforce and to Randall's immersion in Northern Irish political culture, which rehearses an inherited "litany of dates" (Kirkland 5). What Massey calls "the power-geometry of space-time" ("Power-Geometry" 61) becomes uniquely tangible in this constellation. As a car magnate-to-be, DeLorean is literally and metaphorically one of the architects of this geometry. He is in the position to 'buy' his borderless existence at the cost of Randall's relative stasis and exposure to danger in Northern Ireland. More crucially, DeLorean's consumption of space throws into relief the ways in which his workforce live in local, social, cultural and economic constellations that link them to a global sphere of interaction while at the same time depriving them of any immediate access to this sphere.

In *Gull*, John DeLorean's arrival in Northern Ireland is depicted as a harbinger of hope (a word that reoccurs in the novel), which lifts the spirits of a populace that for a decade has been surrounded by grief and deprived of aspiration. Central to this sense of hopefulness is the innovative product that he introduces into the declining Northern Irish industry. Apart

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[77] Sutton points out that "[p]er capita, Ireland in the 1970s was second in the global kidnapping table, only beaten by Sicily" (16).

from the practical, economic implications such as employment and investment of foreign capital, it is the aesthetic appearance of the DMC-12 that seems indicative of future change. The newness of the car's design is incommensurate with the desperate landscape of troubled Belfast and the car's presence alone appears to challenge the parameters that determine the nature of this very landscape. Liz's decision to apply to the DeLorean factory (as, interestingly, the management's decision to employ her) is motivated by the fact that the design of the car and its appearance in this unlikely location is "the first thing that's made [her] smile in this bloody country for years" (*Gull* 90). At the job interview, she explains her involuntary urge to "smile", asking her astonished recruiters: "A sports car made in Belfast?' […] 'Whoever heard of that? And those doors, the way they lift up… The very first time I saw them on TV, I don't know, I couldn't help myself" (*Gull* 90). Indeed, compared to the British-produced second-hand car Liz and her husband Robert had acquired a few years earlier, the gull-winged DMC-12 looks like an up-lifting, otherworldly, even sublime contraption. Their family-suitable Morris Marina, manufactured by British Leyland, looks positively sensible but allegedly belongs to "some of the worst [cars] ever built" (Wheeler n. pag.).[78] However, for Liz and Robert their Morris Marina symbolises the escapism of movement even though their excursions – to e.g. Strangford Lough and the North Coast – take place within the tight confines of Northern Ireland (*Gull* 22). This spatial limitation hints at the policing of the Irish border and the control of cross-border movement during the civil war, but it also implies a limitation of the couple's mental map.

Crucially, their dream of a summer holiday on the Spanish coast – although thwarted by financial constraints – appears to be more feasible than a trip to the Republic of Ireland, the existence of which beyond the border and within driving distance is not even mentioned in this context (*Gull* 22). The political entity south of the Irish border has no bearing on the ways in which Liz and Robert relate to their geographical surroundings, which illustrates the absolute degree to which the border has shaped their understanding of any possible range of movement. Their geographical self-positioning in relation to Western Europe rather than the Republic of Ireland is poignantly echoed in Randall's initial response to Ireland as one

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[78]Interestingly, as Brian Wheeler explains, British Leyland and DMC Limited share a history of governmental Labour-subsidies to which Margaret Thatcher took unkindly when she came to power. In the 1970s, the Labour government saved British Leyland in order to prevent massive job-losses – and lost a huge amount of money in the process. This "experience did not put Labour off the car business, however. It ploughed millions into the DeLorean car plant […] The fact that the area had no history of building cars – let alone futuristic gull-wing sports cars – did not seem to deter ministers" (Wheeler n. pag.).

possible industrial location for the DeLorean factory. To him, "[i]t sounded far-fetched, farther fetched for some reason than Portugal or Spain" (*Gull* 27). The fact that both Spain and Portugal had only emerged from their respective dictatorships in the mid-seventies gives even more weight to this observation. It portrays Spain and Portugal as places where change and movement have become possible while at the same time it denies the Republic of Ireland these same qualities. Indeed, when the economically deprived Republic joined the EEC along with the UK in 1973, it "was regarded by most of the global community as an almost insignificant island, still struggling to finds its place in the world more than five decades after gaining independence from the UK" ("Ireland in the EU" n. pag.).

If "[t]here can be few more powerful symbols of national pride than a country's car industry" (Wheeler n. pag.), Liz's enthusiasm for the new car plant is easily understandable. The arrival of the DMC-12 in Northern Ireland seems to be one of the few economic reasons for national/regional pride since the building of the Titanic in 1912.[79] The traditional three columns of Northern Irish industry, shipbuilding, engineering and linen, had started to crumble as a result of the economic crisis of the 1930s, a process temporarily slowed down by the demand created by WWII (Kennedy et al. 106-8; Ó Gráda 130-31). The fall of Northern Ireland as an industrial powerhouse, however, had set in and was aggravated by the outbreak of sectarian violence and the concurrent reduction of foreign investment (Ó Gráda 131). Against a background of economic downturn and the unyielding entrenchment of sectarian war, the DMC-12 functions in *Gull* as a symbol of socio-economic progress and hope. The high-profile DeLorean sports car – with the associations it evokes of flight and fancy – represents the transmutability of space and time and functions as a condensed allegory of the individual's capacity to transform and transgress the circumstances of one's life. It sells the capitalist principle of self-improvement of which John DeLorean, a captain of industry born into a humble, working-class milieu in Detroit, would seem to be the ultimate embodiment. In *Gull*, Lotus-founder and self-made man Colin Chapman is lauded

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[79] The RMS Titanic, the Belfast-produced ship that struck an iceberg and sunk in 1912, remains another (and not uncontroversial) focal point in the Northern Irish cultural landscape. In 2012, two very different events commemorated the centenary of the disaster: the opening of the Titanic Belfast Museum and Owen McCafferty's play *Titanic (Scenes from the British Wreck Commissioner's Enquiry, 1912)*. Drew Linden, the protagonist of Patterson's *Fat Lad*, derides the famous liner as a "shrine to imperfection and ruin" (51). In the same vein, the Truth Commissioner in David Park's novel of the same name despises Northern Ireland as a country destined to fail. To him it is a place "where a ship that sank and an alcoholic footballer are considered holy icons" (38). Lucy Caldwell's short story "The Ally Ally O" features a joke that counters this narrative of place-specific failure: "Your dad says the joke about the *Titanic* is, She was fine when she left us" (10).

as the automobile pioneer of the previous generation, who has set an example for the DeLorean factory to follow:

> Lotus was not just a company, it was a lifestyle. There were Lotus umbrellas, Lotus jackets and hats, and who knew what else. James Bond had driven a Lotus in his most recent movie – a fact that DeLorean had repeated several times to Randall. 'That's what you would want: your car in a movie. Can you imagine the sales from that?' (*Gull* 93)

For reasons of profit, John DeLorean desires for his own company the kind of high-profile branding already achieved by Lotus. The Lotus Esprit that starred in the 1977 Bond movie *The Spy Who Loved Me* was famously usable both as a sports car in true Bondian style and as a convertible underwater vehicle. The fact that it had achieved lasting fame by way of its association with an icon of popular culture was highlighted in 2013, when the modified Lotus Esprit used in the film sold at an auction in London for no less than £550,000 (Child n. pag.). Due to his marketing prowess, DeLorean is acutely aware of the saleability of commodified identity markers that reflect the image of a luxury make such as Lotus and metonymically project it onto their owner. Commenting on the systemic interdependence between the two, Zygmunt Bauman posits that "[i]dentities, just like consumer goods, are to be appropriated and possessed, but only to be consumed [...]. As in the case of marketed consumer goods, consumption of an identity should not – must not – extinguish *the desire* for other, new and improved identities" (*Work* 29, emphasis mine). It is in the realm of desire, then, that the ingenuity of using feature films as marketing vessels is located. Quite apart from the actual quality and cost of a product, there is no causal connection between a brand and the associations it evokes. Branding creates always new desires and relies on the force of the imagination. The association of Lotus with the James Bond brand that DeLorean speaks of admiringly connects Lotus in the public imaginary with a fictional lifestyle of adventurous consumption that can never be fully achieved and that thus never ceases to fascinate the consumer.

The profitably close ties between culture industry and commodity culture have been exemplified by the long-standing liaison between the watch manufacturer Omega and the James Bond industry, the latest incarnation of which is the Omega Seamaster 300, reissued in a *Spectre* Limited Edition.[80] As Joachim Frenk has pointed out, the nature of the liaison between James Bond and commodity culture has changed over time: While Bond used to

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[80] The James Bond-section of the Omega homepage is as entertaining as it is informative. It informs us, for instance, that the first Omega watch to appear in a Bond movie was the Seamaster Diver M 300 in 1995, then sported by Pearce Brosnan in *GoldenEye* ("Planet Omega: James Bond" n. pag.).

consume the most exclusive and exquisite products only, his name has more recently been used to market affordable, mass-manufactured items such as perfumes and beauty products ("James Bond im Spiegel" n. pag.). Regardless of this development, Bond has remained the perfect, predatory consumer: Although he consumes alcohol, clothes, cars, spectacle, women in great quantities, his appetites can never be sustainably sated (cf. Bauman, *Work* 25). Yet, all these 'consumables' offer themselves to him in abundance. Bond is thus the perfect role model for a "consumer society" in which "[f]reedom to choose sets the stratification ladder […] and so also the frame in which its members, the consumers, inscribe their life aspirations – a frame that defines the direction of efforts towards self-improvement and encloses the image of a 'good life'" (Bauman, *Work* 31).

Unfortunately for DeLorean and, more significantly, for the Northern Irish economy, the DMC-12 did not share the Lotus Esprit's good fortune. It did, in fact, experience the reverse development. The blockbusting film *Back to the Future*, which gave a young Michael J. Fox the jump-start of his career, was only released in 1985 – by which time the DeLorean factory in Dunmurry had been bankrupt and closed for four years already. This is an instance of a peculiarly mistimed product placement that would be unlikely to occur in the marketing-driven present. It is no small irony that the film established the DMC-12 as an enduring cultural icon, while it came too late to save the car's manufacturer from economic collapse. By the time *Back to the Future* became a box-office success, the DMC-12 had somehow become both a futuristic time machine in the public imaginary and a flawed, costly product in Northern Irish economic history.

Commenting upon the DMC-12s incongruent cultural and spatial trajectories, Patterson, informed by his own Belfast perspective, makes a personal observation:

> I was aware that interest in the car did not die with the factory, that the DMC-12 retained a purchase on the public imagination – global imagination, even – thanks in large part to *Back to The Future*, which, Belfast not being over-endowed with cinemas in those high-explosive days, I didn't see until some time in the 1990s […]. Local lottery winners bought DeLoreans, but – again thanks to *BTTF* – in the eyes of the rest of the world the car had largely been translated back across the Atlantic. ("John DeLorean" n. pag.)

It is this "back-translation" of the DMC-12 to the United States that Patterson addresses, and redresses, in *Gull*. If the DMC-12 is so tightly bound up with the *Back to the Future* series that thinking of one necessarily evokes the other, then *Back to the Future* functions as a prominent intertext of *Gull* by way of cultural association. Apart from featuring the DMC-12 as an inanimate protagonist, *Back to the Future* and *Gull* share more common ground in

terms of a set of formal concerns that are, according to Frederic Jameson, peculiar to postmodernism. Elaborating on what he terms "the nostalgia mode" in film, Jameson explains his generic differentiation between the "historical film" and "pastiche" (7; 8). A filmic pastiche in the nostalgia mode involves not the accurate representation of a historical moment, but the sincere resuscitation of past genres and aesthetics. Jameson explains this using the example of *Star Wars* which, he claims, incorporates elements of "the Saturday afternoon serial of the Buck Rogers type" (8):

> Far from being a pointless satire of such dead forms, *Star Wars* satisfies a deep […] longing to experience them again: it is a complex object in which on some first level children and adolescents can take the adventure straight, while the adult public is able to gratify a deeper and more properly nostalgic desire to return to that older period and to live its strange old aesthetic artefacts through once again. This film is thus *metonymically* a historical or nostalgic film. [… I]t does not reinvent a picture of the past in its lived totality; rather, by reinventing the feel and shape of characteristic art objects of an older period (the serials), it seeks to reawaken a sense of the past associated with those objects. (8)

In the *Back to the Future* Doc Emmett Brown succeeds in turning the DMC-12 into a fully functional time machine that is effectively able to defy the interdependency of time and space. It catapults Doc's young friend Marty McFly thirty years back in time and allows him to revisit the past of the year 1955, not as a remembered but as a *lived* place. Modifying the events of the past, Marty changes the lives and the memories of his family in the present, turning them into more successful people who can be hopeful of the future. The central role played by the DeLorean time machine in terms of plot development predicates that the film has to be upfront about its aesthetic status as pastiche; the presence of the past is, after all, given away in the title. The film is steeped in a genre mix including science fiction writing, slapstick and the grotesque, some of which more properly pertain to earlier times. The many comic elements in *Back to the Future* do not diminish it as a nostalgic film in so far as it presents Marty's California home town temporarily submerged in the varnish of the nineteen-fifties. Travelling back into the past with Marty, the audience is able "to live its strange old aesthetic artefacts through once again" (Jameson 8), while the framing presence of the nineteen-eighties adds an extra visual pleasure. Aesthetically, the effect of this spatio-temporal juxtaposition is poignant, as the film juggles the different cultural and aesthetic codes alongside each other which iconically re-enact the film's theme of time-travel. *Back to the Future* can thus be perceived as "*metonymically* a […] nostalgic film," and the modified DeLorean itself stands in equally metonymic fashion for the dynamic reciprocity

of the relationship between the present and the past. Some of the time-travelling energy of *Back to the Future* and its central sports car has, mutatis mutandis, rubbed off on *Gull*.

Gull makes use of the ways in which the past is continuously recycled in the present in a different manner. It revisits the DeLorean endeavour as a part of Belfast's historical past, but it does so by weaving a web of fictional events and characters around it. In his Author's Note preceding the text proper, Patterson playfully professes to have "made this all up, apart from the bits you just couldn't" (*Gull* vii). Ironically, the novel is written from the vantage point of the time that Doc Brown urges Marty and his girlfriend to travel to in *Back to the Future II*, because Doc needs them to help their (as yet) future children in 2015. The temporal trajectory journeyed through with the help of the modified DMC-12 thus coincides with pre-, mid- and post-Troubles times in Northern Ireland and considerably exceeds the thirty year-period of civil war. *Gull* implicitly and cleverly draws on this extended view of the past which comes to bear with the invocation of the DeLorean car as an icon of popular culture created by the *Back to the Future* films.

By the same token, the DMC-12 brings to the novel its status as a metonymy for the dynamic intersection of places present, places past and places future. It highlights the fact that there is a causal connection to the temporal succession of events, but it deprives this connection of any predetermined quality: Nothing is fixed, everything is in flux. The relationship that *Gull* has to the past, however, is much more complicated than that of the films. Centring on the DeLorean factory in Belfast, it is outspoken about the historicity of its subject, but it is also a most peculiar form of postmodern pastiche by virtue of the DMC-12's prominent associations with popular culture. While it does by no means shy away from the harrowing historical events of Northern Ireland in the late seventies and early eighties, it is also, on a quite different, coexisting level, a nostalgic novel. To quote, again, Jameson, *Gull* "reinvent[s] the feel and shape of characteristic art objects of an older period" – the DMC-12 time machine – and thus "reawaken[s] a sense of the past associated with those objects" (8) – the 1980s. While this very sense of the past is, locally speaking, related to the experience of civil war, it is also, globally speaking, related to a cultural industry in which *Back to Future* was made, consumed and achieved international cult status.

Gull is thus able to draw on both the historical past and on (pop-)cultural memory, and it playfully projects these influences onto its own fictionalised version of the Northern Ireland of the early 1980s. What it achieves through the mobilisation of historical and filmic intertexts is an associational widening of the temporal and spatial constellations that frame its plot. In the context of a political conflict and a society that has been accused of fostering

an obsessive-compulsive relationship with the past, the creation of this cultural leeway is in itself a considerable achievement. Employing an essentially postmodern technique, *Gull* creates a narrative that is open to broad cultural associations and it thus illustrates Eamonn Hughes's claim that "Northern Ireland exists as both a ghetto and a postmodern entity" and mirrors his intention "to interrogate the idea of Northern Ireland as a place apart" ("Northern Ireland – Border Country" 3; 4). Patterson is not a writer to eschew the troublesome past; in his journalistic pieces, essays and novels, he has deliberately sought out the past and (as in his "Peace Procession," see Introduction) suggested often unconventional ways of thinking about and engaging with it. In *Gull*, he chooses an equally unconventional approach to the recent Northern Irish past, and one that customises the pastiche mode for its purposes.

Jameson argues that the pastiche is "an alarming and pathological symptom of a society that has become incapable of dealing with time and history" (10). *Gull*, however, uses the pastiche precisely to overcome the historical impasse that Northern Irish society finds itself in after the Good Friday Agreement. As a transitional society, it has struggled, and is struggling still, to find a way to collectively and productively engage with its recent past. By choosing the DeLorean factory as its narrative anchor, *Gull* confirms Jameson's claim that the "realism" present in nostalgic novels such as Doctorow's *Ragtime* and *Loon Lake* "springs from the shock of […] realising that […] we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past, which itself remains forever out of reach" (10). The DMC-12 provides exactly such a pop image by way of which truly new approaches to the past becomes possible. In order to 'become *capable* of dealing with time and history' (adapting Jameson's phrase), Patterson applies the pastiche to approach the all-too-present, all-too-divisive past at one remove. A rare non-partisan cultural icon, the DMC-12 offers a unifying lens through which to look at Northern Ireland and, particularly, at Belfast during the civil war. What Jameson identifies as a serious cultural deficit is thus turned into a historical resource in Patterson's novel.

The Factory Site and Sites of Struggle

Setting off the principles of the current "consumer society" against the older strictures of "work ethic," Bauman suggests that

> [r]ising savings and shrinking credit purchases are bad news; the swelling of consumer credit is welcomed as the sure sign of 'things moving in the right direction'.

[…] A consumer society is a society of credit cards, not saving books. It is a 'now' society. A *wanting society*, not a *waiting society*." (*Work* 31, emphasis mine).

In *Gull*, these two fundamental if simplified societal categorisations are shown to be juxtaposed within the DeLorean factory. The Northern Irish workforce employed at Dunmurry can be regarded as members of a "waiting society," not least because they find themselves in the transitional phase of what Kirkland, writing in the mid-nineties, has termed the "interregnum" (7). Caught in a vicious cycle of ten years of violence, some of the workers have experienced long-term unemployment while others – most prominently Liz – are trapped in unyielding socio-spatial positions that are not of their own devising. Having waited for progress in different social and political guises, they have now become part of a production process that caters to a fast-paced, money-swamped foreign economy. The cars produced at Dunmurry are exclusively destined for the US-American market which becomes exploitable precisely by virtue of its embeddedness in a "wanting society." There, individual demand must be met immediately.

Even before a site for the new factory has been found, DeLorean takes Randall on a promotional tour along the US-American West Coast, trying to enlist car dealers for the DeLorean "dealers' network" (*Gull* 30). In the process, they learn that a substantial number of would-be DeLorean car owners have already been demanding the possibility "to make a down-payment – pay the whole $12,000 asking price in advance, some of them" (32) to secure future ownership. The assumption governing the US-market that the free availability of resources guarantees a right to immediate consumption is metaphorically mirrored in DeLorean and Randall "*eating up* hundreds and hundreds of miles of Californian highway" (31, emphasis mine)[81] in the course of their promotion tour. Access to petrol results in the consumption of space – not in the sense that the covered highway "cease[s] to exist" but in that it "forfeit[s its] capacity to satisfy [their] needs and wishes […] and so becomes unfit for consumption" (Bauman, *Work* 23). The highway has to yield the desired outcome immediately, simply because it cannot be travelled again in order to recruit future dealers.

Juxtaposed to the depictions of the US as the epitomic "wanting society" built on the immediate gratification of individual needs, the inclusion in *Gull* of the 1981 republican hunger strike in Maze prison highlights the desperate violence of self-starvation as a radical refusal to consume. The hunger strike was intended as a measure to press the five main demands of the republican prisoners, the achievement of which would have amounted to the

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[81] The verb to eat is one of the verbs used by Bauman when he insists that "[t]o consume also means to destroy. [… T]he consumed things cease to exist, literally or spiritually" (*Work* 23).

recognition of their political status, something ruled out categorically by the British government. The refusal to eat, to consume the basic resource of food, over a prolonged period of time recasts waiting as an intense period of determination and anxiety, not as one of privileged *ennui*. In its unyielding approach, the Thatcher administration was prepared to wait out the death of ten hunger strikers rather than meet their demands. The situation of the hunger strikers, spatially confined and deprived of self-determination, is as much a symptom of the deficient administration of Northern Ireland during the civil war as it juxtaposes the excesses of the capitalist elite to which John DeLorean belongs. Refusing to consume, the hunger strikers in the end become collateral objects of consumption.

Gull's capability of dealing with the controversial past becomes most visible in its inclusion of the harrowing events of the 1981 republican hunger strike in Maze prison. The first and most prominent of the ten hunger strikers who died between March and October 1981 was Bobby Sands, who was elected while on hunger strike and died as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone.[82] Returning to a theme he had also explored in *Fat Lad*, there focussing on fictional events evolving around the deaths of Kevin Lynch and Kieran Doherty, Patterson stresses the social impact of the hunger strikers' deaths. These were not events that could be contained within the prison's walls, and they deeply reverberated throughout society. The extent to which they further disturbed the situation at large can be deducted from the fact that a single day after Sands's death, "[t]he British government sent 600 extra British troops into Northern Ireland" ("The Hunger Strike of 1981 – Chronology" n. pag.). The fact that in *Gull* the events of the hunger strike offer only a historical backdrop against which the events within the DMC Limited's factory evolve does not take away from the seriousness of the engagement. Rather, it illustrates the disparate social, political and economic interests and ideologies that are variously shown to clash and overlap at the factory site. The factory's production process, which works according to a spatio-temporal script that is opposed to the lie of the land that surrounds it, gives its employees a sense of who they could be in a different set of socio-political conditions. It is in this sense that the factory functions briefly and haphazardly as a heterotopia of respite.[83]

The direct juxtaposition of the relative orderliness of the factory to the mayhem beyond its gates throws into relief the working and living conditions in a situation of civil

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[82] For a detailed account of the developments of the hunger strike, see "The Hunger Strike of 1981 – A Chronology of Main Events" provided by The Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN).

[83] The concept of the heterotopia was put forward by Michel Foucault in his essay "Of Other Spaces." In it, Foucault differentiates between "heterotopias of crisis" and "heterotopias of deviation" (25), none of which seems to be entirely applicable in the present case.

war. It illustrates the constriction of individual lives in so far as factory work, despite the tight temporal regime it requires, is presented and perceived as a period of respite. The work routine requires the employees to engage in a kind of performance that temporarily frees them from their rigid social positions. In his analysis of the nineteenth-century industrial work ethic, Bauman posits that "[t]he work ethic was, basically, about the surrender of freedom" (*Work* 7). In *Gull*, however, an inversion of this work ethic takes place which is possible precisely because of social rules specific to Northern Ireland as a divided society. Social life outside the factory walls is strictly governed by divergent but overlapping "disciplinary regimes" (Foucault, "Body/Power" 58) that impose their divisive socio-spatial scripts upon the populace. The management outwardly acknowledge this ineluctable social division by providing two different entrance gates, one for workers from the Catholic estate of Twinbrook, one for those from the Protestant estate of Seymour Hill. The production processes inside the factory, however, require the acquisition of a different socio-spatial script that follows exclusively economic interests. As a result, subject-positions that are irreconcilable outside of the factory walls become permeable during the production process – workers as well as their positions in the production line have to be freely moveable (see *Gull* 102). Economic interest thus curiously coincides with heightened social flexibility and individual freedom.

The beginning of the novel finds Liz immobilised in several ways – socially, spatially, financially and also in terms of gender roles. Seriously restricted by a sectarian society that is ultimately structured along patriarchal lines, Liz's rebellion against this social order finds an outlet when she applies for, and is eventually granted, a job at the DeLorean factory. Her husband Robert, who emphatically rejects the idea of her contributing to the family budget, belittles her abilities to be anything other than a mother (*Gull* 89). Seeking to assert his role and status as head of the family, he also stresses the potential violence that the job will expose her to (88). Robert's is basically a spatial argument in which he highlights the dangers of the factory location in West Belfast referencing the abhorrent murder of Grundig manager Thomas Niedermayer. Liz foresees Robert's argumentative chain involving her brother Pete who was killed in a misguided paramilitary attack, which implies the regularity with which he "us[es] her brother's memory against her" (88). Exploiting her brother's murder for his own ends, he turns it into a pretext to constrain and control Liz's movements. In a strategy that Liz both recognises and resents, Robert displays a prejudiced as well as a patriarchal frame of mind. In his chain of arguments, the civil war enters into an

uncanny marriage with patriarchal society. The atrocities of the former confirm and reinforce the laws of the latter.[84]

Against this background, it comes as a cultural shock to Liz when she realises that the (near) equality of women at DMC Limited is reflected – literally inbuilt – in the architecture of the DeLorean factory. This, she most prominently detects in the fact that there is a sufficient number of ladies' toilets to effortlessly accommodate the female workforce. Liz realises that "[h]er and all the other women, they were not here by chance but by right, on equal footing" (*Gull* 110). The expression of social privilege and prejudice in spatial terms is, of course, omnipresent and manifold, but it acquires a special import in the Northern Irish context where it will be probed for sectarian motives. For this reason, the use of the word 'rights' here is significant. The civil rights marches in the late 1960s were not least prompted by institutionalised discrimination in the areas of housing and employment, both of which were perceptible in spatial terms. Liz's genuine surprise at the spatial arrangements within the factory is a reminder of the well-known observation that civil rights and equal rights are not necessarily synonymous. The factory's layout does not privilege male needs over female ones, and it displays equal respect for male and female work capacities. The factory architecture thus compounds the otherness of the factory site opposite the socio-spatial order that surrounds it.

Liz is interested in the gender politics of the place rather than in its identity politics. The observation relating to the sanitary facilities is directly preceded by Liz realising that her direct co-workers, TC and Anto, are members of the Catholic community, a nominal fact that does not seem to influence their personal relationship any more than gender. The non-sectarian character of the factory as represented in *Gull* finds confirmation in Sutton's highly readable account of *The DeLorean Story*. He explains that "[a]t the start of their employment each new employee was supplied with a brochure which outlined the DeLorean programme" (138). Among other, more technical and procedural information, this brochure proactively pronounced the factory a strictly non-sectarian workplace. In this regard, the progressive policy at DMC was at odds with the practices common with other local employers:

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[84] Cf. Caroline Magennis who argues a similar point with regard to the inferior status of women in Northern Irish sectarian society. She writes that "[t]he idea of 'defending' women and children is prominent in both the discourses of Republicanism and Loyalism" (10) and adduces a quote from Rosemary Sales who has posited that "[s]ectarianism, and the construction of political and social life around community loyalties, has been a powerful force in maintaining women's subordination" (qtd. in Magennis 10).

> Some of the larger manufacturing concerns in Belfast allowed national flags, sectarian football shirts, religious images and other provocative material to be shown or worn in the workplace, but the DeLorean management insisted that these things had no place in their factory. […] No calendars or posters of any sort adorned the offices or factory walls; only material supplied by the company was permitted. (138)

On two accounts, gender and national identity, Liz's own progressive politics (as measured by the standards of the society she lives in) are thus mirrored in the factory's policies. Working at the factory allows her to experience a degree of freedom of self-expression that she has been unaccustomed to, and she is thus unwilling to return to her life-as-was upon the factory's closure. On the afternoon of the day the factory closes, Liz decides to leave the tight confines of her family life and, most likely, Northern Ireland. Taking nothing with her but her own clothes, she decides to put her overalls in the suitcase as well, "DMC crest up. You had to have something to remind you" (*Gull* 2). Liz's leaving is not so much a flight as a deliberate decision in favour of self-determination. What she chooses to be reminded of by the DMC crest is the existence of circumstances that allow for individual choice unconstrained by sexual or sectarian prejudice.

Likewise, Liz's co-workers are shown to enjoy their social freedom within the factory walls, even if it is a compromised freedom that lies only in having a space to perform an estimable task and a respectable identity. The factory provides the workers with the space to enact a distinct social persona – that of a DeLorean worker. As Patterson pointed out during a literary event, for a substantial number of DeLorean workers this was the only employment they ever held and as such it was a unique source of dignity and identification. Those he had spoken to seemed to agree that it "was the best thing they had ever done in their lives."[85] Concurrently, the performance of their tasks is in *Gull* portrayed as something the workers take pride in, and the car they produce in the face of adverse circumstances functions both as a carrier of hope and as a site of identification. Bauman may contend that "the advent of the factory system […] spelled the collapse of the love affair between the craftsman and his work" (*Work* 6-7), but in *Gull* there is clearly a touch of romance between the DeLorean workers and their finished product. They regard the cars they have assembled as representations not only of their skills but of how they are in the world, both individually and collectively. When the first consignment of cars is due to leave for the USA, Anto and

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[85] Patterson shared these thoughts during the "Scribes at the Duncairn" event in August 2016, which was part of the annual Féile an Phobail in Belfast (Patterson, Higgins and King n. pag.). He also mentioned that DeLorean was exceptional in that male and female workers were paid the same wages. Concerning these points also see Patterson, "John DeLorean" (n. pag.).

his colleagues insist on washing the cars prior to shipping, arguing that they "[c]an't have those Americans thinking we're all a load of dirt birds" (*Gull* 183). The all-encompassing use of the pronoun 'we' hints towards a group mentality that surpasses the sectarian divide and that is grounded in the joint production effort which unites them. Like the news items coming out of Northern Ireland, the cars themselves become a readable message, and one that will have to provide positive leverage against stories of division, desperation and violence.

In social terms, the maxim of productivity that governs the factory is a two-edged sword. Facing dire difficulties in meeting the agreed commencement date for production, the management decide that each worker must be trained to be able to replace "any other, *all* the others, and finish the cars single-handed" (*Gull* 102), and a special training programme is implemented to this end. The workforce receive instructional walks through the entire production process during which every single task along the production line is laid out in detail. In the course of these walks, the workers acquire a special spatial script for the navigation of the factory, which is incommensurate with the spatial scripts that guide them through the divisive geography of the society in which they live. The instructional walks allow at least theoretically for the interchangeability of socio-spatial positions within the production line. Regardless of political affiliation and religious denomination, each worker is empowered and encouraged to assume another person's position with a degree of flexibility that is unthinkable in Northern Irish society at large. The capitalist logic underpinning the management's structural approach does not take away from the degree of social flexibility that it affords. The free interchangeability of workers reduces the import of the individual worker within the production process and makes each of them potentially redundant. The instructional walks are, at first glance, reminiscent of nineteenth-century industrial production where "blind drill aimed at habitualizing the workers to an unthinking obedience" would, in the end, obliterate "the other, now useless, 'human parts' – human interests and ambitions" (Bauman, *Work* 7). The damaging effect of this approach is, however, turned on its head in the context of a sectarian society, where the reduction of individual identity as part of working life amounts to an unburdening from social debt and communal expectation. While social flexibility may thus be won at the price of dispensable individual subject positions, it offers at the same time a temporary respite from politically motivated "disciplinary régimes" (Foucault, "Body/Power" 58).

Apart from the workers' performance as measured by industrial output, the manufacturing process both depends on and gives rise to a performance of a different kind

that is independent of the execution of the tasks at hand. The social flexibility gained within the factory walls is commensurate with a theatrical performance equally carried by each of the workers. In one of the most poignant episodes in the book, a Belfast worker fills in for his US-American supervisor and guides his co-workers through the last of the many instructional walks. In his rehearsal of the different manufacturing stages – of the different socio-spatial positions that can be assumed in the production process – he engages in a jokingly Americanised "performance" that is at the end even "applauded" by the workforce (*Gull* 139). Not only is the language used to frame the episode explicit about the theatricality of the situation. The workers – Liz in this case – themselves are also shown to be acutely aware of it: "She missed the name of the guy who was doing it today, but he was one of their own, stepping up, *acting* up, half taking the pee out of it, half hiding behind the Americans' manner of speaking" (137, emphasis in original). Strikingly, the social hierarchy of the factory divides along the lines of nationality, with management positions customarily held by US-Americans. The Northern Irish workforce form a community in which all members are accorded equal status. Breaking from this fold requires the adoption of a new guise and linguistic code that mark the temporary nature of the transition. The elements of mockery in the performance are not intended to ridicule the management so much as they illustrate the performer's allegiance with the workforce.

The worker's role-playing thus serves initially as an ironical acknowledgement of his own place within the production process, and it quickly elicits the participation of his fellow workers. It turns into a collectively enacted performance that the designated worker only leads through:

> [… 'T]hen the car is placed on the rolling road, its brakes tested, its headlines aligned, and off on out the doors it goes – to what is no concern of yours. In fact, from the moment you walk through that factory gate in the morning, whichever gate it is you walk through, you don't have to worry about anything…'
>
> The chorus now became a sing-song. This was an old favourite: 'No green, no white, no orange, no red, no white, no blue. We are the independent state of DeLorean, our wages are DeLorean wages, our conditions are DeLorean conditions.'
>
> The guide held up one finger, straight as a baton. 'As long as you keep getting fibreglass bodies in one end of this building and DeLorean motor cars out the other.' (*Gull* 138-39)

In the course of his performance, the guide highlights the otherness of the factory site in relation to its surroundings. In his account, the factory site resolves the social division governing the navigation of the space outside, which he references by virtue of the different gates. The production line requires a reliable collective effort in which all tasks are accorded

equal worth. It provides a dependable, repetitive routine that does not allow for uncertainty or wilfulness. The comfort and pleasure the workers derive from the perfect knowledge of this process is playfully reflected in the collective performance of the "sing-song" that ensues. The noun phrases "sing-song" and "old favourite" highlight the entertainment character of the workers' collective performance. In this striking combination, these noun phrases are reminiscent of the kind of popular entertainment that in the nineteenth century was sought in venues such as music halls. In this instance, the factory site becomes clearly a place of respite and escapism from the everyday.

In their performance, the workers highlight the absolute degree to which they identify with the alternative form of citizenship provided by the DeLorean factory – they do not inhabit but they "*are* the independent state of DeLorean" (*Gull* 139, emphasis mine). It appears, as such, to be a place of their own making, and one whose existence depends on the contribution of every single constituent. The extent to which the factory qualifies as a heterotopia of respite is here alluded to in the word "independent." The respite that DeLorean affords resides in the temporary shedding of the garments of national identity and the code of conduct they require. Wedged in between Catholic and Protestant housing estates, recruiting workers from both communities and ultimately answerable to the foreign rules of US-capitalism, the factory is unplaceable on the map of sectarian geography and independent from the dominant lie of the land. The wages the workers receive are "DeLorean wages" and are hence not traceable to a source affiliated with either political position. The fact that DeLorean is an intermediary disbursing the British state's money to them is, of course, clouded by this narrative.[86] Following a capitalist set of rules, however, the workers' ownership of the "state of DeLorean" is dependent upon their efficiency in the production line. Citizenship is granted and maintained through individual effort and is thus a function of agency and empowerment. Both types of performance, industrial and theatrical, are shown to intersect at the DeLorean factory. Industrial performance secures access to a space of theatrical performance, where the workers can temporarily enact a social persona that is unfettered by the demands of the sectarian society they live in.

True to historical events, however, the fictional "independent state of DeLorean" is unable to maintain its capitalist veneer of political aloofness against the harrowing events of

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[86] The importance of this point becomes obvious when considering the fact that, especially during the Troubles, places of employment tended to be either Catholic or Protestant. Brian Walker even points out that after partition, "many Catholic teachers refused to recognise the new Northern Ireland ministry of education and from late February 1922 they received their salaries from Dublin" (Walker 51).

the 1981 republican Hunger Strike in HM's Prison Maze (see Patterson "John DeLorean" n. pag.). In *Gull* as in real life, the Hunger Strike as an auto-aggressive rebellion against the British Ulsterisation policy succeeds in sending shockwaves through a society well used to shocking developments. In the process, the marriage of capitalism, equality and hopefulness that DMC Limited promised to bring to Northern Ireland is revealed to have been based on politically uninformed premises from the beginning. The main incentive for the huge payments given to DeLorean is the view of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that the factory might prevent further deaths among the armed forces (*Gull* 53; cf. Patterson, "John DeLorean" n. pag.). He successfully quells the Prime Minister's initial disbelief by arguing that the DMC-12 is "no ordinary motor car, and if it gives people jobs, *hope*, who knows what else it might set in motion" (53). These political interests are recalled later in the novel when Randall wakes to find the factory besieged following the death of hunger striker Bobby Sands. While enraged members of the nationalist community demonstrate outside the Twinbrook gate, British soldiers – called in by Randall – enter the factory premises through the Seymour Hill gate. Their prompt arrival is attributed by Randall to the substantial subsidies that the DeLorean factory has been receiving (201). Speaking to the captain of the platoon, a young, well-educated, upper-class man, Randall realises that "[t]hese were the men the DMC-12 was supposed to be going to save" (201). While Randall is sympathetic to the captain and his men, the entanglement of military power, political allegiance and the forces of capitalism is nonetheless effectively highlighted. Implied in the succession of events is a sense that the British elites, following a cynically capitalist strategy, look after their own human and financial resources, to which realm Northern Ireland clearly does not belong regardless of any nominal entitlements.

The situation, however, is marked as a two-edged sword. By the same token that the DMC-12 is allegedly helping to save the British soldiers, the soldiers are employed to save the factory and, importantly, the British state's investment. In the process, they are exposed to imminent danger from the nationalist crowd, on behalf of a system that is supposed to be concerned about their safety. An abstract, patronising notion of salvation is thus juxtaposed to a concrete, physical experience of violence. The political predicament is compounded by the fact that the British platoon's intervention, which is almost benevolent on the occasion, cannot but aggravate the situation on the ground. Speaking to one of the men at the Twinbrook gate, Randall learns that the Catholic members of the factory's workforce are effectively there to prevent other members of their community from causing damage to the factory which to them is "neutral" ground and not to be involved in the political struggle

(*Gull* 202). Its political neutrality, the worker explains, is being jeopardised by the presence of the British army on the premises. The ritualised rules of the game predicate the necessary perception of the army as a partisan force, the truth of which is mirrored spatially in the fact that the platoon enters the factory by way of the Protestant estate. What the worker fails to recognise, however, is that the factory, like the state it finds itself in, owes its very existence to British political involvement. As such, British political and capitalist interests are ultimately in-built in the foundations of the factory, which effectively questions any performance of state-like independence.

For Randall, too, the discontinuities inherent in the situation are revealed in the course of the incident. It triggers the reiteration of Randall's past experience of war, but not quite in the way DeLorean had imagined. Randall, who was one of the first of DeLorean's employees in Belfast, is in the eyes of his employer uniquely qualified to handle situations such as this due to his time of service in Vietnam. From the safe distance of the US, DeLorean dismisses Randall's panic, informing him: "I figured if anyone knew what to do in a situation like this it would be you" (200). Underpinning DeLorean's answer is the equation of one theatre of war with another, the presumption that they all work according to the same pattern and therefore need not be understood on their own terms. DeLorean's casual cynicism mirrors the adoption by the British of the Vietnamisation approach which served as blueprint for their own Ulsterisation policy. It further illustrates DeLorean's own approach to Ulster and his reluctance to engage with its affairs beyond bedazzling the press and squeezing the British purse. The assumed interchangeability of one theatre of war for another is unintentionally questioned by Randall, who does not adapt easily to Northern Ireland. His experience of Vietnam has not equipped him with a socio-spatial script for the navigation of Northern Ireland. Randall cannot cope with the situation at hand and his courage and nerves fail him now as they did then. Countering DeLorean's and the government's patronising approach to Northern Ireland, Randall's experience illustrates that the only interchangeable features of theatres of war are human reactions such as terror and fear.

The Limits of Mobility: Points of Entry, Points of Exit

Gull's concern with the intersection of globalised capitalism and mobility is very much mirrored in the depiction of John DeLorean himself. For DeLorean, the consumption of space is both a business guarantee and a way of life. The success of his company depends on the willingness of US citizens to be automotive consumers of space. As Marc Augé

argues, the consumption of space underlies the same capitalist "cosmology" as all other consumption: By way of diverse media outlets, "all space consumers" are subjected to a propaganda that firstly presents consumption as the default paradigm and that secondly "produces effects of recognition" for "multinational brand names" around the globe (85-86). In the novel, John DeLorean is cast as the ultimate consumer of space: The epitome of reckless, neo-liberal industriousness, he is more often than not 'unplaceable' and available only on his own terms.[87] Dividing his time between airports, passenger lounges, hotel lobbies, aircrafts and cars, he leads an elusive and positively unbounded life. His fast-paced, excessive consumption of space befits the logic of what Bauman has called a "wanting society" (*Work* 31) and it exemplifies the maxims of US capitalism by which he lives.

Personally and professionally, DeLorean's spatial habits thus stand in marked contrast to the rigidly defined socio-spatial positions of his Belfast employees. These two experiences of space that *Gull* opposes to each other – one belonging to a "wanting society" and the other to a "waiting society" (Bauman, *Work* 31) – mirror the differentiation that Augé has suggested between "non-place" and "anthropological place." In the introduction to the second edition of *Non-Places*, he explains his proposition while acknowledging its non-exhaustive nature:

> I have defined an 'anthropological place' as any space in which inscriptions of the social bond (for example, places where strict rules of residence are imposed on everyone) or collective history (for example, places of worship) can be seen. […] That does not mean, however, that either place or non-place exist in the absolute sense of the term. The place/non-place pairing is an instrument for measuring the degree of sociality and symbolization of a given space. (viii)

Opposed to an anthropological understanding of place as characterised by the social and cultural interactions that it routinely and ritually brings together, a non-place is detached from any such interaction that could assign to it a recognisable and enduring interpretation: "[A] space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or connected with identity will be a non-place" (Augé 63). Predominantly related to transit and movement, non-places defy the coherent and socially situated experience of time and place. Proposing that they "are the real measure of our time," Augé counts among them "all the air, rail and motorway routes, the mobile cabins called 'means of transport' [… and] the airports and railway stations" (64). Not only does social interaction, as in the case of an airport, customarily pass

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[87] While DeLorean lacks the air of unredeemable evil exuded by Monsieur Deauville in Claire Kilroy's thrilling post-recession novel *The Devil I Know*, his reckless business demeanour and elusive behaviour towards Randall hint towards a spiritual brotherhood between the men.

through non-places. They can equally, as in the case of cars, move through social space without being allocated a permanent location.

In the heated political climate created by the Hunger Strike and the British government's cynical stance towards it, the DMC-12 itself, a non-place *par excellence*, is finally sucked into the identity politics of Northern Ireland. Other than the factory site, however, the high-end sports car is claimed as a site of contention from below, as the workers begin to etch tokens of their respective political convictions into the different automotive components they work with. Working alongside two Catholic colleagues who cover for each other, it takes Liz a while to realise what Anto and TC are doing in her absence:

> 'What the hell is that?'
>
> 'A hunger strike candle,' Anto said matter-of-factly.
>
> 'What's it doing under *our* seat well?' TC opened his mouth to say something, but the penny for Liz had already dropped. 'Wait, are there other cars with "hunger strike candles" hidden in the seat wells too? […]'
>
> 'No.' TC finally got to speak. 'Some of them have the candles behind the dashboard and some of them, you know, *depending on the section* have Celtic or Rangers or No Pope Here.' (*Gull* 239, emphasis mine)

From interviews with former DeLorean workers, Patterson knows that etchings such as these were indeed carried out on "[e]very second car" in the historical DeLorean factory ("John DeLorean" n. pag.). In the novel, they help to expose the theatrical character of the earlier collective performance of unity and independence. The factory space provides the workers only superficially with an alternative social persona that can ultimately not withstand the increasing political pressure from outside. Underneath the non-partisan veneer of the factory there remains the categorisation of the workforce into socio-political "sections," and the interchangeability of socio-spatial positions along the production line is in effect no more than a performance. In this instance, the divisive political discourse is again marked out as a predominantly male one, with Liz alone insisting on "our seat well" as a space underlying the non-sectarian conditions of the factory. While the DMC-12 retains its strong emotional significance for the workers, the ways in which they identify with it undergo a significant change. Instead of using it as a rare means of individual self-expression, the workers begin to 'collectify' the DMC-12 and mark it out as yet another signifier in the discursive contestation of national identity.

The rationality of this contribution to the political discourse is questioned by Liz who points out that these signs of belonging (which are pertinent to anthropological place) will be invisible once the car is completed (and becomes a fully-fledged non-place). Anto insists

on the significance of the sheer existence of the sign: "You can't build a sports car […] in the middle of all this, and not expect it to carry some sort of a mark" (*Gull* 240). Visible or not, the etchings testify to the conditions of life in Northern Ireland during the Troubles and insist at the same time that something worthwhile and hopeful can emerge from them. The car bearing the sign is bound up with the workers' lives while at the same time transcending the circumstances of its making. Similar to a time capsule, the car "store[s] for posterity a selection of objects thought to be representative of a particular moment in time" ("time capsule" n. pag.). It thus expresses the workers' strong sense of history and their belief in the historical relevance of the time and place they live in.

On another reading, and one more in line with the conceptualisation of non-places, the DMC-12 becomes a medium that successfully and simultaneously transposes two different modes of experiencing time and space. Since the DMC-12 is exclusively produced for the US-American market, the etching of the cars embodies the workers' collective wish for Northern Ireland to be politically acknowledged elsewhere, on its own terms, and in a medium other than hopeless and repetitive news items. Synthesising the work of Virilio and Fukuyama, Augé claims that the "global" is ideologically concurrent with "the system," while the "local" is the site of "history" and thus of resistance (xi): "In the global world, history – in the sense of dissent from the system – can only come from the outside. The global world presupposes, ideally at least, the erasure of frontiers and conflict" (xi). As products of the conflict in Northern Ireland, the DeLorean cars enter the USA as 'localised' pieces of history that question the fault lines of the apparently borderless, globalised economic system. Upon its arrival in the USA, each single DMC-12 transposes in one place two different modes of experiencing space and time – a "waiting society" characterised by historical burden and territorial entrenchment and a "wanting society" characterised by the belief in progress and unrestricted mobility. It is in this sense that in *Gull*, too, the car is a time machine in itself.[88] Patterson himself acknowledges the irony involved in the interplay between the historical etching of the DMC-12 dashboards and the DMC-12's cultural life as a time machine: "(Talking of times," he writes, "I defy you, knowing now what lies behind, to look at that famous *Back to the Future* dashboard clock the same way.)" ("John DeLorean" n. pag.).

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[88] For this phrasing, I am indebted to Dorota Babilas, who put it forward in the discussion of my paper on *Gull* in the English Department of the University of Warsaw in May 2016.

At the other – the local – end of the spectrum, *Gull* represents the non-places of airports, airplanes and other means of transport in such a way as invite reflections on the nature of the border that encloses Northern Ireland. Apart from concerns with the actual geography of the border, its territorial traits, permeability, and degrees of reinforcement, *Gull* raises questions as to its metaphorical nature. It probes the ideological foundations of the border that pass off the territory within as 'other' and as spatially and temporally 'remote' from the administrative entity it pertains to. Augé has argued that the mass media have familiarised both "[h]istory (remoteness in time)" and "cultural and geographical distance (remoteness in space)" and turned them into "a type of entertainment" (xii). Travel, he summarises, thus "brings no more profound variety than is found walking between theatres on Broadway or rides at Disneyland" (xii). The media were ever a part of the Troubles, and one whose distorting influence Patterson has explored in *Gull* and, more prominently, in *Fat Lad*. The Disneyland allegory, however, seems particularly apt for the British administration's patronising approach to Northern Ireland under the Ulsterisation policy. Margaret Thatcher may have claimed that "Northern Ireland is as British as Finchley,"[89] but Liz deplores the general "remote"-ness of British politicians (*Gull* 79), while, in the run-up to the general election of 1979, Randall cannot help but notice that "Belfast, Northern Ireland generally, was incidental to the election campaign" (78). Reminiscent of Marty McFly's adventurous time travelling, Randall's maiden journey from his native US to Northern Ireland equally turns out to be a journey back through time and space, but one that seems entirely unhopeful of the future:

> He got on a flight that same evening and, the following morning […] picked up another flight on a plane a quarter the size from a corner of Heathrow so remote and dismal it seemed to belong not just to a different airport but a different decade entirely. An hour and a half later that plane came in to land on a runway bordered on one side by fields and on the other by a military base of a kind he had hoped never to see again when he flew out of Tan Son Nhat for the last time. (*Gull* 50)

As a Vietnam veteran, Randall recognises the spatial constellations of this theatre of war he has just flown into. Outwardly, there is no "profound variety" between these two *theatres* of war, yet the theoretical knowledge of what awaits him does by no means prepare Randall for

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[89] One of the many documents referencing this infamous phrase is an article published in the *Belfast Telegraph* in December 2010. Entitled "Margaret Thatcher was not against a united Ireland," the article explains that "[s]tate files released for the first time show the reputedly hardline Conservative administration told Dublin it had a greater interest in Northern Ireland than London."

the shock of (re-)experiencing war – in his experience of both Vietnam and Northern Ireland, remoteness in both time and space still hold their power to enthral.

Crucially, Randall experiences his movement away from the USA in terms of a journey through space but also through time. This spatio-temporal nature of his journey reveals itself to Randall in aesthetic terms. The connecting flight to Belfast is only allowed to take place from a "remote and dismal" part of Heathrow airport that seems inconsistent with its surroundings. Moving towards his gate, Randall becomes increasingly aware of the fact that Northern Ireland is marked out as spatially and temporally 'other.' The architectural constellations at Heathrow airport are designed so as to tell a particular, biased narrative of deviance and of the concurrent need of containment. The assumed spatio-temporal 'otherness' of Northern Ireland is thus fabricated already elsewhere, and in political processes and cultural practices that are not necessarily reflective of the region. The ability of Northern Ireland to weave meaningful socio-spatial relations that transgress its own borders, to develop "a sense of place which is extra-verted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world" (D. Massey, "Power-Geometry" 66), is effectively shown to be subjected to foreclosure from without. This stresses the ways in which Northern Ireland is embedded in historical and political constellations that are detrimental to its sustainable development as a region possessing a "progressive sense of place" (64). Passing through the increasingly asynchronous non-places of airports, passenger lounges and airplanes, Randall ultimately seems to arrive at an anthropological place where public space is limited and where social relations are historically strained. In Randall's initial perception, his destination is the ultimate location of history, which makes it incommensurate with the globalised, synchronized space-time that he has travelled from.

A similar confusion of space-time occurs for Randall when he decides, some time into his assignment, to make the train journey from the factory site at Dunmurry into Belfast city centre. Again, his progression through space is subject to a peculiar temporal paradigm, but one that in this instance seems to pertain to the locality rather than being imposed from without. As a newcomer to Northern Ireland, Randall offers an outsider's perception of the human geography of the Troubles, which strikes him as aesthetically unique:

> Randall decided to take the train. There were so many restrictions on parking – so few secure car parks – he was surprised anyone drove into the city ever. The train halt (it was no more than a couple of benches and a Plexiglas shelter) was less than a fifteen-minute walk, but once there he stood for almost four times as long without seeing a train in either direction. […]

> Someone had set fire to the post on which the timetable was mounted; vandal or amateur surrealist, the melted glass had a Dali-esque appearance, *The Disintegration of the Persistence of* *Hope*, perhaps. The instant I walk away a train will come, he told himself for the last thirty-five minutes of the fifty-five that had dragged by before the train finally arrived. (*Gull* 116, emphasis in original)

At this point, it becomes apparent that Randall's perceptions of Northern Ireland and Vietnam as theatres of war are not entirely congruent. He possesses no ready template according to which he could frame his experience of the human geography of the Troubles, and its uniquely distorted aesthetic prompts Randall to perceive it in terms of a surrealist painting. The intertextual reference to Dalí's surrealist painting is an ironic one, but one that bears decisively on the ways in which the spatial, the temporal and the social are shown to intersect in *Gull*.

It was, after all, the extension of the railroad network in the industrial nineteenth century that required the introduction of standard time – the possibility to travel across space was reliant upon the uniform synchronisation of time across space. The railway service effectively aligned the state both temporally and spatially to the effect that its citizens inhabited a single, shared space-time. In Randall's experience of the public transport in Northern Ireland, however, distance bears no relation to travel time. The burning of the train timetable, carried out by some "amateur surrealist," messes in allegorical fashion with this notion of standardised space-time and challenges the notion that the citizens of Northern Ireland possess a joint understanding of the space and time they inhabit. What is more, it constitutes a wilful and direct interference with the individual's access to free movement. The painter Conroy Maddox boastfully claimed about surrealism that "[n]o other movement has had more to say about the human condition, or has so determinedly put liberty, both poetic and political, above all else" (qtd. in "Surrealism," 683). Randall's reference to a human geography governed by surrealist rules hints here at the opposite. It throws into relief precisely the lack of individual and political liberty that is encapsulated in the restriction of mobility. The lack of mobility clearly precedes the "disintegration of hope" and injures the integrity of individual lives. If surrealist painting "aims to provoke a sympathetic response in the viewer, forcing him to acknowledge the inherent 'sense' of the irrational and logically inexplicable" ("Surrealism. Art and Literature," n. pag.), then Randall's description offers such a "sympathetic" perception of the geography of Northern Ireland. It detects and captures the perverted "sense" of paramilitary warfare, whose logic consists in the incalculable occurrence of disorder and confusion. The insidious effect of this strategy on the individual is reflected in Randall's moment of magical thinking: His leaving the platform

can have no rational impact on the train's arrival. The melted Plexiglas pane covering the timetable, which has assumed a surrealist appearance, embodies the ontological uncertainty about the fabric of the Northern Irish state during the Troubles and equally mirrors the individuals' increasing alienation from the space they inhabit.

The irony inherent in Randall's description, however, lies in that which is absent from it. Salvador Dalí's 1954 painting *The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory* – the painting that Randall makes reference to – is a less famous reworking of the earlier *The Persistence of Memory*, which is here present only by way of implication. Painted in 1931, *The Persistence of Memory* features the famous melting time pieces that have become internationally recognisable hallmarks of Dalí's work ("Dalí, Salvador" 190). In the painting, measured time becomes fluid and seemingly melts into the surrealist landscape that it finds itself in. Amalgamated with their surroundings, time and, by extension, memory achieve persistence. This amalgamation of memory and landscape is challenged in *The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory*, where that self-same landscape is flooded by the sea and sliced up into a grid of rectangular squares. *The Disintegration* does not belong to Dalí's surrealist phase. According to *The Dictionary of Art*, Dalí had turned away from surrealism during the 1940s; in the post-war years, fuelled by "[h]is fascination with the atom […] his paintings [were] concerned with a general sense of the divisibility of matter" ("Dalí (Domènech)," 468). Against this background, *The Disintegration* seems an appropriate frame in which to capture the disruption, or divisibility, of public space during the Troubles. Randall's perception of the gradual destruction of hope seems to stem precisely from this disruptive experience of space. At the same time, his perception of the "disintegration of the persistence of hope" during the Troubles implies "the persistence of hope," against the odds, during the pre-war years. As with Dalí's painting, a transformation of the original landscape has taken place. The fact that both states are implicitly described in terms of a surrealist landscape hints at a sense of continuity that transgresses the temporal framework of the Troubles. This is, as Eamonn Hughes argues in a different context, a crucial point. He denies the validity of "looking back nostalgically to some supposed pre-Troubles idyll," precisely because "[t]he typical narrative of 1960s Northern Irish fiction was of an individual being crushed by the stultifying pressure of a monolithic society or resisting it at all costs" ("Fiction" 87). Insisting that the Troubles do not need to be portrayed in terms of "a similarly crushing monolith" he stresses the "need to locate the Troubles as one strand in a more complex set of stories" ("Fiction" 87-88). Randall's intertextual description of the spatial constellation he finds himself in points precisely at such a complex and continuous

narrative embedding of the Troubles. In keeping with the surrealist creed, this strikes also a tentatively hopeful note for the future. In his *Manifesto of Surrealism*, Breton expressed his "belie[f] in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality" which he called "*surreality*" (n. pag., emphasis in original). Although convinced of the futility of his endeavour, Breton insisted on pursuing "the quest of this surreality" to catch at least a glimpse "of the joys of its possession" (n. pag.). In the same vein, it is possible to read the human geography of Northern Ireland as being in a prolonged state of resolution, or transition, between the political forces that have shaped it in the past and those that will shape it in the future.

For the time being, however, Randall's observations concerning the reliability of train connections, the heavy "restrictions on parking" and the availability of "secure car parks" depict the civil war as a force that limits the use of non-places, be it due to military or paramilitary interventions in public space. In these interventions, public space is rendered inherently suspect; it becomes a hazardous area where nothing can be taken at face value. This sentiment is echoed by Randall at another point in the novel, where the existence "coffee-jar bombs" (*Gull* 64) leaves him in a state of disbelief and terror. The domestic is robbed of its innocence when inconspicuous tokens of domesticity are utilised in an atrocious battle in and for public space. Explaining the continuous and destructive use terrorists have made of non-places, Augé posits:

> Airports and aircraft, big stores and railway stations have always been a favoured target for attacks (to say nothing of car bombs), doubtless for reasons of efficiency, if that is the right word. But another reason might be that […] those pursuing new socializations and localizations can see non-places only as a negation of their ideal. The non-place is the opposite of Utopia: it exists and it does not contain any organic society. (90)

Augé's hesitantly uses the word 'efficiency' to denote the maximum impact that terrorism can achieve in places of transit that assemble great numbers of people on the move. The violent disturbance of such non-places directly disturbs the systemic functioning of the society these non-places serve; it forces society-as-is to grind to a symbolical halt. As places of transit, Augé finally posits, non-places further inflame insurrectional desires for the creation of a stably and unequivocally historicised place. At one point in the novel when Liz is unable to make her way home due to a bomb scare, a most poignant comment on the management of space is made in the form of an hypothetical aside: "(Some day someone would give the bombers and abandoners of lorries and cars jobs in the roads department. They knew the network and its stress points better than anybody else.)" (*Gull* 133). Hinting

at a future political dispensation that is yet unspecified, the comment stands in a set of parentheses that mark out the liminal and precarious character of any thought about the future. It highlights the astute and often fatal geographical knowledge of the paramilitaries and acknowledges the beneficial use this knowledge could be put to in different circumstances. From the vantage point of the post-war period, the comment also acknowledges the necessarily provisional and ambivalent nature of political life in a society still in the process of resolving its social and spatial divisions. This "new socialization" remains, for the time being, a half-way house that needs to be built on a joint and often contentious management of space.

3.2 Geographies of Peace: David Park's *The Truth Commissioner* (2008)

The stubbornly enduring "shadow from the past thrown forward into our future" (n. pag.) that David Trimble spoke of eloquently in his 1998 Nobel lecture was revisited twenty years later in David Park's remarkably courageous novel *The Truth Commissioner*. In this novel, Park examines the ways in which Northern Ireland's future continues to be limited by demarcations set in the violent past. Both Trimble and Park find geographical expressions for their concerns about the continuously damaging influence of events past. Laying out that "[t]he dark shadow we seem to see in the distance is not really a mountain ahead, but the shadow of the mountain behind," Trimble envisioned the influence of the past as the future absence of sunlight impeding the easy generation of natural warmth and growth. More significantly, mountains as enduring, monumental features of the natural landscape cannot be moved or changed easily. Similarly, the four protagonists in Park's novel experience Northern Ireland during the peace process as a hostile landscape that is incapable of benignant transformation. In what is to follow, I will argue that the most crucial contribution of Park's novel to the discourses of memory, truth and reconciliation in Northern Ireland is its transposition of these issues into the spatial domain. This transposition springs from a shift in the 'geographical imagination' according to which 'the narrow ground' of Northern Ireland itself is envisioned as the keeper of memory and the custodian of truth. While each of the protagonists' lives are destroyed by the emergence of the truth, the novel tentatively suggests that a transformed polity will eventually spring from its imagined geography of transition.

The Truth Commissioner is as such an instance of a wider artistic discourse that counters deeply seated (literary) stereotypes about conflict-ridden Northern Ireland and

presents it as a site of interrelated spatial, social and political change. In 1978, John Bowyer Bell's famous article "The Troubles as Trash" started an enduring labelling practice, that of terming a certain sensationalist, exploitative manifestation of the Troubles thriller as 'Troubles trash' (see Magennis 59). Reviewing a whole set of thrillers that had emerged in the first decade of the civil war, Bowyer Bell suggests that they represent the causes and dynamics of the conflict in such a simplified manner as supports the British political and military approach to Northern Ireland:

> [I]n some strange small way the thrillers on Irish matters may have played a part in the British campaign to restore order, if not justice, to Ulster. In bold strokes of black and white, they have painted the jolly ploughboy, the Irish Rebel, the romantic gunman, as a terrorist, futile, brutal, at best misguided, at worse a callous killer. Surely, the British could ask for no more. (22)

The blatant lack of representational complexity, in other words, has compounded to a certain extent the often deplored British ignorance concerning Northern Irish culture and politics. Somewhat more recently, in 2001, Eamonn Hughes sketched out the Troubles thriller in a similar vein, but not without registering a fresh tendency to overhaul the conventions set for and by the genre. He writes:

> The thriller is for the most part a circular and enclosed form which represents Northern Ireland as a fated place, doomed to inevitable and enduring violence. At its best, however, the thriller can be a subtle moral and political genre dealing with questions which extend beyond glamorised treatments of political violence. […] The work of younger writers such as Deirdre Madden, Glenn Patterson and Robert McLiam Wilson, is often concerned to dismiss stereotypes and conventions about Northern Ireland established within thrillers […]. ("Fiction" 80)

If Patterson has upended such stereotypes with a certain amount of cheekiness in *Gull*, Park's *The Truth Commissioner* treads a more consistently earnest but no less unconventional path. A political post-conflict thriller, Park's novel avoids the pitfalls of the Troubles thriller in its trashy incarnation. It is a fully-fledged version of the peace-process thriller, which has with varying degrees of decorum been put forward in films such as *A Belfast Story* and the much more elegant and successful *Five Minutes of Heaven*. Far from reinforcing the inherited modes of "represent[ing] Northern Ireland as a fated place," *The Truth Commissioner* proposes a poetic if uncomfortable vision of the transitional geography of peace-building in Northern Ireland. Introducing a significant spatial dimension to the discourse around peace and reconciliation, the novel shifts the focus of the debate away from the necessary clash of competing political narratives and the contentious question of the ownership of the past. Inventing a fictional Truth Commission for Northern Ireland, the novel has complemented

academic concerns with the intersection of geography and peace building as well as more recent approaches to dealing with Northern Ireland's history of violent segregation. The topicality of *The Truth Commissioner* is brought to the fore when considering a call for papers that requested submissions for a conference focussing on "Geographies for Peace." Hosted by the International Geographical Union in April 2017, the conference "focused on peace and the contribution of geography to it" (n. pag.). Setting out their stall, the conference organisers explain that

> Peace is always shaped by the spaces in which it is made, as it too shapes those spaces. […] Peace can be created at the scale of the individual, the family, the community, the nation, and/or at other scales, but these different scales are often intertwined. Peace is a situated and spatial process – and as such is necessarily plural. ("Geographies for Peace" n. pag.)[90]

In other words, the making of peace is not only a temporal but also a spatial process and one that follows the vision of a socially integrated future. In the process, disparate views of the violent past need to be amalgamated and, ideally, reconciled. As Doreen Massey has explained with a view to contested spaces, "conflicting interpretations of the past are put to use in a battle over what is to come. What are at issue are competing histories of the present, wielded as arguments over what should be the future" ("Places" 185). With regard to *The Truth Commissioner*, one might claim that the truth about the past too, is a situated and spatial process, and that all three, peace, space and truth are interrelated dynamic processes. Written in rather poetic prose characterised by often unexpected metaphors and similes, the novel engages with remarkable courage in the political negotiations of the ongoing peace process. Centring on a fictional Truth Commission, it imagines an alternative approach to the political problems specific to Northern Ireland as a post-conflict society. First published in 2008, the novel's comment on the state of Northern Irish politics is as poignant now as it was a decade ago. As Park acknowledged in an email interview early in 2015,

> I did feel I was taking a risk with *The Truth Commissioner*. When you write about the distant future you have complete freedom. When you write about the immediate future you can end up looking stupid. Events can suddenly change circumstances and

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[90] Many of the topics proposed by the conference organisers touch upon issues addressed in this study. They include "Globalisation and regional issues," "From landscapes of war to landscapes of peace," "Engaging with the past: managing troubled heritage and making peace with the "other's" heritage," "Territorial arrangements for peace," "Military assemblages," and "Security and public space."

what you've written can [be] ending up in some rusting siding. None of this happened with the book thankfully. ("Re: My Questions" n. pag.)[91]

Indeed, David Park's novel seems to become ever more rather than less topical the further it moves away from its original date of publication. *The Truth Commissioner* has kept in step with the changing colours of the Northern Irish political landscape it is set against. The most pressing problems of the post-Troubles era have remained unsolved for twenty years. As the 2013 Haass talks have shown, the most inflammatory of these issues concern the past – the definition of a victim and, likewise, of a perpetrator, the judicial treatment of Troubles-related crimes, the commemoration of the past, the shared use of formerly segregated space, and even the legitimacy of the state itself. *The Truth Commissioner* comments on the societal deadlock that arises out of these problems with authority, and it has even predicted some of the subsequent political discourse. In its fictional version of the political machinations of Northern Ireland, the deplorable state of the peace process is predominantly depicted in spatial terms. This is so not least because the two dominant political traditions in Northern Ireland are firmly grounded in geographical beliefs. As a whole, the novel offers a cultural incursion into these inherited 'geographical imaginations' and charts a cathartic transformation of Northern Ireland's geography of division which has been marked by mutually exclusive "envelopes of space-time" (D. Massey, "Places" 188; Jess and Massey 134). Equally importantly, the novel achieves a significant substantiation of the often empty rhetoric of the peace process. Effectively bypassing the meandering political discourse, it anchors the evasive truth about the past in the geography of the state itself.

When read against the Report of the Consultative Group on the Past, more commonly referred to by the names of its two chairmen as the Eames/Bradley Report, *The Truth Commissioner* reveals its prophetic potential as well as the nuanced, sensitive fashion in which it responds to the socio-political circumstances it aspires to represent. In her essay on the representation of "filiative reconciliation," Stephanie Lehner, recalling the upheaval caused by the Eames/Bradley report, concurs:

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[91] Early in 2016, the film based on Park's novel was released and illustrated the continuing topicality of *The Truth Commissioner*. The reception of the film seemed to illustrate that the names of the agreements might have changed since 1998 while the issues at stake remain. As Malachi O'Doherty commented in *The Belfast Telegraph* prior to the film's television broadcast in March 2016: "It was finished a year ago, before the Fresh Start talks started and around the time that Gerry Adams was arrested, so there was much in the air at the time to make the management of the past topical. There was also, surely, some risk that events might have overtaken the plot, say if a Truth Commissioner had either been appointed before completion, or a clear statement had been made that one never would be" (n. pag.).

> In the absence, or perhaps in the face of the contentiousness, of an overarching institutional framework, the task of dealing with the so-called 'legacy of the past' has been largely devolved to independent initiatives, community projects as well as media and culture. ("Post-Conflict" 66)

Among these cultural initiatives, Lehner counts *The Truth Commissioner* and *Five Minutes of Heaven*, both of which are discussed in the present chapter. "[B]oth," as Lehner argues, "interrogate the need for such official frameworks, exposing the hypocrisy and calculated 'theatricality' that often characterizes public requests for forgiveness" ("Post-Conflict" 69). Even though demands for a Northern Irish truth commission have been made recurrently in the past, the societal benefit of such a body has remained contested. Mirroring David Trimble's concern with the shadows of the mountain of the past two decades later, the foreword of the Eames/Bradley Report stated that "[t]he Consultative Group on the Past was established to find a way forward out of the shadows of the past" (Report of the Consultative Group 14). Created in 2007, the Consultative Group on the Past published its findings in January 2009 amid great emotional turmoil and outrage. As Katy Hayward points out, "the public launch of this Report was a volatile affair" in the course of which the expression of concerns by those "ordinary people directly affected by the recommendations of the Group" was all but stifled (1). Hayward vividly recalls "[t]he face-to-face confrontation of two individuals […]: a woman and a man, a Protestant and a Catholic, an orphaned daughter and a bereaved brother" on the occasion of the launch, duly and unrelentingly covered by the media (2). The communal helplessness at the scene is poignantly interpreted by Hayward: "As their two worlds clashed under the glare of the press, it became clear that no one around them, in an apt microcosm of Northern Ireland society, knew how to respond to the articulation of such raw anger" (2).

It is ironic that among the Group's most important recommendations was the proposition that "[a]n independent Legacy Commission should be established to deal with the legacy of the past by combining processes of reconciliation, justice and information recovery. It would have the overarching objective of promoting peace and stability in Northern Ireland" (Report of the Consultative Group 16). The Group's recommendations sharply contrast with the findings of the House of Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, which concluded its 2005 report *Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past* opining that

> There may come a time when a formal, national 'truth recovery' process will contribute positively to the normalisation of society in Northern Ireland but, on the basis of the evidence we have received to date, that time has not yet arrived: the peace

is as yet to fragile [...]. Were such a process to be put in train now, it is our view that this might have the effect of exacerbating community tensions. (House of Commons 26; also 34)

The abundance of committees in post-conflict Northern Ireland, it sometimes seems, is equalled only by a scarcity of agreement. The Legacy Commission as envisioned by The Consultative Group on the Past was to tackle "four strands of work" which were to comprise "reviewing and investigating historical cases" and "conducting a process of information recovery" (Report of the Consultative Group 17). While being hesitant about the prospect of an amnesty, the Report "recommend[ed] that the Legacy Commission itself make recommendations on how a line might be drawn at the end of its five-year mandate so that Northern Ireland might best move to a shared future" (19).

While the proposed Legacy Commission sparked a heated debate (and was never implemented), the Group's suggestion of dispensing a payment of £12,000 to all victims and survivors of the Northern Irish conflict also proved highly controversial. Acknowledging the utter impossibility of reaching a consensus on the question of who might be accorded victim status in the Northern Irish context, the report stated:

> The lack of agreement on a definition of a victim reflects the diversity that exists both within the victims and survivors community, and wider public opinion. Some made impassioned arguments that there should be no equivalence between victim and perpetrator while others argued, just as passionately, that there must be no hierarchy of victims [...]. For others it was important to recognise not a hierarchy of victims but rather a hierarchy of perpetrators. Most agreed that the pain and hurt of the families of both victims and perpetrators is the same. (Report of the Consultative Group 66)

As the passage above illustrates, there are continua of victims and perpetrators while it appears that the lines between both groups can become blurred depending on the point of view taken. Whilst this is unsurprising given the intricacies of the conflict and the confusion of the post-conflict situation, it is probably more startling to be reminded of the fact that the relatives of perpetrators were often brutalised just as much as those of victims.

A piece of legislation called the "Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006" established a permanent Victims' Commissioner for Northern Ireland three years prior to the Eames/Bradley Report. It included, among its most important articles, an inclusive "interpretation" of those who classified as victims and survivors and were therefore eligible for the attention of the Commissioner (The Victims and Survivors 2). Since "[i]n the consultation process a definition of a 'victim', acceptable to everyone, did not emerge" (Report of the Consultative Group 67), the Eames/Bradley Report embraced the definition

given in 2006. Article 3 of The Victims and Survivors Order decrees that "(a) someone who is or has been physically or psychologically injured as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident," (b) a caregiver to such a person, "or (c) someone who has been bereaved as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident" will be 'interpreted' as a victim or a survivor (2). The article further considers witnesses and first aid providers at "a conflict-related incident" (2). The Order obviously seeks to be as inclusive as possible, shifting the onus of the "interpretation" to a certain extent onto the sensitivity of the suffering individual. Clearly, it tries hard to evade the much cited 'hierarchy of victims.' The very use of the word 'interpretation' in a piece of legislation, however, suggests awareness of its own tentative status and acknowledges at the myriad ways of looking at the issue at hand.

When *The Truth Commissioner* was published in 2008, the devolved Northern Ireland power-sharing institutions had just been reinstated the previous year. Due to impassable differences between the nationalist and unionist political blocs, the brittle Northern Ireland Assembly had suffered serial suspension after its creation on the basis of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, and endured a phase of prolonged suspension between 2002 and 2007. This period of suspension was caused by an incident called Stormontgate. Due to allegations that a Provisional IRA spy ring was operating at Stormont, the PSNI ransacked Sinn Féin offices at the parliament buildings and arrested three men, among them Denis Donaldson, the Sinn Féin Head of Administration. The three men were cleared of all the charges eventually. Denis Donaldson, however, was murdered in Co. Donegal, in the Republic of Ireland, in 2006, a few months after admitting that he had been working as an informer for the MI5. Only in January 2016, the *Irish News* reported the allegation that "[t]he Stormontgate arrest of […] Denis Donaldson was orchestrated to protect the senior republican after his cover as a double agent was blown when the IRA stole classified documents from Castlereagh" (Morris n. pag.). This incident is only one of many that illustrate the institutional quicksand on which the political peace has been built.

The St Andrews Agreement, reached between the political parties of Northern Ireland and the Irish and British governments, finally paved the way to renewed devolution in 2007.[92] The agreement's section on "Power-sharing and the political institutions" tellingly begins with a pledge:

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[92] The real changes appear in the document's Annex. These concern "Practical changes to the operation of the institutions", a "Financial package for the newly restored executive", and importantly "Human rights, equality, victims and other issues" (The St Andrews Agreement n. pag.). The latter address among other issues social and structural inequality, a Bill of Rights, the re-integration of ex-prisoners, parading and the introduction of a Victims' Commissioner. As a whole,

> Both Governments remain *fully committed* to the *fundamental principles* of the Agreement: *consent* for constitutional change, *commitment* to exclusively peaceful and democratic means, *stable inclusive partnership* government, a *balanced* institutional accommodation of the key *relationships* <u>within Northern Ireland, between North and South and within these islands,</u> and for *equality* and human rights at the *heart* of the new dispensation in Northern Ireland. All parties to this agreement need to be *wholeheartedly* and *publicly committed*, in good *faith* and in a *spirit* of genuine *partnership*, to the *full* operation of *stable* <u>power-sharing Government and the North-South and East-West arrangements.</u> (The St Andrews Agreement n. pag., emphasis mine)

This passage seems insincere for being too emotive, too morally self-assured, for protesting too much. It is a considerable rhetorical feat to squeeze into a passage of only ninety-eight words alone twenty that are dedicated to the expression of sincerity, goodwill and moral if not religious righteousness: While the words "commitment," "partnership," "stability," "full," and "heart," or variations thereof, are repeated at least twice, there are a further four words belonging to the semantic field of mutuality and a further five belonging to some vaguely transcendental or spiritual domain.[93] Interestingly, a further twenty-two words are employed to refer to the very same (if, admittedly, essential) geographical relationships between the dominant political blocs within Northern Ireland, between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and, in turn, between the island of Ireland and Great Britain. In this formidable instance of linguistic shadow-boxing, the politically significant recognition of the state of "Northern Ireland" is immediately counterbalanced by the no less politicised phrase "North and South." The stubborn Britishness of "these islands" – these British Isles – is traded altogether for the seemingly geographical nature of the "East-West arrangements," as if the troublesome unity of the geographical and the political could be discontinued.

The political agreements ever since the Good Friday Agreement have increasingly been framed in this clinical language of mutuality, goodwill and high morals. The linguistic woodwork, however, cannot always bridge the abyss of past distrust and political double cross. Neither does a mere agreement on constitutional change define the nature or content of this very change, least of all in a political climate where the necessary compromise has for decades been depicted as betrayal and sell-out. Charting the meandering rhetorical

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the purpose of the agreement seems to reaffirm commitment to the "parity of esteem" principle proclaimed in the Good Friday Agreement.

[93] Mutuality is implied by the words "consent," "inclusive," "balanced," and "equality", while the noun phrase "fundamental principles" as well as the words "publicly," "faith," and "spirit" seem to refer to spirituality or transcendence.

progress of the peace process, Roy Foster declares "clarity of expression […] an early casualty" (140) and, to prove his point, quotes from Brian Lynch's memorable introduction to *Pity for the Wicked*:

> The peace process was remarkable for its paradoxical combination of precision and vagueness. For this purpose and anti-language was developed, one that by use excavated itself of meaning – after a while it was hard to distinguish between code and cod. Saying not much in this anti-language required a great deal to be said, ambiguously and at length, but with the simplicity of a phrase-book and the repetitiveness of an advertising campaign. (Lynch 2; qtd. in Foster 140)[94]

The "anti-language" of the peace process is in this sense a linguistically corruptive force as it divests the political discourse of its main purpose of information transmission. A similar predicament seems to have assailed the sphere of literary writing as a result. In 2000, Eamonn Hughes deplored the curtailment of the artist's freedom of representation. He has remarked that "[f]or the most part, we have expected our writers, like our politicians, to use language in a restrained and often pious way. This is literature as a kind of Equal Opportunities Commission which treats both sides with parity of esteem and thus offends no one" ("Evasion" 55).

The essential untrustworthiness of political language is also a central concern of David Park's novel. *The Truth Commissioner* identifies, exposes and challenges the "anti-language" of the peace process, which hinders political and social progress. Park acknowledges that in Northern Ireland,

> We have not yet resolved [how to deal with the legacy of the past]. I wanted to explore a possible attempt to do this based on the South African model. Truth and revelation always have potential consequences and the novel paints a picture of a process given lip service but where all the main players continue to hide their own truth while insisting on it from others. For them 'Truth' is still a political weapon. ("Re: My Questions" n. pag.)

The farsightedness of Park's novel on this point has been vindicated in the ongoing debate about the Independent Commission on Information Retrieval (ICIR), which was proposed by the Stormont House Agreement in December 2014. According to the agreement, "[t]he objective of the ICIR will be to enable victims and survivors to seek and privately receive information about the (Troubles-related) deaths of their next of kin" (8). While those providing information to the ICIR will not be given an amnesty, the information itself "will be inadmissible in criminal and civil proceedings" (9). However, when the document entitled

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[94] Cf. Bernadette Devlin McAliskey's criticism of the rhetorical and political foundations of the Peace Process ("I Am Aware" n. pag). Also cf. Carr, *The Rule of the Land* 139-40.

"A Fresh Start – The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan" emerged in November 2015, the 'Past' had yet again been shoved on the back burner. Due to difficulties in drafting the required legislation, the commission has not been implemented to date (see Villiers n. pag.). Since then, a chain of talks, negotiations and agreements has continuously failed to deliver a consensual approach to the issue of the legacy of the Troubles.

A cautious note of hopefulness is expressed by Peter Doran, who detects "a democratic moment" and the possibility of "a new shift in our politics" in "the societal wellbeing conversation":

> The Strand One institutions and their political leaderships have always been destined to *hold two worlds* together in harness: the world of conflict transformation and the world of delivering what most governments must attend to, the wellbeing of their citizens. The former is a world of calculus, trade-offs, and scarce regard. The *Fresh Start* agreement might yet signal an opportunity for a new focus on the art of governing well in the present. (n. pag., emphasis in original)

Doran's is the voice of responsible pragmatism. His insistence on societal wellbeing corresponds to Fisher and Ury's "method of *principled negotiation*," especially to their focus on common interests in negotiations – it "is hard on the merits, soft on the people. It employs no tricks and no posturing" (xxvi). Doran's description of "the world of conflict transformation" in the North seems out of step with this principled approach. The magic word in this paragraph is that of the 'present.' If the transformation of the past has so far proved to be an arduous endeavour, the present is still potentially malleable and responsive to political action. The institutions of the Northern Ireland Assembly thus might actually succeed in transforming the political body they govern if they focused more of their attention than they have done to date on the immediate concerns and problems, on the 'wellbeing,' of the populace. This second draft horse might for the time being be the stronger one in the 'harness,' and offer some support to its stumbling fellow who has been trotting down the much rockier lane of the past.

In a similar vein, taking his cue from complexity theory, Adrian Little has argued that post-conflict Northern Ireland needs to be considered in terms of "contemporary complex societies" (210) where the simple assumption "that conflict can be resolved" is unviable and does not hold any promise for the future (217). This view is mirrored by Hayward who, interpreting the incident at the launch of the Eames/Bradley Report, writes that

> the rippling implications of the vocal expression of anger and pain have no clear boundaries or endpoints. This sits uneasily with the need for order and progress in a

peace process; more devastatingly, it implies that the goal of reaching a 'resolution' to conflict becomes less attainable the more we listen. (2)

Likewise, Little argues that "politics in Northern Ireland has been constituted by conflict, and political activity continues to generate new conflictual issues through which we evolve our discourse and reconstitute and partially restate the discourses of the past" (217). He writes concurrently that "the normative pursuit of conflict resolution" is socially disruptive because it excludes and "marginalise[s] discourses which are less conciliatory. [… T]he rationality underpinning this paradigm implies that those who want to continue to express conflictual discourses that are at odds with the ordained process must be kept on the outer" (211). In Little's view, conflict needs to be proactively embraced rather than thoroughly eradicated; the result of this process does not necessarily have to be "the normative project" (212) of reconciliation:

> Among the critical theories of reconciliation, however, there appears to be a more nuanced account which recognises that conflictual issues are part of the fabric of contested societies – such that the issues which arise from them continue to characterise the social and cultural landscape long after formal political agreements have been made or institutions established. (212)

Essentially, Little argues that an overdetermined pursuit of reconciliation – if simply conceived of as the future achievement of a unified polity with shared political aims – might be hampering instead of furthering the peace process. "A narrative approach to Northern Ireland," he posits therefore, "recognises that there are multiple discourses at work and that they interact with the past and present in complex ways" (221). His understanding of the two dominant discursive clusters in Northern Irish society resembles amorphous, jelly-like conglomerations. They are each made up of myriad narratives that entertain a "dynamic" relationship with each other while co-existing on a continuum endorsing different ideological positions somewhere between the extreme poles of "conflict resolution" and "conflict." The engagement of these present discursive clusters with their past and future variants is, Little stresses,

> never a smooth process as these narratives contradict one another, such that a discursive paradigm is never wholly coherent and consistent. Instead there is considerable fraying at the margins as competing narratives and broader discursive formations rub up against one another, thereby influencing each other in frequently unpredictable fashions. (221)

In its acknowledgement of fundamental disagreement, diversity and adversity as necessary determinants of post-conflict societies, the narrative approach that Little advocates

ultimately "calls forth a messy, unsettled polity" (222). It is in this light that *The Truth Commissioner* acquires its full transitional force.

Narrative Synergies and Slippery Sites of Encounter

The Truth Commissioner depicts a version of such "a messy, unsettled polity" that is still in the process of uncovering, telling, denying and amalgamating its many competing narratives. The novel highlights the manner in which these contentious narratives "interact with the past and the present in complex ways" (Little 221) through its fictional Truth Commission which provides an institutionalised setting for the telling and also, for the manipulation of these narratives. This fictional truth recovery body has the power to summon witnesses and to provide an amnesty to those who give "a full and truthful account of the incident for which they are seeking amnesty" (*Truth Commissioner* 317). Victims are free to decide whether they want their hearings to be held in public or private, and in the former case, the press are allowed to sit in on the Commission's hearings. As long as the victims agree, hence, the Commission's work does not "marginalise" but centre-stage those "discourses which are less conciliatory" and thus located outside the narrative paradigm of a smooth and unimpeded progress towards societal peace (Little 211). Providing a stage for the performance of bitter, violent and harmful memories, the Commission embraces the precarious narrative approach however much this may mean, in Hayward's words, "that the goal of reaching a 'resolution' to conflict becomes less attainable the more we listen" (2). At the same time, the Commission provides an institutionalised framework for such disharmonising narratives, and in turn serves to contain and to frame them according to the overarching discursive paradigm of the state. In spite of the much lauded independence of the Truth Commission, it soon becomes clear that both the Northern Irish and the British political stakeholders of the peace process are unwilling to leave the Commission's narrative outcome to fate. Set on protecting the power-sharing government at any cost, the political establishment do not stop at manipulating the truth recovery process. Attempting to strike a precarious balance, they will allow enough of the truth to emerge for the process to still appear credible, but never more than can be absorbed and accommodated within the existing political structures. In *The Truth Commissioner*, Northern Ireland is 'messy' and 'unsettled' on two different planes. Not only are there diverse personal narratives floating around the two dominant socio-political narrative paradigms with different measures of proximity and distance. There are also the superordinate political attempts at manufacturing out of these

ideologically competing accounts a narrative essence that will sedate the public's need for truth recovery and thus secure the continuation of the political peace process. The Northern Irish polity as described in the novel is thus 'messy' in the sense that it is built on deceit, shadow play and double cross, and 'unsettled' in the sense that any established truth must remain subject to uncertainty and suspicion.

As already mentioned in the subchapter on Lucy Caldwell's *Where They Were Missed* above, Richard Kirkland importantly suggests that the "interregnum" (7) of civil war in Northern Ireland was characterised by "a sense of being on the borders of history as well as on the borders of spatial development" which in turn precluded the creation of confidence in "the *telos* [... and] the primal beginning" (6). In *The Truth Commissioner*, the same indictment continues to apply to messy and unsettled post-conflict Northern Ireland, where the past is manhandled in such a way as to render the creation of a credible, communal national narrative impossible. Concurrently, the novel raises the spectre of an ever-meandering, never-ending peace process that is designed to auto-extend its lease on life. Demonstrating the fatal absence of both the narrative "telos" and the narrative "beginning," the novel pivots around the unsolved fictional case of Connor Walshe. A teenage boy from nationalist West Belfast, Connor was abducted and killed by the IRA for cooperating with the Royal Ulster Constabulary who had enlisted him as an informer. Connor's death has never been confirmed and his remains have never been found, so that the family have lived in a state of torturous uncertainty ever since his disappearance. Connor's case, even though fictional, finds a counterpart in the real-life atrocities of the Troubles: He is one of Northern Ireland's Disappeared, victims of the IRA who were taken, killed and buried in unmarked places, mostly in the South of Ireland. While the remains of thirteen of the Troubles' Disappeared have been located to date, those of another three still remain missing.[95] The 'information' Connor provided to the RUC scarcely deserved the name, but in the eyes of his police handler James Fenton, his recruitment held the promise of a valuable future infiltration of the republican movement. In Fenton's unintentionally cynical words, Connor was "a little acorn planted in the face of an uncertain future" (*Truth Commissioner* 145).

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[95] Almost each of the sixteen people who were taken during the civil war disappeared between the early seventies and the early eighties. Two further disappearances occurred in 2003 and 2005 respectively that are not covered by the Northern Ireland (Location of Victims' Remains) Act 1999. For more information, see *The Disappeared of Northern Ireland* homepage. See Stephanie Lehner's essay "Absent and yet Somehow Still Present" for a more detailed discussion of the Disappeared and the ways in which they are represented in contemporary culture.

When Connor's case is reopened by the newly appointed Truth Commissioner Henry Stanfield, it transpires that, even though the rules of the game have changed, the ultimate goal of achieving political predominance has remained the same. The future continues to be uncertain as the truth recovery process is revealed to be a morally and politically convenient charade the independence of which is undermined by all the institutional players involved. The truth about Connor's killing and burial place, potentially capable of bringing down the devolved government, suits none of the stakeholders of the peace process. The nationalist political establishment as well as the British secret service are aware of the fact that Francis Gilroy, the Minister for Children and Culture in the power-sharing government, was involved in Connor's disappearance. Gilroy's past as a commander of the IRA may give him credit with his political constituency, but the more unpalatable details of his past paramilitary involvement must not interfere with the political present. While the Northern Ireland politicians want to stay in power at all cost, the British government are concerned about their long-standing financial, social and symbolic investment in the region. Strong-armed and blackmailed by the MI5's obscure agents who entrap him in a sex scandal, the Truth Commissioner is willing to cater to the needs of the powers-that-be. He will manipulate the emergence of the truth if only he can hold on to the prestigious position that will be the making on his career. In spite of Stanfield's attempts, however, the formal hearings before the Commission prompt the unlikely amalgamation of three Northern Irish men's disparate narratives into the one version of communal history (see Lehner, "Absent" 38). In an allegorical fashion, the *Truth Commissioner* thus champions the slowly assembled truth about Connor's death as both Kirkland's "*telos*" of the narrative and, at the same time, as the "primal beginning" of the peace process.[96]

Connecting all of them to the same violent incident of the past, the emergent narrative weaves a net of guilt between retired RUC officer James Fenton, Belfast-born US-emigrant Michael Madden and former IRA commander turned Minister for Children and Culture Francis Gilroy. While none of the men actually killed Connor, they all had a part to play in his disappearance: Fenton, because he enlisted the teenager regardless of the dangers to which he knew Connor would be exposed; Gilroy, because he was complicit in Connor's abduction; and Madden, because, as a teenage IRA volunteer, he was ordered to guard the

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[96] Cf. Lehner who assumes that "a movement away from previously hegemonic categories" will be necessary for successful post-conflict identities to emerge ("Post-Conflict" 65). "This promotion of 'new identities' and means of identification is underwritten by a certain temporal logic that aims to recast the present 'as a point of origin' for a new future" (65).

rural safe-house to which Connor had been taken. All three have tried in vain to forget their complicity in Connor's killing (see Lehner, "Post-Conflict" 72), and their guilt is compounded by Henry Stanfield, who attempts to suppress the emergence of the truth to save his career and reputation. In this four-cornered narrative, the truth about the past is refracted through the individual perceptions and memories of the four men. As Park explains:

> I wanted to create the lives of four men, strip them back to the inner self so that they no longer just represent particular archetypes – that's why I took time to create detailed personal stories for each. When I did this and tried to reach the bedrock of who each was, who we all are, I found perhaps even to my surprise that sense of shared space that is essentially shared humanity. Now it was much more difficult to be sure of any definitive sense of truth. ("Re: My Questions" n. pag.)

In this fashion, truth as much as guilt are portrayed as complex and multi-dimensional. As a version of the truth is, against the odds, heard before the Truth Commission, the narrative net establishes the men's shared responsibility for Connor's death and throws them back upon 'the narrow ground,' whose "territorial imperative" (Stewart 181) commanded the abduction and from which each of them has, in his own way, sought to escape.

While their joint narrative seemingly vindicates Stewart's claim that "locality and history [in Ulster] are welded together" (182), it predicates at the same time a breaking up of the divisive place-specific narratives that serve as the organising pattern of Northern Irish society. Nationalist and unionist "envelopes of space-time" as the respective interpretations of place "as it has existed through time" (Jess and Massey 134) are forced to coalesce during the official hearings before the Truth Commission. The result is a painful synergy effect across the socio-political boundaries, which merges the personal narratives of Fenton, Madden and Gilroy into one communal history of guilt at the core of which lie the coordinates of Connor's burial place. What Kirkland has called the "fragmented communal consciousness and the tensions implicit in the essentially spatial distributions of power" are challenged within the building of the Truth Commission to enable, in his words, a "temporal development of linear narratives" (7). The Commission thus becomes a permeable site in spite of corruption and collusion – it facilitates the encounter between the men's disparate socio-temporal experiences, from which the truth about Connor's disappearance springs in a spatially transformative narrative. This narrative synergy effect illustrates Doreen Massey's claim that "[t]he spatial in its role of bringing into contact distinct temporalities generates a provocation to interaction, which sets off social processes" ("Imagining" 14). Fenton, Gilroy and Madden do not interact personally at the Commission, but still their

respective narratives, which in themselves only hold partial truths, interact to produce a narrative that comes surprisingly close to the truth of what happened to Connor. The social processes that are initiated by this interaction, the novel suggests tentatively, are those of closure for Connor's family as well as those of continuing renewal for the Northern Irish polity itself.

Far from being a tale of difference overcome, however, *The Truth Commissioner* represents the peace process as a period of political liminality. It is, in many ways, merely a formalised continuation of the civil war – while the outward appearance of the struggle has been transformed, its content remains unchanged. The hiatus of civil war is shown to be followed by a new period of social and political uncertainty about the future. The transitional nature of the peace process is nowhere more prominent than towards the end of the novel. In the second-to-last chapter of the novel, on the very evening of the day that the Truth Commission has heard Connor's case, the buildings of the Commission are subject to an arson attack. Already beyond saving when the fire brigade arrives, the buildings are destroyed and with them a symbolic landmark of social progress past and present burns to the ground. Located in Harland and Wolff's former drawing office (see *Truth Commissioner* 21), in a part of Belfast harbour which has over the last ten years been reinvented as Titanic Quarter, Park's fictional Truth Commission significantly sits at the heart of post-conflict urban redevelopment in Belfast. Full of self-confidence, its homepage boasts,

> Titanic by name, Titanic by nature, Belfast's Titanic Quarter is one of the world's largest urban-waterfront regeneration projects. Master-planned over 185 acres on the site where RMS Titanic was designed and built, Titanic Quarter is redefining what it means to work, live, play and stay in central Belfast. We can help you build your future among the inspiring legacy of Belfast's maritime and industrial past. ("About" n. pag.)

Highlighting a proud site-specific history of manufacturing and engineering, the past that Titanic Quarter defines itself against decidedly exceeds the temporal and associational confines of the Troubles. Indeed, home to the Titanic museum and the highly successful Titanic film studios, it has become a hub for economic growth and development. It is, however, also home to PRONI, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Concurrently, its engagement with the past is not restricted to the city's maritime and industrial legacy only. Published years before the Titanic Quarter manifested itself in its current, confident incarnation,[97] Park's novel situates the Truth Commission in a locality that continues to

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[97] PRONI moved to its current site in 2011, the Titanic Museum opened in 2012, and Harland and Wolff's headquarters and drawing office have been converted into the Titanic Hotel Belfast, which

testify to future oriented 'geographical imaginations' that are steeped in more generous readings of the Northern Irish past.

Within the novel, however, the emergence of new 'geographical imaginations' is extremely contentious. The burning of the Commission is an act of resistance against the social, political and geographical future that will result from its investigation of the past. It is an attack on the project of truth recovery and on the ways in which the emergent truth about the past might shape the development of that which is yet to come, in other words, the post-interregnum (cf. Lehner, "Post-Conflict" 73). "There'll be an inquiry of course," Truth Commissioner Stanfield reflects watching the fire, "and for the rest of their bitter, corrosive history each side will blame the other and each year a new and blossoming conspiracy theory will apportion blame" (*Truth Commissioner* 369).[98] Stanfield ridicules the messy, unsettled nature of the Northern Irish polity during the peace process, suggesting that the liminality of the political transition with its endless agreements, reports and inquiries will perpetuate itself *ad infinitum*. His vision of history in the North is reminiscent of the "widening gyre" (line 1) in W.B. Yeats's "The Second Coming"; in cyclical movements, it spirals away with the passing of each year without the hope of either renewal or redemption. At the same time, however, the fire dares him to work on in earnest against the gyre of place-specific history and towards the recovery of truth, however elusive its achievement may seem. Thinking of his estranged daughter and newly-born grandson who live in Northern Ireland, the Truth Commissioner "tightly crumples" (*Truth Commissioner* 370) his letter of resignation as well as the farewell letter he had written to his daughter. Occurring on the same day as the hearing of Connor's case, the birth of his grandson gives Stanfield, if not yet hope in historical renewal and personal redemption, a new sense of the importance of the Truth Commission's work (see Lehner "Post-Conflict" 74).

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opened in 2017. On the hotel's homepage, the "More" section illustrates the confidence with which the Titanic Quarter is marketed: "Titanic Hotel Belfast is ideally located in the centre of the Titanic Quarter, an area transformed over the past decade into Northern Ireland's premier leisure destination with numerous visitor attractions, heritage assets, restaurants and public spaces just metres from the hotel, making the building one of the best hotels in Titanic Quarter to explore the city" (*Titanic Hotel Belfast* n. pag.).

[98] This sentence is also quoted by Lehner who draws a different conclusion from it. She posits, "[a]rguably, this will mark the end of the operation of the TRC. Just as the fire engulfs the Truth Commission, so too individual stories become displaced under self-sustaining communal narratives" ("Absent" 39). While she rightfully identifies the threat to which individual truths are shown to be exposed, my reading detects the timid sound of hopefulness in the novel.

The Truth Commissioner displays an overarching concern with posterity and childbirth and it links this concern metaphorically to the male protagonists' anxieties about the past and their hopes for the future (Lehner, "Post-Conflict" 72). For the four protagonists, new-born children, actual, imagined or longed-for, come to stand as means of redress for opportunities missed and actions not taken. Not only do children embody continuity and coherence, countering the strong sense of disruption predicated by the socio-political restructuring of the peace process. More importantly, they further embody the protagonists' personal hopes that something worthwhile can yet be fashioned out of a life lived in the midst of conflict and its corruptive influences. In her study *Sons of Ulster*, Caroline Magennis has argued in a similar vein that

> [f]atherhood offers new possibilities for men's self-definition, but this can be tempered through the rhetoric of patriarchal structures in both communities. Fatherhood can be a limiting identity for Northern Irish men, but it also affords scope to re-negotiate male subjectivity away from a violent past. (144)

This wish, however, for the re-definition of subject positions detached from the experience of the past remains elusive in the novel. The male children that are to be born into the present – Gilroy's and Stanfield's grandsons, Madden's son, as well as Florian, the Romanian teenager Fenton had hoped to adopt, are all inexorably linked to the life that was untimely and unjustly taken from Connor (Lehner, "Absent" 38). Significantly, it is Connor's sister who informs Stanfield of his estranged daughter Emma's pregnancy. Meeting Connor's mother and sister prior to the public hearings before the Commission, Stanfield wonders, "[h]ow can his desire to see his only child be meshed with some other long-dead boy from a Belfast back street?" (*Truth Commissioner* 67). In the same vein, especially Fenton's dreams of fatherhood and the creation of new life are invariably rerouted to remind him of the part he played in Connor's death (see, for example, *Truth Commissioner* 311; 358). Haunting the present lives of all three, the memory of Connor's death calls into question Fenton, Gilroy and Madden's right to a future as fathers and grandfathers. In a post-conflict situation, the moral corruption that Fenton, Gilroy, Madden and Stanfield have suffered due to their prolonged exposure to the logic of conflict becomes increasingly hard to frame and to account for. While they are mostly able to account for themselves before the court of their own consciences, this accountability is harder to achieve when faced with the moral standards of a younger generation or, indeed, with those of the victim's family members.

The recurring motif of pregnancy in the novel hints towards a male longing for a post-conflict 'rebirth' and a more hopeful future. This relegation of women to the realm of national allegory is compounded by the absence of female narratives. In this very male place-specific narrative, women figure only as relative creatures:[99] As wives, daughters and siblings they witness their men's fates in states of partial ignorance and relative helplessness. The Troubles as a predominantly male event necessarily predicate female silence and second-hand suffering. On this reading, the geography of peace in *The Truth Commissioner* seems to spring from a male imagination and is made sense of in a collective male narrative. However, shaped as they are by their involvement in the conflict, the three men's ability to act is limited to a significant degree – they have become prisoners of their violent past. The novel's representation of the men's post-conflict lives thus counters a traditional understanding of masculinity in terms of, as Magennis has pointed out in a different context, "a tendency to activity, […] diametrically opposed to the culturally constructed passivity of femininity" (Magennis 129).

By contrast, the women in the novel do not appear to be subject to the same spatiotemporal limitations. Placing much metaphorical importance on the female capacity of childbearing, the novel may not depict women according to a progressive gender paradigm but, by the same token, it identifies the ability to build the future first and foremost as a female one (cf. Lehner, "Post-Conflict" 73). In our email interview, Park recalled how, in the process of writing *The Truth Commissioner*, he increasingly felt that the key to a peaceful Northern Irish society lay in the emergence of new generations, in the continuation of life:

> As I wrote the book I came to believe that future healing was not perhaps to be found in formal process but in the restoration of the normal processes of life – children being born, people falling in love, the natural passage of time and new growth. ("Re: My Questions" n. pag.)

The novel, however, does not allow Fenton, Madden and Gilroy to fully partake in this "restoration of the normal processes of life." The violent past that is re-constructed in the men's joint narrative has been shaped by male action and perception. In the form of a male narrative, the killing that occurred during the 'interregnum' of civil war leaks into the 'interregnum' of the peace process and continues to illustrate the unsettled, transitional

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[99] See Magennis, esp. 7-12, for a detailed discussion of the Troubles and the concurrent national identities as predominantly male discursive formations. Also see Lehner, "Post-Conflict," esp. 67-69, who illustrates that the peace process, too, has decidedly been dominated by male discourses and concerns.

nature of both periods. In this context, it is of no small importance that the narrative truth about Connor's death as it is assembled before the Truth Commission has been prompted by the insistent agency of Connor's mother and sister. They persevere against the resistance of Connor's elder brothers who do not wish to see the shame of their informer brother to be dragged into the light again (see *Truth Commissioner* 30). By the same token, the novel suggests, the successive interregna of civil war and peace process will eventually give way to a socio-political future catalysed and shaped by female action and female narratives.

Not posting his resignation letter in the end, Stanfield decides against taking the easy escape route out of the North. With the birth of his grandson, Stanfield experiences a change of heart that compels him to attempt to be both a more genuine and successful family man and Truth Commissioner. The traditional allegory that frames the nation in terms of the nuclear family is revived at this point when both spheres coincide for Stanfield to render his position meaningful above and beyond the euphemist 'anti-language' of the peace process (Lehner, "Post-Conflict" 74). Fenton, Gilroy and Madden, by contrast, are denied such second chances. Their lives are destroyed by their revisiting of the past before the Truth Commission. Their complicity in Connor's death, once admitted in public, erases the sharp line they had drawn between their past actions and the present incarnations of themselves (72). Irrespective of the geographical desires they have developed since the night of the killing, their public testimonies pull them back to the narrative centre in Northern Ireland. This narrative centre pivots around Connor's burial place, to which the three men are irrevocably bound by way of their separate, interweaving narrative strands. Connor, the boy who "didn't know how to live anywhere other than here" (*Truth Commissioner* 29-30) but who was not allowed to live, is eternally 'buried' in the Northern Irish past – and so are Fenton, Gilroy and Madden by way of their complicity in his death. Their present geographical desires, which draw them beyond the divisive geography of Northern Ireland, are incompatible with their shared spatialised past. This spatiotemporal tension is ultimately irresolvable and equally turns any place they choose to inhabit into a place without a future.

Language, Belonging & New "Geographical Imaginations"

In the end, the Truth Commissioner abandons, at least in part, his detached cynicism about the North as a fallen place that is beyond saving. Initially, he lacks belief in the possibility of socio-political and geographical regeneration and, concurrently, has accepted his post in Northern Ireland merely for the "nice ring" (*Truth Commissioner* 18) of the title rather than

out of concern for what he calls "the stinking cesspit of the country he's temporarily found himself domiciled in" (38). Throughout the novel, he is first and foremost a career peace-maker; someone to whom Northern Ireland is only the next rung on the ladder to international fame and fortune. Any advance towards truth and reconciliation is merely the by-product of his ascent. In this sense, the liminal nature of political transition suits him perfectly as it creates a climate in which superordinate political ideals are jettisoned in favour of personal agendas. At the same time, however, he is subject to the unpredictably dynamic field of force of political restructuring where nothing can be taken at face value. Early on in his posting in Northern Ireland, the Truth Commissioner learns that the file pertaining to Connor's case has been "doctored" by obscure agents wanting to shape the official truth according to their ends (*Truth Commissioner* 47). At this point, he realises that he is

> standing at the edge of a brackenish bog, a shifting swamp of a landscape where an ill-judged step might see him sucked into the morass. He has to be careful, perhaps more self-protective than he has ever had to be, as he increasingly glimpses a bottomless mire that waits for the foolhardy. (*Truth Commissioner* 47)

Stanfield describes the political geography of the peace process tautologically as a "bog," a "swamp," a "morass" and a "mire." The effect of this cumulative metaphor is emphatically sinister and suggests that once he interferes with the politics of this place, he will invariably lose the ground beneath his feet. The 'foolhardiness' Stanfield is wary of comprises trust in the political discourse; in anything that is presented to him as fact. The novel's representation of the language of political transformation concurs with what Brian Lynch has poignantly called the "anti-language" of the peace process which "by use excavated itself of meaning" (2). As Stanfield observes, the "linchpin word 'transparency'" as well as the phrase of "the 'integrity of the process'" (*Truth Commissioner* 21), have been reduced to empty containers; they are broken linguistic signs in which the signifiers are deprived of their signifieds. Witnessing "one of the new Prime Minister's first public speeches," Stanfield gains the impression of listening to

> a soft-centred meringue of a speech that leaves [him] feeling he has overdosed on sugar as he endures the endless references to healing and closure. […] Thankfully there is no attempted knock-out punchline such as the hand of history but only a whimpering petering out with tautological references to momentous moments and rather tired images of building the future. (*Truth Commissioner* 49-50)

In contrast to Stanfield's own tautological description above, the Prime Minister's invocation of "momentous moments" lacks stylistic poignancy and underlines the essential emptiness of his speech. The meringue metaphor highlights the light, foamy and sweet nature

of the speech; it is a decorous but unsubstantial thing that achieves, if anything at all, a sugar rush in the form of a short-lived belief in the possibility of conflict transformation and reconciliation. But the anti-climax comes, as it must: The brief excess of linguistic energy 'peters out' in uninspired rhetorical figures. The language of the peace process concurrently lacks a correspondent in the arena of political negotiation where faithful engagement with the respective other is prevented not only by inter- and intra-communal distrust, but also by the confines of this very language itself. It is for this reason that Gilroy, the Minister for Culture and Children, "wants a new way to speak": As somebody completely immersed in the political discourse of the day, he struggles with "his life [being] so full of words and so depleted of meaning. Some days it feels like he's wearing a straight jacket or his brain is clamped in a vice" (*Truth Commissioner* 262). Unable to trespass the boundaries of the discursive field he moves in, Gilroy experiences an acute curtailment of his mental capacities. Rather than his speech expressing his thoughts, his thoughts are being encroached upon by the empty political 'anti-language.' If the crisis in Northern Ireland is, in its essence, "a crisis of language" (Deane, "Heroic Styles" 6; cf. Kirkland 9), then the same indictment continues to apply to the peace process – it is part and parcel of political liminality (cf. Michely 246). On this reading, the political interregna in the North are both predicated and perpetuated by linguistic lapses.

In his 1998 Nobel lecture, unionist politician David Trimble expressed his distrust towards "the kind of rhetoric which substitutes vapour for vision" (n. pag.), and it is this very class of vaporous rhetoric that characterises Stanfield's performances of moral authority and principle at the Truth Commission. Opening the hearing of Connor's case (*Truth Commissioner* 317), he recapitulates the threadbare phrases that speak of 'healing,' 'closure' and 'building the future' that he himself has seen through and ridiculed when coming from other stakeholders of the peace process. Even though he knows from first-hand experience that Northern Ireland's political future is to be built on the present manipulation of its past, Stanfield continues to demand "truth and openness" before the Commission (*Truth Commissioner* 317). In the forced conversation between Stanfield and Walters, the MI5 agent blackmailing him, it becomes obvious that what Walters wants is Stanfield's support in the fabrication of a cohesive 'geographical imagination' for Northern Ireland. The obscure project that Walters euphemistically refers to as "constructing the future" (*Truth Commissioner* 256) is diametrically opposed to the linguistic "meringue" about "building the future" that Stanfield has had to endure at the hands of the Northern Irish Prime Minister. Walters tells him:

> There's only one thing that's certain and that is that we're leaving. Not today and perhaps not tomorrow but within a foreseeable future and you see, the problem is, Henry [Stanfield], we can't tip our hats goodbye until the bricks are in place to hold the house together. So as you might also appreciate we need people like you on occasions to understand this broader picture, to have the necessary vision. (*Truth Commissioner* 257)

Here, Walters implicitly demands of Stanfield the obfuscation of whatever version of the truth might be adverse to the current political settlement. Walters' stance thus echoes, in a more menacing manner, Nina's understanding of MO2 in Ciaran Carson's *The Pen Friend*. As a "field officer" for a fictional intelligence agency called MO2, it is part of Nina's brief to support the British endeavour "to get shot of Northern Ireland" (*Pen Friend* 47). In the same way that Walters targets the Truth Commissioner, MO2 targets "[t]he up-and-coming cream, the incipient meritocracy" (47). In Carson's novel, too, infiltration of the socio-political establishment is aimed at securing an outcome of the conflict that will comply with British interests and as such betrays a high-handed, almost colonial approach to conflict resolution. Stanfield knows "that what [Walters] really means is people who will close their eyes at the required time" (*Truth Commissioner* 257-58), cloaking their pretence of ignorance with the appropriate language of truth and reconciliation.

Ironically, Walters' exposé recycles another phrase that David Trimble used to great effect in his Noble lecture. Speaking of the daunting legacy of sectarianism in the North, he acknowledged the responsibility that unionists and nationalists shared between them: "Ulster Unionists, fearful of being isolated on the island, built a solid house, but it was a cold house for catholics. And northern nationalists, although they had a roof over their heads, seemed to us as if they meant to burn the house down" (n. pag.). Describing the state in terms of a house is not an original spatial metaphor, but it is one that succeeds in highlighting the constructed quality of any polity. A house, just as the polity, is designed, built and maintained according to the proprietor's wishes who can in turn determine the inhabitants' terms of residency. Walters depicts British influence in post-conflict Northern Ireland as the scaffolding propping up a house that is as yet under (re-)construction. While this much may be true, he implies that the house must be finished in such a way as to accommodate the needs – not of its inhabitants – but of the British state as the landlord. Concurrently, Walters' brief at the Truth Commission is to secure an official narrative of the truth that will guarantee, or at least not imperil, the peaceful coexistence of the state's inhabitants under the existing power-sharing arrangement. At the heart of this intervention lies the desire to control the 'geographical imagination' that is to emerge from the process of truth recovery.

As Doreen Massey has argued, the definition of a place through a selective narrative of the past always serves an ideological purpose ("Places" 185; also Jess and Massey 134). The obscure manipulation of Northern Ireland's official history as established by the Truth Commission hence allows Walters to shape the future of the polity to a degree unattainable in overt, transparent politics.

Walters can avail of this interferential leeway because of the North's political liminality throughout the peace process. The political uncertainties of the peace process initiate a series of social and spatial transformations of the North's cultural geography which makes it increasingly difficult for the protagonists to locate their subject positions. The redistribution of political and, indeed, of moral authority initiated by the Good Friday Agreement is portrayed to challenge traditional patterns of territoriality and of bounded place identities. It produces an acute sense of dislocation and alienation for the protagonists on each side of the political divide – Stanfield's wariness of this "shifting swamp of a landscape" is shared by Fenton, Gilroy and Madden as their old geographical beliefs are increasingly incongruent with the emerging spatial practices. For them, the social redistribution of political power goes hand in hand with feelings of dislocation and crises of identity (cf. Lehner, "Post-Conflict" 72), which in turn demands the location of new subject positions outside of the cultural and political geography of Northern Ireland. For them, only evasion, be it physical or imaginary, offers routes to personal respite if never to redemption. In the post-conflict period of the political negotiation of peace, they are unable to find their footing, to make sense of the changing socio-political landscape they inhabit. The internal pressure for the creation of inclusive place identities as well as the external influences of globalised culture make the emergence of a new 'geographical imagination' imperative which in turn results in profound personal crises of belonging. The protagonists' inability to link their subject positions to the North's transitional socio-political geography provokes attempts at imagining alternative and highly subjective geographical trajectories outside of the specificities of Northern Ireland.

These escapist geographical desires are represented to coincide with a tendency to discard that which lies inside the Northern Irish border, turning the political aspirations of both unionists and nationalists effectively into a farce. The unionist ideal of stalwart, loyal Ulster on the one hand as well as the nationalist ideal of "the island of Ireland as an indivisible garment" (Buckland 94) lose their importance as the border does no longer sharpen the sense of national identity at either end of the political spectrum. This profound socio-spatial disruption in the North combines with the economic impact of the Celtic Tiger

in the South to undermine traditional patterns of spatial identification. Rigid national identities become increasingly incompatible with the economic desires created by the modern, globalised world. This holds true as much for nationalists as it does for unionists. Commenting on the abundance of property in Co. Donegal owned by northern Protestants, for instance, Gilroy remarks sardonically: "It's funny though with Prods – they'd fight to the death to avoid a united Ireland and cut your throat for a holiday home in it" (*Truth Commissioner* 265). As Roy Foster has pointed out, the series of negotiations between the Irish and the British governments and the political parties of Northern Ireland from the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement gradually implemented the pragmatic acceptance both of the Irish border and of the Irish Republic's involvement in the name of peace (132-33). Paradoxically, the peace process managed to make the border more endurable and more permeable at the same time, and thus achieved a moderation of the border discourses on both sides of the political divide. In the place of formerly secure national identities, there is now only a shared contempt for the territory of Northern Ireland which unites the novel's four protagonists and which is the new and miserable common ground of their 'geographical imaginations.' The growing inability to ascribe meaning to their territory, to establish "a sense of place […] as part of [their] cultural interpretation of the world" makes it increasingly difficult for them to locate both themselves and the 'other' against which they might define their identity (Rose 99).

Retired RUC officer James Fenton projects his desire for spatial belonging increasingly onto Romania, which might be "enough for him to shrug off whatever it is that clings to him" (*Truth Commissioner* 156). Fenton's escapist tendencies are fuelled by his sense of having somehow been corrupted by his service during the Troubles, a feeling that has been corroborated by his being pensioned off as part of a post-conflict police reform (see 143, 127). While the details go unnamed in the novel, there is a real-life corollary in the 2001 police reform initiated by the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland. In January 2000, some four months after the commission released its report, the then Chairman of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland expressed his disappointment at the proposed changes in a letter to the members of the RUC. The reasons for his disappointment included the alteration of the force's name and badge (Rodgers n. pag.).

Signalling a more than symbolical rupture with the RUC's past, the bitterness of the proposed reform to the force's members could not have been much assuaged by the award of the George Cross to the RUC in April 2000. On the occasion, Peter Mandelson, the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, praised the RUC, saying that "[f]or 30 years the RUC

held the line between democracy and terrorism" ("George Cross" n. pag.). Once all-out terrorism was gone, however, the force too was arguably considered part of the violent past that could not continue unchanged. The changes, including a new recruitment quota and a considerable reduction of the force, were necessary to render the force acceptable to all strands of society. They implied, however, a sweeping prejudice against the force's *esprit de corps*. Concurrently, Fenton resents that "his generation" are being "considered part of the corporate embarrassment, part of a past that had to be quietly replaced" (*Truth Commissioner* 127). This replacement of the past, however, has wider and more obscure implications than Fenton could have imagined. As Fenton is called before the Truth Commission to testify in Connor's case, he too is pressurised by the secret service who do not wish Gilroy's name to be mentioned before the Commission. Convinced of Gilroy's guilt, Fenton is exasperated: "They took the name, they took the badge, any kind of respect that was owed, and now they want to take the truth and twist it into whatever shape they think suits them best?" (134). The parallel structuring of the sentence highlights the common ground Fenton perceives between the oath, the badge and the truth, all of which has been, or is about to be, taken from him. The common ground between these three items consists in the lack of respect for his commitment to the police, which is reflected not only in the changes to the police name and badge, but also in depriving him of the truth about his past as a member of the RUC. Although the disturbing memories of his time of service hold Fenton in a firm emotional grip (see *Truth Commissioner* 127), he has at the same time been separated from his professional past by the forces of political restructuring. Fenton's compulsory mountain hiking as well as his regular trips to an orphanage in Romania are attempts at resolving this tension between his experiences of the past and the present. He desperately seeks to open up a space that might accommodate the post-conflict existence he is attempting to construct. His need for wide, uninhabited mountainscapes is, however, tragically reversed by the public hearing before the Commission. Listening to a recording of Connor's voice, Fenton "feels as if he's standing on an exposed plain devoid of any feature that might shelter" (327). This forceful re-immersion in a past he had tried to forget duly alters Fenton's perception of his present surroundings, from which suicide now appears to be his only escape. To this end, he drives into his formerly beloved mountains, which seem transformed into "the bleak and barren heart of the world" (358).

In a similar vein, Michael Madden has tried to locate his subject-position-in-the-making outside of the claustrophobically 'narrow ground' of his birthplace (see *Truth Commissioner* 200). His star-crossed attempts at self-reinvention are the most extreme in the

novel: After witnessing Connor's killing, he fled to Florida, where he lives illegally under the name of Danny. Calling forth associations with "Danny Boy," a well-known Irish folk song dealing with the sorrow of leave-taking, his adopted name illustrates the finality of his leaving. 'American wake' was, after all, the name given to those get-togethers that marked the, more often than not, final departure of Irish emigrants to North America. Madden cherishes Florida's "seemingly disconnected slew of houses [... where] no one has to live inside the pockets of someone else's paranoia" (*Truth Commissioner* 208) that are diametrically opposed to his experience of segregated space in his native Northern Ireland. With Fenton, he shares the desire for the experience of open spaces that allow for an unimpeded view and, hence, for a singularly individual perception of space. The globalised space of Florida provides Madden with the opportunity to achieve the reconciliation of "distinct temporalities" (D. Massey, "Imagining" 14) that was entirely precluded during the Troubles, where the separate, politically motivated 'envelopes of space-time' merely coexisted in contentious dissociation. For Madden, this hopeful belief in spatiotemporal reconciliation is epitomised in the pregnancy of Ramona, his Latina fiancé, whose belly to him holds the promise of "a new and better land" (*Truth Commissioner* 200). The allegiance to the US-American canon of future-oriented values unites Madden and Ramona in their belief that a prosperous and decent future will yet be achievable regardless of their brutalising pasts.

Francis Gilroy, the Minister for Children and Culture, equally experiences an acute sense of alienation that expresses itself in spiritual terms. Due to his involvement in the peace process and the devolved power-sharing institutions, Gilroy suffers not only an epistemological but also an ontological crisis. Formerly a committed IRA commander who took part in the republican Blanket Protests of the 1970s (see *Truth Commissioner* 79) and in one of the break-outs from Long Kesh prison (see 92), he has sacrificed his life and health to the republican struggle. After a "lifetime of commitment" (82), he now feels that

> Something is happening to him. Maybe it's the menopause because he has read that it happens to men as well. He feels increasingly sentimental about things in a way that sometimes makes him feel vulnerable and foolish. […] He […] wonders what it has been all about. For the people? For Ireland? It is a strange thought but several times in the last few months he has been afflicted by the idea that Ireland does not exist. Like God it's just perhaps some concept that has no meaning apart from the one you construct in your head. (81-82)

The tectonic shifts ushered in by the peace process prompt Gilroy to commit this sacrilege – in one single train of thought, he offers up for debate the three holy pillars of the republican

struggle: masculinity, Catholicism and the integrity of Ireland. His doctrinal belief in the existence of Ireland as his "ancestral homeland," which both inspired and required "religious attachment" (Smith, *Chosen Peoples* 151) falters along with the threadbare political 'anti-language' that now controls and contains his thoughts.[100] His sentimentality about the past is fuelled by a vague memory of a time when his actions were still inspired by a "passionate intensity" to use Yeats's phrase ("The Second Coming" line 8). From the vantage point of the conflict-resolution period, he finds it increasingly hard both to recall the motivation and to account for his paramilitary actions. He now questions the limits of the knowledge on which he has built his personal and political life. Likening the concept of nationalist Ireland to the concept of a Christian God, he confirms its spiritual importance only to debase both God and Ireland in the very same sentence: Both are equally subject to ontological uncertainty – their existence depends solely on his faltering belief in them as meaningful entities. As the island of Ireland, the "ancestral homeland, conceived of as a blessed, sacred island with a pervasive Gaelic culture from the first millennium" (Smith, *Chosen Peoples* 154), ceases to provide him with a stable spatialised identity, Gilroy suffers increasingly from a sense of social isolation that is akin to Fenton's. Losing his grip on the man he used to be, he becomes alien to himself as well as to his wife and friends. A sense of belonging can now only be achieved by means of his individual 'geographical imagination,' which provides him with an escapist, undefined "somewhere else [... a] place he's never been, but which he know believes exists, a secret whose revelation has been denied to him" (*Truth Commissioner* 94).

Coming Full Circle

Even though none of the three Northern Irish protagonists, neither Fenton, Gilroy or Madden, was present at the moment of Connor's death, their combined testimonies before the Truth Commission yield as much of the truth as will ever be available to Connor's family. Acting as an unexpected catalyst, Madden's truthful testimony is the most important one: It prompts Minister Gilroy's summoning before the Commission and thus extracts the circumstances of Connor's death against the odds of political power old and new. In an

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[100] See Anthony D. Smith's chapter on "Sacred Homelands" in *Chosen Peoples*, where he explains the socio-cultural processes that turn national territories into reservoirs of communal identity. He especially accounts for the discursive processes that, steeped in Celtic heritage, Catholicism and anti-oppression writings, forged the vision of island of Ireland as a "sacred" entity (151-54).

unlikely coalition, the IRA and the British security service are united in their attempts at saving Gilroy and, by extension, the power-sharing institutions. Both the RUC and the MI5 have been accused of colluding with loyalist paramilitaries, and it is one of the post-conflict ironies presented in the novel that the IRA's intentions should be coinciding with those of the British state. The acuteness of Madden's memory of the evening of Connor's death is surprising given the length of time that has elapsed in the meantime. Once allowed to be formulated, his telling seems to be the audible rendering of a narrative relay that has been replaying in his head ever since the traumatic incident. As opposed to the self-incriminating narrative that he is supposed to tell before the commission, a rendering that is to be couched in the corporate language of his IRA blackmailers, his own courageous narrative carries the stamp of individual perception. However, as he relates his memories of Connor's abduction by the IRA before the Commission, "he's aware that his voice and the words he's using sound intensely strange, as if he has reverted to an older language that has rusted unused and almost forgotten" (*Truth Commissioner* 338). Employing the "older language" of the civil-war period, Madden feels increasingly alienated from himself as the re-living of his memories requires a re-immersion in the person that he used to be. Scarcely recognising his own voice anymore, the public performance of memory catapults him back to a time and place that were inhabited by an earlier incarnation of himself.

The Truth Commissioner's obsession with the representations of time and place is nowhere as prominent as in the first and the last episode of the novel. Tellingly entitled "Beginnings" and "Endings," these episodes locate the narrative in a frame that draws extensively on spatial imagery. If juxtaposed to one another, these episodes offer a poignant comparison between 'the narrow ground' as the outdated organising pattern of Northern Irish society and the ongoing transformation thereof as part of the peace process. The first paragraph of "Beginnings," which relates the details of Connor's abduction to a rural IRA safe house outside of Belfast, states the following:

> The familiar is what [Connor] knows and never willingly strays from, so all his life has been a slow trawl through the safety of his own area where the boundaries are fixed and mind-narrowed into a meshed grid of streets and a couple of roads that only rarely has he followed into the city's centre. [...] So the journey he's being taken on feels as if he's travelling to the end of the world and he's frightened that he could fall off its unknown, unchartered edge. (*Truth Commissioner* 1)

This passage highlights a sense of spatial belonging as the main factor in creating and maintaining a feeling of both bodily and psychological safety. The definite geographical boundaries of Connor's republican area completely contain his body and mind – it is as if

they were mapped onto the confines of his body in allegorical fashion. Interestingly, the area's boundaries offer a notion of safety that favours the spatial above the social, and thus relegates communal belonging to a secondary level. From this description, republican West Belfast emerges as a heterotopic site in the Foucauldian sense: Connor perceives it as a bounded place which both underlies "a system of opening and closing" ("Other Spaces" 26) and has "a function in relation to all the space that remains" (27). It is, however, this "mind-narrowed" binary organisation of the social in terms of the spatial that collapses heavily onto those who cross the set boundaries. Speaking to RUC officer Fenton, Connor injures the social boundaries of his community and, as a means of punishment, is forcefully taken beyond the geographical boundaries of "his own area." Connor's abduction from his native heterotopia comes to a terrible conclusion in his death, which equally takes him beyond the boundaries of his own body.

"Endings," which is set after the hearings at the Truth Commission, again shows a deep concern with geography. Comprising only one and a half pages, the episode consists of a detailed account of the setting, as the metaphorical "shifting swamp of a landscape" (*Truth Commissioner* 47) of truth recovery finally yields to the "remote stretch of bogland" (371) where Connor's corpse has been deposed of:

> In an hour the vestiges of mist will have faded and light will shock everywhere into new definition. Now any searching eye might see colour if it has the patience to look […]. But this is not somewhere that humans ever come. […]
>
> Then as the light slowly levers open the sky there is a new sound as dawn begins its daily skirmish with the water to conjure reedy, windblown reflections and stir the drift of bog myrtle. […] And then in the first true light of morning a yellow digger trundles along the pitted track and when it reaches the edge of the bog it stops its engine and waits. Soon others will arrive with their transit vans and equipment, their thermal-imaging cameras and their marking poles. But for the moment the driver sits alone waiting in his cab […] and, pressing his hands together as if he's praying, lifts them to his mouth and tries to fill them with the warmth of his breath. (*Truth Commissioner* 371-72)

In spite of the political manipulation and the human tragedy depicted in the novel, "Endings" seems to offer a hopefulness for the future that is, significantly, expressed in spatial terms. Its language strongly suggests an allegorical remapping of the bog where Connor's body lays buried, making recurring references to the emergence of "light" as well as eyesight, "colour" and "dawn" along with their connotations of knowledge, perception, newness and even truth. These metaphorical references to the human capacity of arriving at and processing new insights are mirrored and reinforced by the technical "equipment" that is to

be brought in, which equally serves the purpose of establishing knowledge by extracting information from the earth. As a whole, the passage points towards the transformation of earth into light, of obscurity into clarity. The excavation of the corpse at the end of the book thus sends a powerful reminder of the necessity for a re-conceptualisation of 'the narrow ground' of the North as part of the peace process. The engagement with the buried past, the ending suggests, will offer new paths to shared space and, by extension, to a shared future: "In an hour the vestiges of mist will have faded and light will shock everywhere into new definition."

Both in terms of content and concern, *The Truth Commissioner* belongs to what Eamonn Hughes has spoken of as "post-peace-process fiction" ("Limbo" 138). Although reservations about the "post" part of the phrase appear to be in order, Hughes' analysis of an earlier set of novels is characterised by his customary lucidity as he writes:

> In line with much fiction from the North since 1994 there is a backward look in these novels and a sense that the present political situation rests precariously on a foundation of lies, guilty secrets and amnesiac evasions. This is the *mise-en-scène* of the paranoid thriller, the dominant form of Troubles fiction, which […] has in many cases been reoriented so that the Peace Process rather than the Troubles becomes the focus of its delusional semiology. [… T]he Peace Process was imagined as a locus of dark secrets and double dealing which rendered it unstable and vulnerable to the emergence of the truth. (139)

In acknowledgment of the existential plurality of truth, Hughes goes on to explore the "very different concepts of truth that are at stake" in the novels under his consideration. In *The Truth Commissioner*, as has been argued above, the truth at stake before the Commission turns out to be geographical rather than rhetorical. In the novel, the peace process remains the locus of hypocrisy and double-cross, but it curiously creates a field of force that propels the individual to speak their personal truth. For Fenton, Gilroy and Madden, the hearing before the Commission is the first retelling of the past and it duly destroys the lives they have built for themselves in the present (see Lehner "Absent" 38). Their narratives draw each of them back into a spatialised past that is incompatible with their present geographical desires. The collective narrative they create, however, reveals Connor's burial place and thus provides a hopeful path out of the violent country of the past: The quest for truth bypasses the old and untrustworthy "anti-language" of the peace process and grounds its revelation in something altogether more firm – in the land itself.

This line of thought might seem precarious, bringing to mind Ciaran Carson's famously cutting review of Seamus Heaney's much acclaimed collection *North*, which was

first published in 1975. Entitled "Escaped from the Massacre," Carson's review criticizes the mythicised and mythicising bog poems, exclaiming that "Heaney seems to have moved – unwillingly, perhaps – from being a writer with the gift of percision [sic.], to become the laureate of violence – a mythmaker, an anthropologist of ritual killing, an apologist for ''" [sic.] the situation, in the last resort, a mystifier" (183).[101] Carson's criticism is grounded in the belief that the cloaking of sectarian violence in mythological references ultimately bestows an unwarranted degree of legitimacy and aestheticism on that which must be condemned. It is significant, hence, that Park himself acknowledges the connection of his novel's ending to Heaney's bog poems. He shows an acute awareness of the discursive framing at stake when he writes:

> The novel ends in a bog where so many bodies of the disappeared were buried. This location has a precise geographical reality but also a mythic one. These are ancient places full of history and preservers of the past. Heaney's bog poems in *North* explore these places which eventually give up the dead – those murdered or sacrificed in ancient ritual. The novel ends with an image of the digger driver pressing his hands together as if praying and there is an understated sense that this is a religious moment where the dead are brought back into the light. […] (Park, "Re: My Questions" n. pag.)

While the final passage of the novel acknowledges the mythic importance of the bog, it also exposes and challenges it. The killing was demanded by the mythic quality of an "allegorical landscape" which, as Kirkland argues following Walter Benjamin, "has no boundaries, no possibility of escape back to a world of pure matter, and can provoke little more than a longing for a violent dissolution of the totality" (5). Yet, this bog is at the same time the site of a very precise and personal truth. It is here that the men's narratives converge to yield Connor's burial place. The excavation of Connor's body undermines the assumed geographical stasis of Northern Ireland during and prior to the conflict. The description of the small events that take place in this unpopulated, uncivilised landscape – the watery sounds, the quiet conflicts between light and water – suggest a primal, timeless form of continuity that paints over the IRA's deadly interference with it. As such, the mythic framing of the bog is portrayed to be complicit with the IRA's violent nationalism – both are steeped in Gaelic mythology and in readings of the uncolonised land as an identity reservoir for Irish nationalists (see Smith 131, 151-54). And yet, in the yielding of Connor's body, the bog is

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[101] Eamonn Hughes makes a related point. He observes that "the 'archeological' poems of Seamus Heaney" perpetuate conceptualisations of the North as "enclosed and, more importantly, static," because "the answers which the poet seeks are to be found by delving ever deeper into the ground of Northern Ireland" ("Northern Ireland – Border Country" 5). Also see Neal Alexander 5.

transformed and subject to a "new definition" (*Truth Commissioner* 371). The mythic existence of the bog is violently disrupted by the builders' heavy machinery as it is re-mapped by "their thermal-imaging cameras and their marking poles" (372). As the digger breaks open the ground, mythic space-time ceases to exist. I thus wish to contradict Lehner who suggests that the novel "ends with description of a pristine innocent landscape that is disrupted by the arrival of a digger" ("Absent" 37). In its heavy mythicality, the bog is far from "pristine." In my reading, it is exactly the (apparent) absence of human interference with the bog, which in itself is narratively constructed, that allows for mythic readings of the landscape. The digger disrupts not the bog's innocence but rather its suspiciously mythic existence. The final image of digger driver locked into contemplation marks the almost spiritual importance of this geographical remaking. He is about to witness a liminal moment where death and re-birth are meshed into one violent experience of allegorical socio-spatial transition. The closing passage of the novel thus testifies to Doreen Massey's claim that "for time to be new, we have to think of space as changing and 'open'" ("Imagining" 40).

Accounting for the "grotesque visions of maternity" that male authors have tended to conjure up in contemporary Northern Irish fiction, Magennis has identified an "over-identification with, and then a rejection of, Mother Ireland, who sends her sons to die and is all-devouring" (33). From the traditional genre of the Aisling poem to Yeats and beyond, the island of Ireland under British rule has been imagined as a beautiful, imperilled maiden, a widow, a whore or a bloodthirsty hag, but in line with other national imaginaries always as an allegorical female body (24; Smith, *Chosen Peoples* 152-53). In the context of Northern Irish fiction, produced in the midst or in the aftermath of sectarian conflict, this allegorical trajectory produces a very specific reservoir or gender-specific meaning, as Magennis argues:

> The maternal has a radical symbolic potential, and this is exaggerated in Northern Irish literature due to competing yet misogynist discourses of maternity. The reproductive capacity of women can be contrasted with the conflict in Northern Ireland, and sexuality and fecundity can challenge the established order of piety, sacrifice and sectarianism. One cannot overlook the fact that they have been conjured up by male authors, and this affords us a way into looking at how men figure their own bodies, as sons, fathers, lovers or murderers, as well as their relationship to national ideology. (33)

While, as Park puts it, "the dead are brought back into the light" ("Re: My Questions" n. pag.), there is also one of the "grotesque visions of maternity" that Magennis describes as the Irish soil miscarries one of her own children. The stillbirth of Connor's body from the

bog effectively de-mystifies nationalist perceptions of the land as an idealised female body. In this horrendous vision of violent nationalism, the insemination of the soil with blood yields only death. Reproduction, on this reading, is not precisely in contrast with the conflict. Rather, the conflict reverses the nature of reproduction from the creation of life to the creation of death. Yet, the novel's allegorical portrayal of maternity is not steeped in misogyny as it, importantly, exposes nationalism and sectarianism, the conflict itself, as springing from an exclusively male mindscape. It is the demythicised, unallegorical female body on its own terms that holds the promise of a peaceful political future.

3.3 The Long Way Home: Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Five Minutes of Heaven* (2009)

My starting point here shall be that which serves as the concluding point in Helen Hackett's consideration of Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy, namely, that "[f]or all its fantastical and nightmarish qualities, revenge tragedy can be understood as a response to ideological pressures in the real world of its time" (85). As *Gull* and *The Truth Commissioner* do in their own and different ways, Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Five Minutes of Heaven* also engages in a startling fashion with the challenging socio-political landscape of contemporary Northern Ireland. The film offers a controversial "response to [the] ideological pressures in the real world of its time" by tackling the more uncomfortable issues left unresolved by the peace process and the political attempts at establishing a polity governed by the demands of realpolitik. Released in 2009, *Five Minutes of Heaven* is to all intents and purposes a thwarted revenge tragedy or, rather, a tragedy about revenge thwarted.[102] While early-modern genre conventions cannot be transplanted to contemporary cultural production without the necessary circumspection, watching the film through the lens of revenge tragedy reveals startling perspectives on the protagonists' psyches as well as on the state of the peace process. In the context of conflict transformation, Lehner has argued, "[t]he issue of dealing with the past forms a constant theme and, as such, incorporates […] discourses about justice and identity" ("Post-Conflict" 65). This entails "a shift from an emphasis on retributive notions of justice to restorative practices" (65) and is, as such, strikingly at odds with the literary conventions of the revenge tragedy that the film taps into. As Hackett explains, "the

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[102] Katherine Graham's conference paper "'You mean some strange revenge': The Jacobean Intersections of Revenge and the Strange" and the subsequent discussion made me realise this with sudden clarity. She gave this paper at the "Strangeness in Early Stuart Performances" symposium at Saarland University in November 2016.

ingredients that characterised Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy […] included artful modes of death, dismembered body-parts, ghosts, ingenious villainy, moral ambivalence, emotional excess, and madness" (81; cf. Pollard 58). While morality and extreme mental states are of importance in *Five Minutes of Heaven* too, one blatant absence in light of these crass conventions is the absence of such graphic gore and bloodshed. In spite of the raging lust for bloody retribution, there might be fighting, but there is no revenge. This very absence, I will argue, hints paradoxically at the stubborn elusiveness of reconciliation itself.

The counter-generic absence of revenge implicitly reflects another absence in the socio-political reality to which the film alludes. As *The Truth Commissioner*, *Five Minutes of Heaven* criticises the lack of official commitment to truth and reconciliation due to which victims and survivors are thrown back onto their own resources. While sectarian crimes past and present receive much public and political attention, healing is mostly perceived to be a private matter and a personal responsibility. Far from advocating violence, the film portrays the psychological toll of the peace process on those who are unable to heal of their own accord, unassisted by a coherent institutionalised process of reconciliation, of truth recovery and, perhaps most importantly, of official acknowledgement of responsibility. The crucial questions of victimhood and official justice, of communal and personal closure are played out in the film on two separate planes, one specifically personal, one allegorically imprecise. While offering a suitably uncomfortable narrative of hard-won personal closure, the film also allows for an allegorical reading that portrays communal closure in the somewhat simplified manner of flowchart diagram: If only each side involved owned up to their own demons, then society as a whole could find closure and peaceful coexistence would surely follow. Somewhat paradoxically, the film both perpetuates and interrogates "the historical framing of reconciliation in Northern Ireland as 'community relations'" (82) which, as Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie show persuasively, has chipped away at the integrity of the very term 'reconciliation' for some forty years. "The 'two-traditions' […] paradigm was," as they explain, "arguably until the current peace process, the dominant construct for not only framing an analysis of the *nature* of the conflict for much of its history, but also of what was required to achieve its *resolution* through *reconciliation* between those warring traditions" (83, emphasis in original). As an elitist approach, first adopted by the British government (84), it has demeaned a 'problematic' Northern Irish working class while glossing over other causes of the conflict, such as the involvement of British and Irish state actors as well as structural inequalities within Northern Ireland (83; 98). Concurrently, the causes of the conflict as well as the responsibility for reconciliation

has predominantly been sought within Northern Irish society alone. While the film is doubtlessly distrustful of this reductive variant of the reconciliation paradigm, it refrains from straying beyond the claustrophobic constraints of intercommunal (and interpersonal) relations gone fatally wrong.

Five Minutes of Heaven belongs to a host of cultural products imagining the possibility of truth and reconciliation in Northern Ireland from a post-conflict vantage point. As, for instance, the relatively recent films *Bloody Sunday* (2002) and *Hunger* (2008), *Five Minutes of Heaven* is a fiction based on a real-life incident involving real-life people, which effectively heightens the burden of social and political responsibility it takes on. Oliver Hirschbiegel, who impressively made a name for himself with *Downfall* (2004) and more recently with *13 Minutes* (2015), obviously has a penchant for difficult historical material. It appears not to be unlike him, thus, to tackle the legacy of the Northern Irish civil war from a perspective that only few directors have chosen to explore. Upon the release of *Hunger*, David McKittrick deplored the lack of filmic representations centring on the loyalist/unionist side of the Northern Irish political equation with flourish:

> The world finds much of interest in the Republican story. There is violence, intriguing personalities, a sense of the underdog pitted against the might of Britain. Add in some swirling Celtic music by the Chieftains or Enya, and a movie can easily take shape.
>
> The perceived Protestant narrative, however, is one of a reactionary frontier community grimly holding on and opposing change. This is enough to make film-makers shudder and turn their attentions elsewhere: they find the Republicans intriguing but the Protestants problematic. ("Why Irish Protestants" n. pag.)

As *Bloody Sunday*, *Five Minutes of Heaven* deliberately undermines the artificial and convenient separation between the republican and the Protestant narratives of Northern Ireland. Both films include the Protestant side of the political conflict, aiming in a way at an always elusive cultural balance. Incidentally, both star Ballymena-born Protestant actor James Nesbitt who spoke candidly about his roles in an interview with Marie-Louise Muir for the BBC's *Arts Extra* programme. *Bloody Sunday* pivots on the role the Protestant MP Ivan Cooper played in leading the fateful civil-rights march in the predominantly nationalist city of Derry/Londonderry in the course of which thirteen marchers were killed by a British parachute regiment.[103] Bloody Sunday has remained a scarring memory for many people in

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[103] After a botched investigation into Bloody Sunday chaired by Lord Chief Justice Widgery in 1972, the innocence of the victims was established as late as 2010 by the Saville Inquiry. Following the release of the Saville Report, the then Prime Minister David Cameron issued an historic apology which was publicly broadcast in Derry's Guildhall Square. Philip McGarry refers to the apology as "One of David Cameron's finest moments." Cameron's concession "that Bloody Sunday was

and beyond Derry, the bitterness of which was exacerbated in 1972 by an official inquiry that came to be known as the Widgery Whitewash. The inquiry concluded that the soldiers had acted in self-defence, falsely belying the testimonies of numerous eyewitnesses. With great courage, the film *Bloody Sunday* offered a version of the event that, at the time of the film's release, differed markedly from the established official truth. The film exonerated those who had died at the hands of the British army a full eight years before the Saville Inquiry officially established their innocence in 2010. As such, the film quite deliberately tread highly contentious territory. In the interview with the BBC, Nesbitt acknowledges that

> unquestionably I was scared. I was scared about what my family would think, […] about what friends would think. I was scared of misrepresenting or, or, or, or people from my background, feeling that I was in some way betraying them. I was also very scared that nationalists in Derry and the families would not appreciate the idea of Ivan being at the centre of it even though, I mean, he was MP. Or, or, but also this, you know, Protestant actor from up in Coleraine, what would he know about our story? (Nesbitt 20:12-20:39).

Nesbitt acknowledges that there is still a divisive sense of territorial and, importantly, confessional ownership of certain stories. In *Five Minutes of Heaven*, this principle is flipped upside-down with the two lead actors – James Nesbitt and Liam Neeson – playing parts that coincide with the respective other's confession (cf. Barton 214). What is more, both sides of the main political divide are portrayed as equally swept up in violence and thus as equally 'problematic' to use McKittrick's term. The murder around which the film revolves, however, was committed by a Protestant paramilitary who felt himself as an 'underdog pitted against the might' – not of Britain – but of Irish republicanism. In the end, it is this very Protestant who is transformed into an advocate of peace and of social and political change. The film is, hence, decidedly a post-conflict, peace-process piece of work that confines the depiction of troubled Northern Ireland – always easily exploitable for sensationalist effects – to the first twenty of its running time of almost ninety minutes. I thus wish to contradict Barton who claims that

> for all its post-Troubles emphasis and exploration of the ambiguities of reconciliation, *Five Minutes* still rehearses many of the signifiers of conventional Troubles cinema. For instance, the opening sequences emphasise the commonalities shared by the killer and the victim […] In this community, ties are as strong as strong as divisions. In common, too, with Troubles cinema narrative conventions, the killing is identified as senseless […]. (214)

'unjustified and unjustifiable' […] had the virtue of being simple, clear and honest, and it made a genuine, immediate and lasting impact" (n. pag.).

While the above is certainly the case, it is equally important that these references to the conventions of "Troubles cinema" occur in the film's "opening sequences" only. The film is marked by a split of cinematic conventions that coincides with its two separate temporal planes: There is the first, and shorter, part of the film dedicated to the night of the sectarian killing in 1975, and then there is the second, longer one, dedicated to the post-conflict present. Beyond the first twenty minutes, the film notably refuses to tap into the run-of-the-mill narratives of Northern Ireland's socio-political communities and their respective wrongs and grievances. Rather, it focusses tightly on the life narratives of two individuals whose very personal, very emotional conflict merely stems from the communal division of the past. Ingrained in the makeup of the film is thus a sense of the ongoing quest for new communal narratives and, concurrently, for new narrative conventions.

The film takes its cue from the real-life story of Joe Griffin and Alistair Little, whose lives crossed fatefully due to a Troubles-related incident in the 1970s. When he was seventeen, Alistair Little shot dead Joe Griffin's seventeen-year old brother at the Griffin family home in Lurgan. A member of the local branch of the Ulster Volunteer Force, Alistair was convicted of murder and subsequently served thirteen years in prison. Following his release, he eventually became a professional conciliator, doing international workshops on reconciliation and crime-prevention (McLean n. pag.). Joe, by contrast, who at the age of thirteen had witnessed the killing of his elder brother, had fallen into a life of crime and addiction. His family life was inexorably torn asunder by the violent death of his brother: His remaining brother committed suicide while his mother continuously blamed him for not having prevented the killing (Nesbitt 24:50-25:00). The meticulous research on the men's life narratives is mirrored by the film's earnest engagement with their post-war existences. As Craig McLean points out, "[w]ritten by Guy Hibbert (*Omagh*) who worked with Little and Griffin over three years to develop the story, *Five Minutes Of Heaven* depicts the arranging of a meeting between two men who, in reality, have not met since the night of the murder" (n. pag.). The idea of staging a meeting between Alistair and Joe stemmed from a BBC television programme on truth and reconciliation that was to depict the men's encounter under the supervision of South African human-rights activist Desmond Tutu. The plans for the programme, however, were aborted when "the BBC cottoned on that all wasn't right with Joe" (Nesbitt 24:30-24:34). When Hibbert subsequently met with Joe to pursue the story, "it transpired," Nesbitt recounts, "that Joe had been going to do the programme […] because he wanted to kill Alistair Little on camera" (24:42-24:48). While Alistair and Joe's meeting as envisioned by the film is purely fictional, their memories, feelings and

attitudes have informed the way in which the film stages their forceful encounter. The film thus provides a fictional ending to a story the loose ends of which were not to be tied up in real life.

<center>*Staging Revenge in Times of Peace*</center>

Five Minutes of Heaven examines the possibility of personal as well as allegorical reconciliation, focussing on two personal encounters – one public, one private – between Joe Griffin, played by Nesbitt, and Alistair Little, played by Neeson.[104] The fictional pivot of the film is the set of a TV programme called *One on One*, where, thirty-three years after the killing of Joe's brother, Joe and Alistair are to meet in a symbolically important act of reconciliation. During the first twenty minutes, the background for the men's meeting is given in graphic detail, as the film begins with the night of the killing in Lurgan in 1975: A teenage Alistair prepares for the killing, is collected by his partners in crime, drives to the Griffins' house and shoots Joe's brother through the living room window in cold blood while the child Joe witnesses the killing from the street where he has been kicking a ball against the wall. Throughout the film, Joe's heart-breaking memories of the aftermath will be shown in flashbacks, focussing on the way in which his mother deprived him of love and affection as a punishment for not having prevented the killing. These flashbacks, combined with Joe's adult behaviour, emphasise the fact that Joe grew up to be a highly traumatised man who must, as a function of his feelings of guilt, keep revisiting the moment of his brother's murder. Replaying the harmful memories of the past in a never-ending loop, trying to identify the precise moment he did wrong and caused his family's misery, Joe suffers deeply from a lack of self-regard and a constant sense of fury that he directs most prominently at himself.

After the night of the killing, the film fast-forwards to 2008. This is post-conflict, globalised Northern Ireland, where the finely tuned and well-oiled machinery of the "reconciliation industry"[105] holds sway. While the film itself is a participant in the public

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[104] *Five Minutes of Heaven* and Owen McCafferty's play *Quietly* (2012) make a curious pair in that they almost work as blueprints for one another (Michely 251-52). Both stage a meeting between two men decades after one has murdered a close relative of the other. Both pairs meet at the respective scenes of the sectarian crime. In their shared concern with responsibility, justice and reconciliation, they pay tribute to the socio-political Zeitgeist in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

[105] I adopt this term for my purposes from McEvoy, McEvoy and McConnachie (82) who use it in a much more positive sense to denote reconciliation work carried out to great effect at a grassroots level across Northern Ireland. From a more critical perspective, James Hughes writes that

discourse about truth and reconciliation – while it is itself an instance of this very discourse – it is, at the same time, highly critical of the reconciliation industry and the concurrent commodification of personal grief in the name of capitalist gain (cf. Barton 214). The TV-programme *One on One* in which Alistair and Joe are to meet in an allegorical encounter adds an important metatheatrical or, as it were, meta-filmic level to *Five Minutes of Heaven*. A critical exploration of this meta-level shows that the meta-filmic elements serve the main purpose of exposing the more unsavoury characteristics of the reconciliation industry, both within the fictional world and beyond it. If, as Beus suggests, "[t]he play within the play is often used by playwrights to reveal the working of dramatic irony and the nature of drama" (15), the depiction of the TV set in *Five Minutes of Heaven* highlights the very nature of voyeuristic reality TV while shedding the self-reflexive light of irony on the film's own status as a cultural product.

Both *Five Minutes of Heaven* and *One on One* can be seen – not as revenge tragedies proper – but as near-tragedies of failed revenge. Both formats thrive on the "reckless embrace of extremity" which Hackett singles out as the "characteristic mode" of revenge tragedy (83). Considering the "uneasy laughter" often elicited by the genre, she concludes that "[r]evenge tragedy understands the close proximity of horror and absurdity; its characters and situations are driven beyond the normal boundaries of decorum, and genre, to a place where grief and laughter meet in a profoundly uncomfortable blend" (82-83). In *Five Minutes of Heaven*, it is the TV programme which, in its display of those who have carried the trauma of the past into the present, compels Joe and Alistair "beyond the normal boundaries of decorum." The weight of both "horror and absurdity," however, rests alone on Joe, who feels that his status as victim and survivor makes him a grotesque spectacle in the post-conflict society in which he lives. His extraordinary capacity for language allows him to frame his extreme feelings of social alienation in words that express at the same time acute self-awareness and pain as well as an incredible sense of humour.[106] Being introduced to the overly welcoming and friendly production team on set, Joe salutes himself, thinking: "Well, here you are, pal, a fully signed-up member of the celebrity circle of life's victims: Men in love with donkeys, twins stuck together by their bollocks, elephant women who cannot get

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"[p]eacemaking is a business and something akin to a salariat has emerged in the reconciliation sector" (13).

[106] Nesbitt describes his character in the film as "this frantic, demented, angry, funny ball of energy" and recalls that he found the real-life Joe Griffin "a whirlwind […] at [whose] core you could see this brilliant man, very funny, uneducated, but, but, but bright, but whose life has been destroyed" (25:16-25:51).

out of their chairs, and now you" (*Five Minutes* 31:39-31:51). The way in which he equals serious but absurd psychological and medical conditions with his own situation is as telling as it is cynical. It reveals the ways in which he imagines himself as perceived by the general public – as both ridiculous and beyond the bounds of reason.[107] As such, he serves as a spectacular oddity that can be displayed and exploited for financial gain in the crude fashion of the nineteenth-century freak show.

Joe's "reckless embrace of extremity" (Hackett 83) hence never blinds him to the manoeuvring of the reconciliation industry going on around him (cf. Barton 214). Talking to Vika, the Russian set runner, he admits, "The problem with me is, I've got all the wrong feelings" (*Five Minutes* 39:25-39:28). While this could be taken for another instance of self-deprecation, it turns into a criticism of what is considered socially and politically acceptable in a post-conflict polity where reconciliation is the imperative of the day. His enduring hatred, he implies, is 'wrong' only if compared to Alistair's politically-correct public response to the past. Alistair, having managed the turn from paramilitary to peace-maker, is perceived as an eloquent, sophisticated man of the future. Spurred on by his sense of social injustice, Joe rages about Alistair's feelings being considered "just right, just perfect" (39:32-39:35). Commenting on the reactions to the sudden death of Martin McGuinness in March 2017, McGarry observes in a similar vein: "Everyone loves a narrative, and that of the 'bad' man becoming a 'good' man is universally compelling" (n. pag.). McGarry himself dismisses as short-sighted and undifferentiated the dominant paradigm according to which the former Deputy First Minister "was a thoughtless, violent 'Paddy', who was somehow transformed into a totally different Gandhi-type figure" (n. pag.). His point, however, on the appeal of the narrative paradigm stands.

Five Minutes of Heaven is a superbly written film that lays much emphasis on the spoken word and dialogic interactions. In his unfavourable review, Kirk Honeycutt calls it a "highly emotional, very talky movie, which feels more like a play" (n. pag., also qtd. in Barton 214). Although harsh in his judgement, he is right concerning the film's theatrical qualities. Throughout, the film is characterised by a disregard for showy effects or speedy editing; its focus is always with its characters, with their emotions and thought processes, and it is carried for the most part by its lead actors on whose faces and upper bodies the camera dwells for prolonged sequences. Camera movements are slow and deliberate, while

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[107] See the OED's definition of the adjective "absurd": "1.b. Of a person: acting in an incongruous, unreasonable, or illogical manner" and "3. Causing amusement or derision; ridiculous, silly."

the framing is often highly suggestive of interpersonal dynamics, personal circumstances and private states of mind. The effect is less one of intrusion than of emotional and mental proximity to the protagonists, establishing sympathy for both. One prime instance of this is provided by Alistair's and Joe's separate car journeys to the set of *One on One*. In a continual cross-cutting of scenes pertaining to Alistair and Joe respectively, the men are shown sitting in the backs of two limousines, making conversation with the drivers who are taking them to the big house where the TV programme is to be filmed. Following upon the flashback to 1975 and preceding the meta-filmic scenes on the set of *One on One*, these cross-cut car scenes introduce the viewer to the adults Joe and Alistair have become as a result of the killing and shed some light on the ways in which they think of the respective other in the present. These scenes act as a foreword to what will happen on the TV set and take place in a sort of grey zone between the meta-filmic elements and the action – past and present – of the film proper.

The car journey that Joe is taken on is an emotional *tour de force* for Joe, but also for the audience. In Joe's interaction with the driver, it becomes obvious that the impending meeting with Alistair distresses Joe greatly. It calls forth forceful memories of what he suffered in the past and illustrates the ways in which the trauma of this suffering continuously reproduces itself in the present. Following the killing, his mother denied him her affection, a treatment which compounded Joe's sense of grief and anger. This long-harboured anger has become a defining element of Joe's identity that he cannot leave behind for fear of falling apart emotionally. The uneasy dynamic between emotional intelligence and blind rage was, as Nesbitt elaborates, one of the targets he had set for his performance. He explains that "[i]t had to be the marriage of the visceral insights of [Joe] and the kind of brilliant expressed emotion but all tied up in a kind of a ball of rage" (27:21-27:32). In Joe's heightened state of agitation, it is anger, not grief, that holds the promise of sanity and safety. Anger fuels Joe with a fierce energy that counterweighs the emotional and physical drain of grief. In his somewhat verbose analysis of metatheatricality in *Hamlet*, Bernhard Greiner argues in a similar vein:

> In grief the subject is manifested as having experienced a fundamental loss that at the same time implies a loss of self.[108] […] It is therefore all the more astonishing that it is Hamlet's grief that moves him to lay claim to a self beyond and beneath the forms of appearance. The outward signs of mourning, Hamlet explains to his mother in their

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[108] Greiner bases this point on Sigmund Freud's essay "Trauer und Melancholie." Taking her cue from the same source, Judith Butler makes a related argument in her essay "Violence, Mourning, Politics" (21-22).

first scene […] are mannerisms that could just as well be faked […], whereas he himself is unacquainted with appearances: 'I know not "seems"' (I.ii.76). […] Hamlet negatively introduces the ontological claim to a subjectivity beyond appearance. (4)

Joe precludes the "loss of self" by holding onto his anger, championing its subjectively beneficial characteristics over its ultimately destructive force. The 'mannerisms faked' by Joe in the context of *One on One* are those pertaining to an outward display of the willingness to forgive. His "subjectivity beyond appearance" is, for the time being, that inspired by anger and hatred, that which requires revenge to be appeased. Joe grieves the losses of his brother and of his mother's love, and these surely "impl[y] a loss of self." But he also grieves the loss of the life he could have lived without Alistair's intervention, and this is the loss in which he has lost himself. It is the supreme loss through the lens of which Joe has learnt to define his decentred subject position.

The film's version of Joe is splendidly highlighted by the sudden bouts of eloquence in which Joe indulges. Joe is at his most 'outspoken,' in both words and thoughts, in those scenes that pertain to the set of *One on One*. Here, and only here, are Joe's thoughts made audible as voiceovers that offer a running commentary on his participation in the TV programme and illustrate the immense field of tension in which he moves. The moments of the film when Joe's thoughts are audible highlight the ways in which his social isolation and insecurity are so severe that he has become his own best interlocutor. Sitting in the back of the car taking him to the TV set, Joe conducts the following dialogue with himself, rehearsing his anger towards Alistair Little, with his driver serving merely as the implied audience:

> JOE. [Thinking] Swarmin ' round the world, talking about your feelins. A ticket to paradise. [Shouting] For killing a man! I mean where would he be without me? Forty years in the factory in Lurgan makin' egg cartons like the rest of us – aye, not him. He can make a livin' tellin' the Pope, the Queen and the Dalai fuckin' Lama how it feels to kill a man. How it feels, the sufferin' I have, the burden I carry. [Thinking] Why should you get ladies in pastel shades and rosy perfumes givin' you tea and buns and wine from fuckin' Chile just so as you can tell them what it feels to be puttin' three bullets into my brother's head. Twelve years for armed robbery, membership and murder. [Punches upholstery and shouts] Fuck! (*Five Minutes* 23:22-24:04)

Joe's shifts between spoken word and thought do not follow an easily discernible pattern and as such seem to be highlighting his mental state of confusion. They poignantly illustrate his psychological instability in so far as the line between containable and uncontainable speech becomes blurred. In anticipation of his meeting with Alistair, he experiences such intense emotional strain that it becomes impossible for him to contain within himself the

words that describe the injustice he has suffered. Compounding the original wrong of murder, there is a second, subsequent wrong which finds expression in terms of status. In Joe's perception, Alistair gained access to a glamorous, cosmopolitan life beyond the men's native Lurgan by virtue of murdering Joe's brother. Joe, in contrast, feels that leading a morally decent life has unjustly deprived him of such opportunity. Lurgan thus comes to symbolise a reverse spatial measure of success in life – the more distance you have managed to put between yourself and Lurgan, the higher the social status you have achieved. The forty years Joe has been working in the egg-carton factory in Lurgan do not tally with the twelve years Alistair spent in prison. In this line of thought, it is Joe, not Alistair, who has been serving a life-sentence.

Once arrived on the set of *One on One*, Joe goes almost entirely mute and will only break his half-silence when meeting Vika, the empathetic Russian set runner who will act as a mediator between Joe and Alistair, "open[ing] Joe's eyes to a few truths to which his hatred has blinded him" in the process (Honeycutt n. pag.). By contrast, Joe refuses to interact with Michael, the producer of the show, who gives him a pep talk of sorts prior to the filming. While Michael talks to Joe in a soft tone that only succeeds in highlighting his patronising attitude, Joe remains monosyllabic, pretending to agree. It does not escape Joe, however, that what Michael is after is a comfortably clichéd commodification of the past, an emotionally exploitative performance of forgiveness that might sell reconciliation as a convenience product (cf. Lehner "Post-Conflict" 70).[109] Trying to elicit an ending to Joe's and Alistair's story that might cater to the voyeuristic tastes of his audience, Michael instructs:

> MICHAEL. In terms of your actual meeting with him [Alistair], it's important to remember, for all of us to remember, where we are trying to get to in this programme: the truth.
>
> JOE. [Thinking] Yes, I know, I know what you want: shake his fucking hand and we can all go home.
>
> MICHAEL. The last thing I wanna do is push you into areas of your mind where you don't want to go. But on the other hand, it's important for us to understand all the emotions in this. […] I know that it's difficult which is why I don't want to push that. But I do want you to be truthful with how you feel. […] And you know, we are all going to have an important day here. […] This is the question we are all

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[109] In Lehner's view, the film suggests "that the discourse of restorative justice and reconciliation is […] appropriated by the norms of a newly hegemonic profit-making middle-class masculinity, whereas the traditional working-class identity of Joe is associated with the retributive version of justice" ("Post-Conflict" 70).

wanting the answer to: truth and reconciliation. What's at stake? Is it possible? (*Five Minutes* 34:13-35:17)

Michael's notion of reconciliation is revealed to be steeped in a reductive understanding of the term according to "the communal relations paradigm" (McEvoy et al. 84), which does not do justice to Joe's more complex experience of reality. The voyeuristic creed of reality TV demands a staging of reconciliation as a simple spectacle. Invoking a diffuse entity of 'us'/'we' at this point, Michael hints at a presupposed unity of the general public relying on Joe's performance of reconciliation for their communal deliverance from the past. Whether Joe is to be counted a member of this post-conflict unity-in-the-making depends upon his ability to perform; as yet, he is a hindrance to its formation. The pressure Michael exerts is thus of a social nature, while his own thinly disguised interest is merely the novelty of victim meeting perpetrator in front of the running cameras. Joe is perfectly aware of the exploitative mechanisms at work (Barton 214). In an angered response to Michael's demands, he retreats to the ensuite bathroom of the room he has been assigned in the big house serving as the programme's set. There, he proclaims his intention of revenging his brother in front of the bathroom mirror:

> JOE. [Thinking] I can do handshakes, Michael, and I can do victim. I can do handshake and victim both at the same time. But I made a decision on this one. Reconciliation? You have no idea. [Speaking] A handshake? For killing my brother? For me taking the blame? Thirty-three years of that? What do you think I am, a joke? [Thinking] If ever a man deserved a knife run through him that scum of the earth. Truth and reconciliation? I'm going for revenge. (*Five Minutes* 35:28-36:07).

Acquiescing to the performative demands of the TV programme – 'doing handshakes' and 'doing victim' – Joe highlights the theatrical nature of his participation in it. He rejects the possibility of reconciliation out of hand and promises a good performance in exchange for revenge and the anticipated bliss of shedding the victim's role. While Hackett claims that "[r]evenge is essentially a moral dilemma," asking "should a wronged victim become an avenger […]? Or should he or she leave divine justice and the forces of human law to do their work?" (81), Joe clearly does not perceive his situation in terms of a moral dilemma. To him, the situation is straightforward at this point in time. The obedient acceptance of the forgiving victim's role that Michael – and, by extension, post-conflict politics – expect of him will make him "a joke" in his own eyes. Only revenge holds the promise of self-assertion, of control regained and, ultimately, of justice (cf. Lehner "Post-Conflict" 70). As Hackett posits, "if waiting for God or worldy authorities to take action appears fruitless, a

victim is likely to feel compelled by grief and a sense of injury to take up the cause of revenge" (81). While Alistair did serve a prolonged prison sentence for murder, Joe is enraged by the thought that Alistair has been able to build a considerable career on the back of a sectarian killing. To Joe, moral and judicial justice fail to coincide. Significantly, Joe confirms his plans of revenge in front of a mirror, looking at himself while responding to Michael's demands. In the dialogic situation in front of the mirror, the addressee, Michael, is absent so that the speaker, Joe, addresses his message at his own reflection. The result is twofold. Responding to Michael's shallow expectation of reconciliation, Joe justifies the legitimacy of his revenge by referencing the blatant injustice he has endured, first, at Alistair's and, subsequently, at his mother's hands. In looking at himself, in recognising his brutalised self in the mirror, he further acknowledges his pain and hatred sympathetically and pledges revenge, most importantly, for his own sake.

Joe's desire for revenge is fuelled by the anticipated bliss of shedding the victim's role. The moment of revenge, which he calls "my five minutes of heaven" (*Five Minutes* 41:12), will at least temporarily compensate him for a lifetime of grief. The victim's emotional need for revenge is, as Pollard explains, a necessary ingredient of "the early modern tragedy, [… since] revenge is the only thing capable of restoring them to psychic health and equilibrium. [… R]evenge offers the possibility of an emotional cure, allowing them to reclaim the pleasure and peace of mind that was violently and unjustly taken from them" (61). Joe has selected the set of the TV programme as the perfect site to redress the injustice he has wrongly suffered. The name of the programme, *One on One*, is in this reading imbued with an ironic and sinister sense of foreboding. The programme offers a stage for Joe to act upon his desire for revenge face to face, one on one. The fact that there will be an audience to witness his revenge and cameras to document it is an added bonus. In her consideration of a number of early modern revenge tragedies, Pollard comments on "the explicit links between metatheatricality and revenge […] in revenge drama":

> Revenge, like tragedy, brings satisfaction through violence. […] Equally importantly, the private justice of revenge requires public witnesses to ratify it, and to make its triumph meaningful. […] The public realm of the stage offers an alternative to the implicitly rebuked failing courts, a self-created jury of one's peers to persuade of the merits of the case. (69)

If considered through the lens of revenge drama, the thinking behind the programme *One on One* is exposed in interesting ways. In the case of *One on One*, Pollard's apt phrasing could be adapted in the following way: 'Reconciliation, like reality TV, brings satisfaction through

emotion.' It aims at delivering reconciliation by proxy, custom-made and on demand. Joe intends to flip this principle upside-down, and in the process creates an uneasy equation between revenge and reconciliation: If reconciliation, according to Michael's consumerist creed, "requires public witnesses to ratify it, and to make is triumph meaningful," so does revenge. Joe needs the public stage for his revenge on Alistair, precisely because he wants to rectify in public the suffering he has endured in private. In doing so, he hopes to redress the public amnesia which passes as justice in a post-conflict polity.

Just as Joe witnessed the murder of his brother through the living-room window of his own home, so will the general public witness his revenge on Alistair through the TV screens in their own living-rooms. For Joe, the murder/window pairing seems to require an exact response in the form of the revenge/TV pairing. On the night of his brother's murder, Joe was standing in the street outside of his family's living-room window, on the same side of the public/private divide as Alistair when he pulled the trigger on Joe's brother. Joe was thus made a spectator of the murder and his watching, involuntary as it may have been, made him complicit in the crime. His is the guilt of the onlooker, of those who are stopped in their tracks by the innate urge to watch. In this constellation, the window pane, and the position assumed in relation to it, makes all the difference – it divides innocent victims from those explicitly or implicitly guilty of the crime. It does not make an emotional difference for Joe (nor for his mother) that he did not choose his position but was forced into it. Being forced to feel complicit in a crime that victimised him is the core of the outrageous wrong he has suffered. In planning to take revenge in front of the running cameras, Joe effectively attempts to turn the tables on this situation. He will turn the TV crew and, by extension, the general public into idle witnesses of Alistair's murder and thus impress on them the sense of complicity that has haunted him all his life.

Enter Vika – Modes of Intervention

In the end, the possibly fatal encounter on the set of *One on One* does not occur. Joe loses his nerve and abandons the set prematurely, mostly due to the intervention of Vika, the young female Russian set runner. Vika effectively serves as a foreign go-between who, by virtue of her foreignness, is able to act with purpose and insight in a social constellation that paralyses the other participants. The inclusion of her character in the film comments meaningfully on not only the socio-cultural makeup of contemporary Northern Irish society but also on the impact of immigration on this society. The achievement of the Good Friday

Agreement in 1998 facilitated a demographic change for Northern Ireland by transforming it into "a country of net inward migration" (Russell 24; also see J. Hughes 6-7). Since the enlargement of the European Union in 2004, the country "has received a disproportionate number" (4) of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe compared to the rest of the UK. These demographic figures counter received notions about Northern Irish society and portray Northern Ireland and its situation as a country emerging from a conflict about national identity as a place characterised by its strong connections to other European places (cf. Stewart 3). This globalised understanding of space is, as Doreen Massey argues, opposed to the 'geographical imagination' of modernity, which was characterised by the "assumed isomorphism between spaces/places and cultures/societies" ("Imagining" 21; cf. Anderson 7). In order to meet the exigencies of globalisation – and those of the project of European enlargement – the 'geographical imagination' of modernity will have to yield to a new mode of thinking about space as permeable, one in which places are conceptualised not only as containing diverse temporal narratives, but also as sites where encounters between these narratives can occur (22). "[I]f this is so," Doreen Massey writes, "[t]he spatial in its role of bringing into contact distinct temporalities generates a provocation to interaction, which sets off social processes" ("Imagining"14).

Five Minutes of Heaven is part of a cultural discourse promoting the notion that the influx of people who are foreign to Northern Ireland, who have not been brought up to live by the rules of 'the narrow ground,' can change the social geography of spatialised identities and challenge the inherited modes of conceiving of this space.[110] The possibly fatal encounter between Joe and Alistair on set is prevented Vika, who succeeds in mediating between the two men who can as yet not speak to one another. She fills the verbal void between victim and perpetrator and is thus represented as the third party in a social and spatial constellation which has been conceived of in terms of a binary opposition, enriching

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[110] In my discussion of Owen McCafferty's *Quietly*, where an immigrant from Poland witnesses a meeting between a former member of the UVF and a victim of his violence, I make a very similar argument (Michely 251-53). There, I claim that "[t]he allegorical importance of the play lies […] in the immigrant's importance for the communal memory and the concurrent development of an inclusive spatial identity for Belfast" (253). In the introduction to their poetry anthology *The Future always Makes Me so Thirsty. New Poets from the North of Ireland* (2016), Sinéad Morrissey and Stephen Connolly take a related stance. Including six poets resident in, but not from the North, they write "[i]n a poetic territory that is stereotyped, almost always mistakenly, as parochial and insular at its best and explicitly hostile to those deemed outsiders at its worst, the value of fresh perspectives cannot be underestimated" (16). Editing *The New North. Contemporary Poetry from Northern Ireland* (2008), Chris Agee opted for a similarly inclusive approach (Introduction xxxii), defining his "new North" as a region "of old and new immigration, diaspora, bilingualism, and cultural interchange between the islands" (xxxiii).

the simplicity of what has been criticised as the "two-tribes construct" (McEvoy et al. 14). With regard to the role of the foreigner in early modern revenge tragedy, Pollard posits that "[i]f playwrights wanted to render revenge as foreign but not remote, figures who were simultaneously intimate and alien offered ideal candidates" (65). With the help of Vika's intervention, *Five Minutes of Heaven* introduces a significant variation on this pattern. Vika who is simultaneously intimate and alien offers a perfect prism for the film's endeavour of rendering the possibility of reconciliation as remote but not entirely elusive.

Significantly, Vika makes her first appearance on set immediately after Joe has declared his intention of taking revenge in front of the bathroom mirror. Taking tea to the room that serves as Joe's retreat in the stately home where the programme is to be shot, she introduces herself as "the runner" (*Five Minutes* 36:24). It is thus right from the start that her capability of physical performance is highlighted, which is relevant to her function as "messenger" between Joe and Alistair: She is the "medium" which makes their communication "visible" (Zons 160, my transl.). Vika establishes a channel of second-hand communication between Joe and Alistair long before the men finally meet face to face. It is Vika, indeed, who communicates to Alistair Joe's emotional need for revenge, which in turn prompts Alistair to seek Joe's proximity after the failure of the TV programme. Importantly, Vika can only achieve this communication by first identifying herself as an impartial participant in the communicative activity whose overarching aim is, after all, national reconciliation. Answering Joe's question as to her place of origin, Vika merely responds "Vladivostok" (*Five Minutes* 38:16), and thus avoids the dominant discourses of national belonging in favour of local specificity. While female deprivation of full national participation has been ascribed to a male complex of knowledge and power that restricts female mobility and withholds the possibility of self-determined spatial identification,[111] *Five Minutes of Heaven* offers an alternative perspective emerging from within the specificities of the North. This self-identification positions Vika outside the reductive modes of national identification and opens the floor for alternative conceptualisations of difference and similarity.

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[111] As Virginia Woolf, considering "the daughters of educated men" as "outsiders" in English society (193), put it starkly in her 1938 pamphlet *Three Guineas*: "[a]s a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world" (197). From her position as a lesbian US-Mexican border dweller, Gloria Anzaldúa makes a similar statement: "As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover" (102). See chapter 2, "Movimientos de Rebeldía y las Culturas que Traicionan," of her *Borderlands/La Frontera* for a detailed account of the ways in which the Chicano women have been disenfranchised by a patriarchal culture (37-45).

Joe's reaction is as cynical as it is emphatic, revealing the perception of a common ground between them: "Vladivostok and Belfast? Does bad luck run in your family?" (*Five Minutes* 38:17-38:21). Joe's 'geographical imagination' apparently allows him to perceive similarities between both places, implying a set of shared spatialised experiences and, by extension, the possibility of mutual understanding. It is speaking to Vika that Joe admits his desire for revenge, declaring that the moment of murdering Alistair would be "[his] five minutes of heaven" (*Five Minutes* 41:12). Being the third party adds to Vika's credibility within the social mechanics of reconciliation, as she does not have a vested interest in the country's collective memory, a version of which is to be established in the programme. It is important, in this context, to note that Vika's mediation occurs within the setting of an Irish big house which has been chosen as the set of *One on One*. While the location might have been chosen "to provide a venue removed from daily distractions" (Montville 124) according to the principles of conflict resolution theory, it is also a historical monument bearing witness to the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland, embodying a potentially divisive story of class and domination dating back to the plantation of Ulster. Within this specific architectural 'envelope of space-time,' which constitutes "a plunge into a field of social relations in which it brings about some specific effects" (Foucault, "Space, Power and Knowledge" 170), Joe's claim to the truth is denied articulation. Vika, however, who is not affected by this "coding of […] reciprocal relations" (170), juxtaposes the narratives of hegemony and globalisation by means of her presence in the place and challenges the place's exclusive identity, which is apparently set in stone.

The capability of accommodating ambiguity is characteristic of Vika, and the visual language of the film emphasises this heavily. She is repeatedly positioned in the liminal spaces of the stately home, out on the balcony, in the background, in the margins of the frame, or present only as a reflection in the mirror of Joe's room. As Joe has to recognise, "the messenger, mediating between heterogeneous worlds, cannot be attributed to one side or the other" (Zons 163, my transl.). Messengers, just as the figure of "the third," are liminal figures, "negotiators, discursive double agents, border guards and smugglers," that make their appearance "whenever thresholds, origins, endings and boundaries come into play" (Koschorke 29, my transl.). Joe is upset when Vika admits that she has visited Alistair's Belfast home, transgressing the boundaries around Alistair's private space. Smoking a cigarette with Joe on the balcony, Vika recalls her first meeting with Alistair:

VIKA. He [Alistair] was worried for you. […]

JOE. Worried for me? What do you mean, he was worried for me?

VIKA. That... He said he thought it would be too painful for you.

JOE. He said that, did he? Too painful, is that what he said?

VIKA. Yes. Difficult for you. […]

JOE. Did he? What about him? What did he say about himself?

VIKA. He didn't talk about himself. But he seems very sad.

JOE. Sad?

VIKA. I don't know but, I don't know him really but that's how he seemed. Like he couldn't forgive himself for what he has done to you. There's an expression you say, uhm… a broken man. A broken man. So it's good. It's good that you're meeting. I think.

JOE. Fuck! (*Five Minutes* 53:01-54:23)

Joe's weirdly misplaced expletive at this point vents his frustration at Vika's sympathetic descriptions of Alistair which challenge his preconceptions about Alistair as the debased villain who exploits the misery of others in exchange for personal gain and glory. The description of Alistair as "sad" and "broken" instantaneously collapses the Joe's precarious sense of self that he has built in opposition to his imagined, internalised Alistair (Barton 214). Vika's mediation between the men can, in Bhabha's terms, be understood as an act of "translation" (211), which exposes the decentred identity Joe has created for himself. It is this experience of liminality, of recognising that he shares a certain set of traits with 'the other' against whom he needs to define himself that challenges Joe's essentialist mode of thinking. In allegorical terms, it is this instance of cultural translation by a third agent that allows for a brief hybridising moment across the divide and creates a "'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" (Bhabha 211). The momentary glimpse of these other positions renders Joe unable to face Alistair. With his emotional instability heightened, Joe abandons the set of *One on One* and thus defers the dénouement of the plot which, in the encounter as arranged by the programme, would have led to Alistair's assassination.

The depiction of Vika as the occupant of liminal spaces only is, of course, an ambiguous matter. While this representation underlines her potential of transformative agency, it seemingly confirms the status of the immigrant as an outsider and, what is more, of women as passive observers of the Troubles. As Emilie Pine argued in her review of Owen McCafferty's *Quietly*:

Except for plays like Tinderbox's 'True North' series, Christina Reid's *Tea in a China Cup* and Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone,* the Troubles is consistently framed

as a male-dominated narrative. And now the peace process is being framed likewise. While Jimmy and Ian's stories are compelling, they are remarkably similar to the stories presented in the 2009 film *Five Minutes of Heaven.* And in both versions of the truth and reconciliation process, women are only presented via the men's narratives. (n. pag.)

Pine's criticism is apt with regard to large segments of Northern Irish cultural production, but probably more adequate in the case of *Quietly* than of *Five Minutes of Heaven*. Admittedly, Vika only facilitates the spatial juxtaposition of Joe's and Alistair's narratives through her mediation and thus "generates a provocation to interaction" (D. Massey, "Imagining" 14), while her own narrative remains marginal, almost muted, in the exchange. It is, however, significant that it is this liminality that allows Vika to be subversively represented as the centre of the exchange. Through her physical presence, the spaces of the in-between become 'filled,' and the processes that undermine the social binaries become the pivot of the action. As Zons argues in a different context, "[m]edia are the centre. […] Media are means, in the midst, in-between, connection and separation, they are the third, without which the two do not recognise each other" (159, my transl.). In making Joe and Alistair recognisable to one another, Vika sets in motion reciprocal processes of communication and action that had formerly been impossible. For this recognition to occur, a fully-fledged reconciliation between the men does not need to take place. There is no former relationship that could be restored, and the mere acknowledgement of each other's existence and position is sufficient for the sake of coexistence.

As a Russian national, Vika offers a divergent depiction of the immigrant population in Northern Ireland. As a 2012 Research Paper for the Northern Irish Assembly documents, the majority of immigrants to Northern Ireland since the EU-enlargement of 2004 have come from A8-countries (Russell 3-4) to which Russia does not belong. In fact, immigration from Russia to Northern Ireland is not even mentioned in the report. This representational variation allows Vika to be read as an immigrant 'once removed.' She is given the potential to offer a more inclusive representation of the Northern Irish immigrant, and one that is free from associations with xenophobia. In *Quietly*, Owen McCafferty chooses a different route and confronts xenophobia in Belfast head-on. In his take on the possibility of post-conflict reconciliation, a Polish immigrant named Robert is elected to the position of a private "truth and reconciliation committee" (30). As I have argued elsewhere, "the lack of institutionalised retrieval and storage of memory is compensated by Robert, a national 'other' [… who] is championed as the bearer of the communal memory" (Michely 252). Thus, Robert assumes a conciliatory role that resembles Vika's in *Five Minutes of Heaven*.

Unlike her, however, Robert is exposed to xenophobic harassment, the representation of which is grounded in a number of real-life incidents of racist intimidation of Polish immigrants.[112] Both the play and the film, however, promote the influx of culturally new elements – irrespective of national belonging – as a catalyst for peace and hint towards new modes of thinking about the spatial. Released at a time when Ulster regionalism was still unable to provide a cross-communal identity, *Five Minutes of Heaven* promotes the space of Europe and beyond as a frame of reference for the future.[113] If Northern Ireland is a border country where the territorial imperative has discouraged the inhabitation of the socio-cultural interstices, Vika's role as a border crosser is that of offering glimpses of a "third country" (Anzaldúa 25), which transcends the homogenous 'envelopes of space-time' that have existed in relation to Britain and the Republic of Ireland respectively. The representation of the immigrant in *Five Minutes of Heaven* offers an equally hopeful reflection of the poem Seamus Heaney delivered at the EU enlargement ceremony in May 2004. With a nod to Horace, he said his poem "Beacons at Bealtaine" was "to salute and celebrate a historic turn in the *saeculum*, the age" ("Beacons" n. pag.). The poem itself is a salutation of "newcomers" and a celebration of the linguistic richness they might bring to the island of Ireland as a permeable cultural space. It extends an invitation to "speak / the unstrange word, as it behoves us here" (line 18-19) when welcoming strangers.

Regaining Ground

At the beginning of the film, Alistair's personal account of why he was radicalised as a teenager is heard as a voiceover, while footage is being shown of the height of the Troubles in the 1970s. Some time later in the film, Alistair will be recounting the exact same beginning of his story again in front of the cameras on the set of *One on One*. This verbatim repetition indicates a "rehearsed" quality (Barton 214) as much as a self-imposed compulsion to narrativise his life, to impose a linear order upon it, so as to make it comprehensible not only to others but also to himself:

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[112] In July 2012, for instance, loyalist eleventh night celebrations in Belfast came under scrutiny for having burned Polish flags atop the traditional bonfires ("Poland Flags" n.pag).

[113] I have argued a similar point with regard to Robert's role in Owen McCafferty's *Quietly*: "The inherited pattern of the social division of space is slowly broken up by the expansion of the European Union, a process that illustrates Massey's claim that 'for time to be new, we have to think of space as changing and "open"' (1990: 40). In this view, the Peace Process can be understood as a temporal event whose success depends on the formation of new 'geographical imaginations'" (Michely 253).

> ALISTAIR. For me to talk about the man I've become, you need to know about the man I was. I was fourteen when I joined the tartan gangs, and I was fifteen when I joined the UVF, the Ulster Volunteer Force. At that time, don't forget, there were riots on the streets every week, petrol bombs every day, and that was just in our town. […] And it was like *we were under siege*. Fathers and brothers and friends were being killed in the streets and the feeling was we all have to do something. We're all in this together and we all have to do something. (*Five Minutes* 01:11-01:56, emphasis mine)

Alistair's use of the pronoun "we" stands in striking contrast to Michael's use of the same word. Michael's simplistic pep talk to Joe centres on an idealised post-conflict national community, while Alistair's recollections refer to past social divisions that have carried on, in a gentler fashion, into the present. What Alistair sketches out is a mode of understanding space that has many times been described as the 'siege mentality.' It refers in spatial terms to the loyalist fear of being outnumbered by nationalists on the island of Ireland, and belongs to the hegemonic discourse of inclusion and expulsion so characteristic of national communities. In the first twenty minutes, when the film still adheres to the aforementioned "signifiers of conventional' Troubles cinema" (Barton 214), it depicts the conflict-ridden Lurgan Joe and Alistair grew up in, highlighting the manifestations of defensive territoriality in both protagonists' housing estates, displaying the full array of national paraphernalia: There are street barricades, flags, murals, as well as kerb stones and lamp posts painted either the colours of the Irish tricolour or of the Union Jack. The visual imagery introduces the audience to a tautologous world of delineations, which depends, in Bauman's words, on "territorial separation, the right to a separate 'defensible space' which needs defense […] precisely because of its being separate" (*Liquid Modernity* 107).

The deferred dénouement takes Alistair and Joe back to this world of tautologous delineations in which they first met as teenagers. In the aftermath of the failed TV programme, Alistair initiates a second and, this time, private encounter with Joe in their native Lurgan. Joe selects the scene-of-crime as their meeting place, which is, at the same time, his former family home. As Alistair makes his way through Lurgan towards 37 Hill Street, he once more penetrates territory that is still visibly marked as republican with walls and lampposts painted green, white and orange. The Griffins' derelict family home has been all but gutted, apparently having been left to the forces of decay for many years. As he did thirty-three years ago, Alistair pauses in front of the now barred living-room window, contemplating the scene where he committed the crime that has brought him and Joe to where they are in the present. Having been warned by Vika, Alistair suspects that this meeting with Joe, just as their first encounter, will be driven by hatred and violence. After

Joe abandons the set of *One on One*, Alistair, upset by Joe's reaction to the imminent meeting, asks Vika to give her opinion on the situation: "You think he really wanted to meet me?" he enquires, and receives Vika's honest answer with no apparent surprise: "I think he wanted to kill you" (*Five Minutes* 59:44-59:50). In preparation for the fight that he knows must await him, Alistair takes off his watch with deliberate care before he enters the building. It is a simple gesture, but one that is heavy with symbolic meaning. It implies his unwillingness to harm Joe more than strictly necessary for the sake of self-defence. It is a token of his submission to the rules of the encounter as dictated by Joe as well as his willingness to subordinate his physical integrity to Joe's emotional needs. He thus adheres to a pledge he made when on the way to *One on One*, telling his driver about the day he was asked to join the programme: "I said I'd be, I'd be willing to, to, you know. If it's a meeting he wants I'd be willing to, to do it, to see him. I'd do anything to, you know, to…" (*Five Minutes* 25:14-25:26). The fashion in which the sentence trails out unfinished suggests that Alistair is hesitant and careful about the degree of redemption he wishes he was able to offer. Still, his "anything" includes putting himself deliberately at bodily risk.

The fistfight in which Joe engages Alistair inside the house is a cathartic re-appropriation of the place's history which, by extension, enables him to regain the control over his own fate. By spatially linking the encounter with the traumatising incident of the past, Joe seeks a way of redeeming his family's desanctified private space retrospectively both for them and for himself. Barton has criticised the film for the violence of the encounter, claiming that "[t]hrowing punches at each other is a primitive reconciliation, or catharsis" (214), but still the fight between Joe and Alistair is comparatively chaste if held against the gore and bloodshed typical of revenge tragedies (cf. Pollard 66-67), or indeed of those Tarantino films that have turned the aestheticisation of violence into a fine art. The shock factor of the scene lies in what Barton (214) calls the "unreconstructed" nature of the violence – this raw, noisy, entirely unaestheticised clash of two middle-aged men is incongruous with the post-conflict commitment to the verbal negotiation of difference. While there are no holds barred in Joe and Alistair's fistfight, this seems to be the only way in which this pivotal encounter between the two men can be depicted with credibility. As Anzaldúa has argued, the encounter between hegemonic binaries that precedes the formation of the new is necessarily a violent process; it is "the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture" (25). When Joe and Alistair fall out of a first-floor window and hit the street below in a bloody embrace surrounded by shards of glass, the visual language of the film is at its allegorical best. The fall through the threshold of the window

enables their "reb[irth] from the ground" to occur (Barton 214). The men draw new personal and social strength from this forceful contact with the earth in ways that are reminiscent of the Greek hero Antaeus, memorably indited by Seamus Heaney in *North* (1975). In "Antaeus," the warlike hero, who serves as the speaker of the poem, finds the ground on which he stands "operative / As an elixir" (lines 3-6). The contact with the life-giving earth permits the warrior to rise again with his physical power restored.

Concurrently, the scene illustrates that the bond between Joe and Alistair consists in their inexorable rootedness in the same home ground. Here, too, the film is steeped in "the Aristotelian tradition" which, as Pollard explains, "holds that the violence of tragedy should ideally take place between people who know or are close to each other – friends or family – so that their suffering will evoke maximum pity" (62-63). What in Pollard's consideration applies to "the claustrophobically tight courts and families of Renaissance revenge tragedies" (63) is here applicable to the small and sparsely populated 'narrow ground.' The quest for a new spatialised narrative is initiated immediately after the men's fall, when Alistair finally tells Joe his version of the truth in front of the very window through which he killed Joe's brother. This time, it is not the rehearsed account that the audience has heard him tell twice before, but a more immediate one, told unsparingly and without background references to the political circumstances at the time. He need not explain the spatial script according to which the sectarian killing happened – Joe was raised by the same rules of socio-spatial isolation and exclusion. While Alistair's and Joe's encounter does not quite amount to the creation of a culturally hybrid common ground, it does force them to recognise that they paradoxically share the same class of geographical knowledge which they will have to reconceptualise according to new paradigms for the sake of future cohabitation.

Importantly, Nesbitt states that "people think that the film is about reconciliation, it's not really, it was never about reconciliation – Joe doesn't want to be reconciled with – it's about self-reconciliation" (25:58-26:06).[114] Joe's self-reconciliation in the end significantly predicates his being able to let go of the past. After the cathartic encounter with Alistair, Joe commits to a self-help group and, by the same token, to a life in the present. Making a telephone call to Alistair at the end of the film, Joe squeezes his final message to Alistair into a handful of words: "It's Joe Griffin. We're finished" (*Five Minutes* 01:20:50-01:20:54),

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[114] Cf. Lehner whose analysis of the film focusses on the ways in which the peace process predicates a transformation of the acceptable forms of masculinity. She argues that the film is "a narrative of male 'reconciliation' that describes not so much the reconciliation between these two men but, rather, their individual reconciliation with their own violent masculinity" ("Post-Conflict" 70).

he tells Alistair who at this moment is heading towards the pedestrian lights on Donegall Place in front of Belfast city hall. Joe thus cancels out the complex balance sheet of guilt between them and signals his acceptance of their respective 'rebirth' with clean slates. Lehner reads this scene in the context of "filiative reconciliation," arguing: "This moment of closure allows both men to recast the present as the origin for a *filiative* future: while Joe is restored to the bosom of his family, the last shot of the film captures Alistair's relieved glance towards heaven, which works to transcribe the original meaning of the film's title" ("Post-Conflict" 72). Upon Joe's ending the call, the camera swerves up above the street and shows Alistair tilting his face skyward for a brief moment, bearing an expression of joyful relief, before he unites with the other city dwellers crossing the busy pedestrian lights. The visual language of the film is, again, highly metaphorical. As Alistair reunites with the stream of people crossing the street, there is a sense of him being re-enabled to partake of everyday social, communal life in a way that was unavailable to him before. While he may not be granted the redemptive qualities of forgiveness, Alistair, too, has been freed from the oppressive burden of the past. He and Joe are not reconciled, but 'finished': They are rid of each other and free to build their lives untrammelled by the respective other's existence. Theirs may be no happy ending, but one that is tentatively hopeful of the future.[115]

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[115] Asked by his interviewer Marie-Louise Muir as to the "sense of ownership" the scene implied for a Northern Irish audience, Nesbitt answered in the same vein: "I love that it pans out on Liam in the end and you see Belfast in all its glory and you see as Liam's character Alistair thinks that maybe there is some sort of future you also see a future for the North of Ireland." (28:25-28:37).

4. Conclusion: Mapping Change

At the end of this study, I would like to return to a concern with which it began. Discussing Glenn Patterson's "Peace Procession" in the introduction, I turned to the observations made by Liam Kelly and Audra Mitchell in their essay on "Peaceful Spaces" in post-conflict Belfast, in which they depart from de Certeau's understanding of walking as an uncontrollable, inherently transgressive spatial practice ("Peaceful Spaces?" 309). This idea is reflected to stunning effect in Anna Burns's much acclaimed novel *Milkman*, published in 2018 and awarded the Man Booker Prize in the same year. In *Milkman*, the unnamed female narrator is straddling adulthood in the deeply divided and dangerous Belfast of the late nineteen-seventies. Growing up in a claustrophobic, paranoid and patriarchal republican community, whose resilience has been worn thin by perpetual exposure to sectarian violence as well as military and paramilitary despotism, the narrator has developed a practice of escapism which consists mainly in reading eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels while walking home from her city-centre place of work. This innocent idiosyncrasy marks her out as socially deviant, and makes her a strong contender for the status of "a district beyond-the-pale," as her concerned brother-in-law points out to her (*Milkman* 63). Her brother-in-law is mainly worried about her physical safety in a violent urban environment that demands constant alertness – a practice of "reconnoitring and surveying" at all times (58) –, and in this context, the narrator's socially deviant behaviour is a less immediate but no less real danger to her wellbeing. Displaying uncommon degrees of idiosyncrasy or indeed individuality signals, as she well knows, a wilful disregard for the communal rules of cohabitation and, concurrently, leads to the loss of the community's protection: "you'd find yourself branded a psychological misfit and slotted out there with those other misfits on the rim" (60). The narrator's idiosyncratic behaviour draws unwanted attention to itself when a high-ranking local paramilitary, the eponymous milkman, begins to stalk her in public:

> He appeared one day, driving up in one of his cars as I was walking along reading *Ivanhoe*. Often I would walk along reading books. I didn't see anything wrong with this but it became something else to be added as further proof against me. 'Reading-while-walking' was definitely on the list. (3)

The milkman's sudden, threatening intrusion in the narrator's consciousness contrasts starkly with the tale of chivalry in which she immerses herself as a means of protection against an unwanted reality. Not only does the milkman draw her back into that reality, he also conspires to make it even more unbearable. Her community immediately and mistakenly

assume that she is sexually involved with the milkman who, much older and already married, exposes her to malignant gossiping that no negation can dissipate. The milkman in his turn, eager to exert as much pressure and control over the narrator as he possibly can, is aware of the community's oppressive attention and harnesses it to his ends. Anticipating that the community's combined powers of surveillance will wear down her resistance, he continues to accost her in public, inviting her to get in his car and discouraging her "reading-while-walking" as much as her running exercises: "'Not sure,' he said, 'about this arunning, about all of that awalking. Too much arunning and awalking'" (9). In the milkman's eyes, her physical activity displays a disregard for the community's established code of conduct, and it bespeaks a sense of individuality and independence that is unwelcome, especially in a female. Running and walking both expose the female body to the public gaze, draw attention to the physical claiming of space and hence threaten to upset the spatially encoded order of a society striated along sectarian as much as patriarchal lines. As such, they are spatial practices perfectly suited to express an embodied dissent that is all the more subversive for its being silent.

Milkman's female narrator is an agent of social and spatial subversion in spite of herself. It is one of the many devastating ironies described in the novel that she seeks to be unobtrusive and inconspicuous, while she must inevitably fail at both if she is to keep the kernel of her personality alive. She does indeed walk a very 'narrow ground,' encroached on by the patriarchal strictures of her family, her community, the IRA and the security forces, all of which are bent on setting her up for a fall. Her experience of troubled Belfast thus dovetails with what Glenn Patterson, in the BBC's "Literary Landscapes" programme, describes as narratives of the "in-between" that give precedence to personal rather than political struggles:

> If you're in a place where there is political conflict and division, what you find is that the story that you want to write is not the story about that conflict and division, it's about what that does to people who do not see themselves as being represented by the crease. And it's the […] spaces in-between that you want to write and that's most of the writing that interests me about Belfast has always been into those […] spaces in-between, or trying to find those spaces in-between. (Patterson in "Literary Landscapes" 3:13-3:44)

In the same vein that *Milkman* pivots around a personal struggle with the "spaces in-between," so do the six novels and films discussed in this study focus – albeit to different degrees – on personal encounters with the social, spatial and political rifts and ruptures that shape their mental maps of their native Northern Ireland. The most immediately personal

struggles for individuation and self-determination have been discussed in the border narratives of Lucy Caldwells's *Where They Were Missed* and Steve McQueen's *Hunger*; Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Five Minutes of Heaven* too deals with personal explorations of the in-between, offering a decidedly allegorical subtext within the immediate context of reconciliation.

As James Anderson and Liam O'Dowd stress emphatically, borders are as much simplifying instruments of hegemonic power as they are "inherently contradictory, problematical and multifaceted," displaying "dichotomies [that] may alternate with time and place, but – more interestingly – [that] can co-exist simultaneously in the same people (595). Paradoxically connecting the narratives they are designed to keep apart, borders are potentially capable of catalysing alternative discourses of belonging. In *Where They Were Missed*, the Irish border becomes a personal and a metonymical site of spatial change at the same time. Saoirse's acute sense of dislocation is appeased when she embraces a narrative sense of self that is not in accordance with the state-centric system of territorial affiliation (cf. Anderson and O'Dowd 597-98). She negotiates her sense of self through a narrative that is pitted against the discursive 'prison walls' of national division. Her border crossings, both narrative and geographical, question the stability of the places created by the Irish border, and they depict the Irish borderlands in terms of Doreen Massey's "progressive sense of place": they become "conceptualized in terms of the social interactions which they tie together" ("Power-Geometry" 66).

Dealing with one of the most controversial historical figures and incidents of the Troubles, *Hunger* is a highly political film that criticises the "disciplinary régimes" (Foucault, *Discipline* 58) of the state authorities and the republican movement, and to a lesser extent also of the Catholic Church. While the film clearly sympathises with Bobby Sands's predicament – of the individual human being caught within the cog wheels of these diverse disciplines – it also criticises Sands' 'geographical imagination' as limited and, paradoxically, even hegemonic: it is steeped in the conviction, dating back to modernity, that the territory of the state coincides with a coherent cultural group (D. Massey, "Imagining" 21). In *Hunger*, the border is cast as unproductive and isolating, and as hardening traditional communal identities against any peace-enabling solution. *Where They Were Missed*, by contrast, represents the border, perhaps too neatly, as a 'bridge' (cf. McCall 155). The shift in Saoirse's 'geographical imagination' predicates what Anderson and O'Dowd call a "qualitative border change" (602) through which the border becomes a site of individual identity formation. In both *Hunger* and *Where They Were Missed*, however, the Irish border

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functions as the primary site for the (re-)negotiation of the protagonists' personal identities and their sense of communal belonging. While Saoirse and Sands, a literary and a filmic character, arrive at very different conclusions, their border crossings – imaginary and physical – are spatial practices that question the rigidity of national borders and as such have multiple social and political implications.

Five Minutes of Heaven deals with the possibility of personal reconciliation in post-conflict Northern Ireland and as such offers a much more metaphorical narrative of boundaries crossed. If we bear in mind Pollard's dictum that "[r]evenge, like tragedy, brings satisfaction through violence" (69), it is noteworthy that *Five Minutes of Heaven* refrains from acting out such sensationalist satisfaction. Neither, however, does it offer satisfaction through harmony by turning into a sugar-coated tale of reconciliation finally achieved. As an instance of the public discourse on truth and reconciliation, the film's importance, and its success as a work of art, lie in the fact that it withholds an easy sense of satisfaction or resolution. It takes the same uncomfortable stance that Little has taken advocating a narrative approach to conflict transformation in the North:

> The generative function of reconciliation narratives is not just about generating accord. Narratives of reconciliation will also generate critiques of reconciliatory processes and greater or lesser degrees of non-reconciliation. [… A]s Moon (2006: 246) contends, talking about reconciliation needs to involve discourses which are *not* reconciled, which are not forgiving, which do not apologise, which call for punishment. (215).

Indeed, as James Nesbitt has pointed out, *Five Minutes of Heaven* "was never about reconciliation" but rather "about self-reconciliation" (25:58-26:06). Joe and Alistair's hard-won self-reconciliation does not predicate or even depend on accord so much as on a discourse of un-reconciliation. With regard to the genre of revenge tragedy, Pollard posits that "[t]he thrill of these plays […] depends on the audience identifying with the aggrieved revenger and rooting to punish the original wrongdoing" (59). While the viewer is perfectly able to identify with Joe, the would-be revenger, the film portrays the adult Alistair in such a sympathetic fashion that any urge "to punish the original wrongdoing" is called into question. The thrill of *Five Minutes of Heaven* is hence of a different kind. It lies in the complex web of contradictory feelings it shows and evokes, and in the longing of both Joe and Alistair to establish their peace of mind. A lasting rapport between Joe and Alistair is not established, and the film's version of peaceful post-conflict coexistence is only more credible for it. Observed from a meta-perspective, however, Joe's failure to take revenge corresponds to the failure of the TV programme – Joe leaves the set before attacking Alistair,

thus abandoning the programme entirely. The absence of murder in the film is of course salutary, but still the failure of *One on One* hints at a deeper problem underpinning the debate on truth and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Institutionalised peace-building initiatives, the films implies, do not or cannot foster peaceful coexistence because they fail to understand the victims' emotional needs which may well be outside the boundaries of the socially or politically desirable. By the same token, the film ironically undermines itself as an instance of institutionalised discourse. The effect is wryly beneficial in that it limits the allegorical scope the film has established for itself. By criticising the institutionalised approach to truth and reconciliation, *Five Minutes of Heaven* asks to be taken with a grain to salt as it auto-interrogates the way it has staged Alistair and Joe as representatives of Northern Irish society and acknowledges its status as only one possible narrative among many.

The remaining three works discussed in this study, Glenn Patterson's *Gull*, Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras* and David Park's *The Truth Commissioner*, possess a somewhat broader scope than the three aforementioned. They too offer narratives from the "spaces in-between," but they do so moving away from the depiction of mainly personal 'geographical imaginations' and towards imaginary landscapes of a wider social relevance. *Gull* is concerned with the reduction of individually usable space by both militaries and paramilitaries whose interventions adhere to and enforce a sectarian logic. This logic follows a threefold approach in which all public space is first divided and then equalised into what Augé has termed "non-places." Finally, the mobility through these non-places is radically limited. In *Gull*, this reduction of space is opposed within the DeLorean factory, which functions according to the spatial exigencies of productivity. Wedged in between the Catholic estate of Twinbrook and the Protestant estate of Seymour Hill, the factory recruits workers from both. The training the workers receive enables them to carry out each and every job in the manufacturing process should need be. As a result, the positions occupied within the factory briefly become exchangeable and flexible and oppose the rigid social ordering outside. With the closure of the factory, the workforce finally return to a geography of division, but this geography prevails first and foremost because Northern Ireland is submitted to foreign discourses that reinforce the impermeability of its borders. *Gull*'s challenge to what Eamonn Hughes has criticised as "the most common perception of the North […as] a category of one" ("Northern Ireland – Border Country" 1) does not stop here. While Randall's initial experience of Northern Ireland would seem to tie in with this very perception, *Gull* as a whole significantly widens the narrative framework in which to contemplate and portray the socio-spatial relationships of Northern Ireland. Writing in 1991,

Hughes posited that Patterson, along with other writers of his generation, "escape[d] the sense of Northern Ireland as fatalistically complete by taking for granted that the world beyond the North [… was] part of the Northern Irish experience" ("Northern Ireland – Border Country" 8). *Gull* continues in the same vein, taking for granted that Northern Ireland was as much implicated in the economic processes of globalised capitalism as it was influenced by the aesthetics of postmodernism and the European surrealist movement. It is thus represented as a region embedded in international networks in such ways as promote thinking about it as a "conjunction of many histories and many spaces" (D. Massey, "Places" 191; cf. "Imagining" 14). If Breton and Soupault have given the name "surrealism" to what they call "the new mode of pure expression" (Breton n. pag.), the spatial dimensions of *Gull* function as an equally "pure expression" of the contradictory local and global discourses in which Northern Ireland was trapped one decade into the Troubles.

Discussing *Gull* at the "Scribes at the Duncairn" event during the 2016 Féile an Phobail, Glenn Patterson expressed his disbelief towards the hard-and-fast distinction between fiction on the one hand and history on the other, stressing the ways in which the process of writing prose was necessarily a selective one, so that no account, fictional or otherwise, could hope to capture all that which had been or could have been experienced in a given situation (Patterson, Higgins and King n. pag.). This conviction plays out in *Gull* to striking effect, as the novel revisits a part of Northern Ireland's recent history. In choosing the DMC-12 as the narrative focal point, however, *Gull* takes a fascinating historical and cultural detour. Taking its cue from a factory that did exist in Belfast in the late seventies and early eighties, *Gull* sheds some semi-fictional light on the historical events of the period from the vantage point of the ongoing peace process, doing so through the lens of an earlier cultural product, namely the DeLorean time machine as featured in the *Back to the Future* films. The iconic car remade by the film industry as an instantly recognisable object of US-American popular culture brings to the novel a set of cultural associations that bypass and transcend the binaries that are always subtly at play in Northern Irish culture. Disregarding the differentiation between history and fiction, *Gull* effectively promotes a narrative reframing of the divisive past.

Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras* and David Park's *The Truth Commissioner* are thrillers of a very different kind but both are starkly political novels. Both counteract the customary formulaic certainties of the thriller genre by suggesting that historical events follow their own inherent logic and develop their own dynamic, which cannot be foreseen or controlled from without. They are instances of the trend that Eamonn Hughes already observed in

Northern Irish fiction in 2001, when he opined that "[c]hance and coincidence, far from being flaws in fiction, are actually being used as a way of countering a previous reliance on fate and inevitability" ("Fiction" 102). He goes on to say that "[c]onservative fictional forms, such as the thriller, are often narratives which try to stabilise society in the wake of some kind of turmoil, narratives that is to say which cannot, on the surface, allow for chance and the random" (102). By contrast, while both *The Ultras* and *The Truth Commissioner* clearly operate "in the wake of some kind of turmoil," they delve deeper into this very turmoil as a means of resolving it, and in doing so, they clearly allow "for chance and the random". *The Ultras* is free from the hope of redemption offered at the end of *The Truth Commissioner*. It is a dark, hopeless, paranoid tale of the workings of the British intelligence agencies in Northern Ireland as they collude with loyalist paramilitaries for purposes whose rationale remains oblique to the end. Their counter insurgency efforts appear mainly to be directed at driving a wedge between the Catholic population and the places they inhabit, manipulating their 'geographical imaginations' to such an extent that their lived surroundings become unintelligible and fearful to them. By way of quasi-colonial interference, the Catholic population is alienated from the ground they tread on and are thus rendered, disoriented, unfit for resistance. In the process, the military players enlist and destroy the lives of locals such as police officer Blair Agnew, whose responsibility for his own demise cannot be clearly ascertained in retrospect.

In her study on representations of masculinity in contemporary Northern Irish fiction, Magennis has rightly observed that "[v]ictimhood is a complex issue, then, as it is often used as a political tool but the scale of the conflict in Northern Ireland has given countless people victim status. This ambiguity is reflected in the fiction, which deals with victims, both directly and indirectly, and perpetrators" (127). Blurring of the boundaries between victim and perpetrator, both *The Ultras* and, to an even greater extent, *The Truth Commissioner* highlight the ways in which their protagonists have been brutalised by the past. In *The Truth Commissioner*, the lives of Fenton, Madden and Gilroy have been equally damaged by their involvement in the Troubles. If there is to be 'no hierarchy of victims,' these characters are all victims in equal measure, at least according to the broad definition provided by the 2006 Victims' and Survivors' Order. The three protagonists are as much implicated in the circumstances leading to Connor's death as they are affected by them. The ultimate responsibility for the killing lies with neither of them and, concurrently, the novel refuses to disrupt the empathy it has established for each of its protagonists. In this fashion, the responsibility for Connor's death is depersonalised, deflected on 'the circumstances' of the

civil war as an abstract force that has blurred the boundaries between the acceptable and the unacceptable. As a result, the novel refuses to offer a simple answer to the question of guilt and responsibility. Far from evasive, it is ultimately one of the novel's achievements that it stresses so poignantly the human complexities of the post-conflict situation. The absence both of the killer and of his victim from the novel paradoxically does not simplify matters. Rather, it contributes to the pervading sense of a complex, intricately-spun web of responsibility that encompasses the whole of Northern Ireland as a post-conflict landscape. The novel decidedly denies an easy allocation of guilt; it refuses to release the three protagonists from their shared responsibility and to offer any emotional catharsis.

The narratives that emerge from both the hearing at the Truth Commission and from Park's novel itself allegorically highlight the question of societal involvement in the past and suggest that responsibility, both implicit and explicit, is distributed in complex patterns across any society emerging from a prolonged period of civil war. As Little contends in his essay on a narrative approach to conflict resolution in the North, "most attempts to resolve social and political conflict will fail because of the void between the linguistic constructions through which conflict resolution is expressed and the complex political terrain to which these discourses apply" (Little 221). Little's argument mirrors Brian Lynch's complaint about the "anti-language" of peace, which is unable to refer to the oftentimes unpalatable socio-political reality (Lynch 2). In *The Truth Commissioner*, this discursive impasse is addressed and ultimately redressed by reframing the contentious discourse about truth recovery in spatial terms.

Although called for from diverse quarters, no Truth Commission has as yet been established for Northern Ireland. However, the excavation of Connor Walshe at the end of the novel portrays an allegorical act of truth recovery. Concurrently, *The Truth Commissioner* apparently aligns with the stance taken in the controversial 2009 Eames/Bradley Report which, recommending the establishment of a Truth Commission for Northern Ireland, argued that "the past cannot be forgotten. *Buried memories* fester in the unconscious minds of communities in conflict, only to emerge later in even more distorted and virulent forms to poison minds and relationships" (Report of the Consultative Group 52, emphasis mine). Connor's corpse embodies such "buried memories" that have to be retrieved for his family to be able to continue. It is in this light that I read Joseph O'Neill's astute remark "that with writers like David Park, the novel can itself be a kind of truth commission" (n. pag.). By re-framing the socio-political discourse about the past in spatial terms, Park circumnavigates the 'anti-language' of peace building and provides the truth with a firmer

ground. *The Truth Commissioner*, as much as the other works discussed in this study, succeeds in exposing and questioning the narrative foundations of 'the narrow ground,' suggesting ways of thinking about the North that creatively complement the political discourses of peace building and power sharing that take as their reference points the limiting paradigms of party politics and the past. When analysing the causes of the civil war and capturing the predicament in his phrase of "the narrow ground of Ulster," A.T.Q. Stewart posited impatiently that the conflict

> [o]f its very nature consists in particulars, the location of a road, a stretch of a wall, a church or a cluster of houses, and the pattern has less relevance to abstract concepts of reconciliation, political reform, constitutional innovations […] than is commonly supposed. And yet the problem is invariably discussed in abstract terms. (181)

Stressing the importance of territorial ownership and place-specific narratives in a highly constricted spatial setup, Stewart hints at the mismatch between these concrete particulars which are of immediate practical relevance and the abstract, intangible remedies which are located in the domain of socio-political theory. Fiction and film, by contrast, whose descriptions of setting – if they successfully underpin the narrative's personal and emotional dynamics – necessarily rely on particulars, offer modes of representation that bypass abstract discussion and evasive political rhetoric. They add to these abstracts life, or lives, lived out in concrete spatial configurations. In an environment of linguistic limitation, their discursive innovation lies in the creative description of the minute particulars of the everyday, which must be lived, represented and transcended in terms of the spatial.

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6. Deutschsprachige Zusammenfassung

Im Kontext der fortlaufenden politischen, sozialen und kulturellen Verhandlung von Frieden in Nordirland beschäftigt sich die vorliegende Studie mit vier Romanen und zwei Filmen und deren Entwürfen von Raum, räumlicher Identität und sozialem Wandel. Die fortlaufenden Brexit-Verhandlungen haben nicht zuletzt durch die Debatte um den „Backstop" – die umstrittene Sonderregelung für die irische Grenze – die Teilung Irlands einmal mehr in den Fokus internationaler Beobachtung gerückt. Die innerirische Grenze war jedoch bereits vor dem Brexit-Referendum im Jahr 2016 eine, zumindest innerhalb Nordirlands, diskursiv stark umkämpfte Grenze. Zwar wurde durch das Friedensabkommen von 1998 eine Exekutive auf der Basis eines Parteienproporz geschaffen, der dafür Sorge trägt, dass die beiden vorherrschenden politischen Gemeinschaften Nordirlands, die Unionisten/ Loyalisten einerseits und die Nationalisten/ Republikaner andererseits, gleichermaßen an der Ausübung politischer Macht beteiligt werden. Die umstrittene Frage nach der verfassungsrechtlichen Daseinsberechtigung des Staates Nordirland und seiner Grenze ist damit jedoch nicht abschließend gelöst worden; sie reproduziert sich fortwährend in politischen Debatten und Auseinandersetzungen. Wie Anssi Paasi zusammenfasst, projizieren Nationalstaatsgrenzen ihre Macht sowohl nach außen als auch nach innen, "marking the spread of societal and political control into society" (22). Dementsprechend sind sie Eckpfeiler dessen, was Passi als "the discursive landscape of social power" (22) bezeichnet. Das gescheiterte Abkommen beispielsweise, das von den US-amerikanischen Unterhändlern Richard Haass und Meghan Sullivan Ende 2013 vorgestellt wurde, sollte eine gütliche Lösung für die Verwaltung von Paraden, dem Gebrauch von Nationalflaggen, den Umgang mit der Vergangenheit und, damit einhergehend, Fragen des Gedenkens klären. Das Abkommen betraf somit Kernelemente der Prozesse des "emotional bordering" (Passi 22).

Vor dem Hintergrund gesellschaftlicher Spaltung und der nachhaltig und mit großer Dringlichkeit geäußerten Forderungen nach der Ermöglichung von „shared space" als elementarem Bestandteil der Konsolidierung gesellschaftlichen Friedens in Nordirland (Cunningham 33; Haass und O'Sullivan 2, 4, 14; cf. Komarova passim, und Kelly und Mitchell, „Peaceful Spaces?" passim) behandelt die vorliegende Arbeit die verbalen und visuellen Darstellungen von räumlichem und sozialem Wandel in Nordirland sowie an dessen Grenze als den engagierten Versuch der Teilnahme und letztendlich der Bereicherung der fortschreitenden diskursiven Verhandlungen von Raum und dessen Eigentumsrecht. Die Überzeugung, die diese Studie leitet, hat Michel Foucault wie folgt zusammengefasst:

"Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power" ("Space, Power and Knowledge" 170). Dementsprechend verorten sich die literarische Analysen dieser Studie an der Schnittstelle von Raum, gesellschaftlichem Leben und politischer Macht. Die Repräsentationen und Interpretationen von Raum und räumlicher Identität, die zeitgenössische nordirische Literatur und Filme vornehmen, fungieren als überaus effektive diskursive Eingriffe in das, was Humangeographen als „geographical imagination" (Jess und Massey 134) bezeichnet haben. Diese kulturellen Texte nehmen Teil an den öffentlichen Diskursen über Frieden, Versöhnung und gemeinsam nutzbaren, öffentlichen Raum, und wirken mit an der Öffnung neuer, zukunftsfähiger und kultureller Räume und gemeinsamer nordirischer Narrative (cf. Frenk, Introduction 16; Kirkland 13; cf. Alexander 15). Zum Zweck der detaillierten diskursiven Verortung der kulturellen Texte und der Räume, die sie entwerfen, betrachtet die Arbeit explizit und ausführlich Gesetzestexte, Texte politischer Vereinbarungen, journalistische Arbeiten sowie akademische Abhandlungen aus dem Bereich politischer Soziologie. Nur durch eine solche Kontextualisierung, so die Annahme dieser Arbeit, kann die gesellschaftliche Relevanz der fiktiven, textuellen Geographien analysiert werden.

Abgeleitet von ihrem Forschungsinteresse gliedert sich diese Dissertation in zwei Hauptkapitel, die sich jeweils mit eher rezenten kulturellen Texten befassen; alle sind in den ersten beiden Dekaden des noch jungen einundzwanzigsten Jahrhunderts erschienen. Das erste dieser Kapitel betrachtet unter dem Titel „Geographies of Contention" also „Geographien der Auseinandersetzung" verbale und visuelle Texte, die sich mit der Darstellung der irischen Grenze und der Verhandlung der zugehörigen umstrittenen identitätsstiftenden Grenzdiskurse befassen. Im Speziellen handelt es sich um zwei Romane – Lucy Caldwells *Where They Were Missed* von 2006 und Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras* von 2004 – sowie einen Film – Steve McQueens biographisch inspirierter Film *Hunger,* der 2008 erschienen ist. Das zweite dieser Kapitel befasst sich unter dem Titel „Geographies of Transition," zu Deutsch „Geographien des Übergangs," mit Texten, die sich der Darstellung und Kommentierung von gesellschaftlichem und räumlichem Wandel im Zuge des Friedenprozesses zuwenden. Auch dieses Kapitel beschäftigt sich hauptsächlich mit zwei Romanen und einem Film: Die beiden Romane sind Glenn Pattersons *Gull*, 2016 veröffentlicht, und David Parks *The Truth Commissioner* von 2008; dazu kommt kontrastierend Oliver Hirschbiegels Film *Five Minutes of Heaven*, der 2009 erschienen ist.

Die literarischen Analysen der Texte zeigen auf, sozusagen über die Kapitelgrenzen dieser Dissertation hinweg, dass Lucy Caldwells Roman *Where They Were Missed* und Steve

McQueens Film *Hunger* das Ringen des Individuums um Selbstbestimmung und Selbstentwicklung im Spannungsfeld nationaler Diskurse auf unmittelbarster, persönlichster Ebene diskutieren; Oliver Hirschbiegels *Five Minutes of Heaven* befasst sich ebenfalls mit dem persönlichen Erleben von Liminalität und beinhaltet gleichzeitig einen deutlichen allegorischen Subtext im gesellschaftlichen Kontext von Versöhnung und dem Streben nach Wahrheit. Die verbleibenden drei Texte, die diese Arbeit diskutiert, Glenn Pattersons *Gull*, Eoin McNamees *The Ultras* sowie David Parks *The Truth Commissioner* bieten einen etwas breiteren, weniger unmittelbar-individuellen Blick auf die Verhandlung von gemeinsam beanspruchtem, öffentlichem Raum. Auch diese drei Texte können als Narrative des ‚Dazwischen' gelesen werden, aber sie markieren eine weniger ausgeprägte Beschäftigung mit den individuellen ‚geographical imaginations' ihrer Protagonisten und entwerfen stattdessen imaginäre Geographien von umfänglicherer sozialer und gesellschaftlicher Relevanz.

Den Analysen dieser Studie von Caldwells *Where They Were Missed* und McQueens *Hunger* liegen hauptsächlich Peter Goldies Konzept des „narrative sense of self" (118) und Michel de Certeaus Konzept der „spatial story" zugrunde (s. gleichnamiges Essay). In seiner Studie *Border Literatures in Twentieth-Century American Literature* (2000) hat Larry Trenton Hickman die Relevanz des Konzepts der „spatial story" für die Analyse von Narrativen umkämpfter Grenzen und Räume herausgearbeitet. Nach Hickman betont die „spatial story" die Bedeutung des Einzelnen, der mit seinen Geschichten zum grenzübergreifenden „space-clearing" seiner gesellschaftlichen Gruppe beitragen kann (8). Hickman kommt zu folgendem Schluß:

> Room exists for individuals in the act of space-clearing, then; indeed, individual stories that help a people collectively 'imagine' their claims to a parcel of land at the microsocial level – even if, as in the case of the borderlands, they have little or no political recognition of this space – allow for the Lefebvrian 'spaces of representation' and 'representational spaces' to arise at macrosocial ones. (9)

In meiner Lesart der Texte dienen den Protagonisten von sowohl *Where They Were Missed* als auch *Hunger* ihre jeweiligen „spatial stories" bei der Entwicklung eines individuell schlüssigen „narrative sense of self." In Caldwells Bildungsroman *Where They Were Missed* fungiert die innerirische Grenze als Ort des individuellen als auch des metonymischen räumlichen Wandels. Die heranwachsende Protagonistin, Saoirse, empfindet aufgrund ihres Daseins zwischen den Narrativen der beiden irischen Nationalstaaten ein akutes Gefühl der Dislokation, der Nicht-Zugehörigkeit, das sie im Zuge einer biographisch bedeutsamen

Reise über die irische Grenze letztlich bezwingen kann. Die Analyse des Romans legt nahe, dass Saoirse eine Zusammenfügung ihres gebrochenen Selbst gelingt, indem sie ein Selbstverständnis entwickelt, das gerade nicht auf den hegemonialen Gewissheiten der nationalstaatlichen, territorialen Zugehörigkeitsdiskurse beruht (cf. Anderson and O'Dowd 597-98). Saoirse erreicht eine erfolgreiche Verhandlung ihres neuen Selbstverständnisses, indem sie sich ein eigenes, identitätsstiftendes Narrativ aufbaut, das die diskursiven Manifestationen der nationalen Trennung Irlands versöhnt. Ihre narrativen und geographischen Grenzüberschreitungen stellen die postulierte Stabilität beider irischer Nationalterritorien und deren Narrative in Frage und beanspruchen das Grenzland dazwischen als fluiden Raum, der sich durch das Zusammentreffen sozialer und kultureller Elemente im Sinne von Doreen Masseys „progressive sense of place" immer wieder neu definiert ("Power-Geometry" 66).

Steve McQueens *Hunger* ist eine Filmbiografie, die sich mit den letzten Monaten im Leben des IRA-Mitglieds Bobby Sands beschäftigt, der sich 1981 im Maze/Long Kesh-Gefängnis im Rahmen eines von ihm initiierten republikanischen Hungerstreiks zu Tode hungert. *Hunger* ist ein hochpolitisches Werk, das gleichermaßen Kritik an den "disciplinary régimes" (Foucault, *Discipline* 58) der staatlichen britischen Institutionen und dem organisierten irischen Republikanismus der IRA übt; er zeigt die Zwangslage des Individuums, das zwischen den Zahnrädern dieser disziplinären Systeme gefangen ist. Die Geschehnisse in *Hunger* spielen sich beinahe ausschließlich innerhalb der Gefängniswände ab, wobei der Film einer dreiteiligen Struktur folgt: der erste Teil des Films porträtiert die brutalen und teilweise menschenverachtenden Bedingungen, unter denen die republikanischen Häftlinge ihre Gefängniszeit verbringen, während der dritte und letzte Teil sich mit dem langsamen Sterben des Streikenden beschäftigt. Der zweite und für die vorliegende Arbeit bedeutsamste Teil ist einem circa zwanzigminütigen Austausch zwischen Bobby Sands und seinem Pastor im Besucherraum des Gefängnis gewidmet, im Verlauf dessen Sands seine Entscheidung rechtfertigt, sein Leben den Zielen des Hungerstreiks unterzuordnen. Während der Unterhaltung wird deutlich, dass Sands' Hungerstreik in letzter Instanz in der übergreifenden politischen Überzeugung begründet ist, dass die innerirische Grenze eine unrechtmäßige Teilung der Insel vornimmt und die irische Nation spaltet. In meiner Lesart des Films kritisiert *Hunger* Sands' ‚geographical imagination' als limitiert und sogar hegemonial, da sie der Überzeugung der Moderne entstammt, das Territorium des (angestrebten) Staates stimme mit einer kohärenten kulturellen Gemeinschaft überein (D. Massey, "Imagining" 21).

Während *Hunger* die Grenze also als sozial unproduktives und isolierendes Bollwerk darstellt, das die traditionellen loyalistischen bzw. republikanischen Nationalnarrative nur verstärkt, fungiert die Grenze in Caldwells Roman als ‚Brücke' zwischen als sich gegenseitig ausschließenden Identitätskategorien (cf. McCall 155). Die individuell bedeutsame Verlagerung von Saoirses ‚geographical imagination' begründet einen „qualitative border change" (Anderson und O'Dowd 602), der die Grenze als Ort der individuellen Identitätsbildung denkbar macht. Sowohl in *Hunger* als auch in *Where They Were Missed* fungiert die Grenze hauptsächlich als ein gedachter Ort, an dem die Protagonisten ihre persönlichen Identitäten und ihre Gefühle gemeinschaftlicher Zugehörigkeit verhandeln. Saoirse und Sands ziehen aus diesen Prozessen der Neuverhandlung unterschiedliche Schlüsse, aber die imaginären und geographischen Grenzüberschreitungen beider Charaktere stellen räumliche Praktiken dar, die die Rigidität nationaler Grenzen in Frage stellen und in diesem Sinne soziale und politische Implikationen mit sich bringen.

Oliver Hirschbiegels *Five Minutes of Heaven*, den ich in meinem zweiten Kapitel „Geographies of Transition" bespreche, beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, ob und inwiefern Versöhnung im Nordirland der Nachkriegszeit möglich sein kann. Ich betrachte den Film als eine Abwandlung der frühmodernen Rachetragödie, in der Rache zwar versucht, aber letztendlich nicht ausgeführt wird. Der Film schildert die fiktive Begegnung zweier nicht-fiktiver Protagonisten, deren Leben durch eine Bluttat während des Bürgerkriegs mit einander verbunden sind: In einer Rückblende zeigt der Film, wie der siebzehnjährige loyalistische Paramilitär Alistair Little in den siebziger Jahren den älteren Bruder des Katholiken Joe Griffin ermordet. In der Jetztzeit des Films, die mit der Zeit des nordirischen Friedensprozesses zusammenfällt, sollen beide als erwachsene Männer im Rahmen eines Fernsehprogramms zum Thema Versöhnung aufeinandertreffen. Griffin verlässt den Drehort, bevor es zu einem Treffen kommt, und die Männer begegnen sich stattdessen in Griffins ehemaligem Zuhause, wo ein Faustkampf zwischen den beiden stattfindet. Das Resultat der Begegnung ist letztlich keine Versöhnung, zumindest jedoch eine Übereinkunft auf friedvolle Koexistenz. Entgegen der Genrekonvention enthält *Five Minutes of Heaven* vergleichsweise wenig kathartische Gewaltausübung wie die Rachetragödie sie fordert (cf. Pollard 69). Allerdings bietet der Film auch keine gefühlsbetonte Geschichte zwischenmenschlicher Versöhnung und Verständigung an. Stattdessen nimmt er teil am fortlaufenden öffentlichen Diskurs über Wahrheitsfindung und Versöhnung, indem er sich mit den realen Gegebenheiten dieses Diskurses auseinandersetzt und diese kommentiert. Er

nimmt somit die unbequeme Position ein, die auch Adrian Little einnimmt, wenn er einen narrativen Ansatz zur Konflikttransformation in Nordirland vertritt:

> The generative function of reconciliation narratives is not just about generating accord. Narratives of reconciliation will also generate critiques of reconciliatory processes and greater or lesser degrees of non-reconciliation. [… A]s Moon (2006: 246) contends, talking about reconciliation needs to involve discourses which are *not* reconciled, which are not forgiving, which do not apologise, which call for punishment. (215).

Little vertritt also die Ansicht, dass „Narrative der Versöhnung," wenn sie der Realität Rechnung tragen wollen, auch abweichende, „nicht-versöhnte" Stimmen und Sichtweisen zulassen und aufnehmen müssen. In *Five Minutes of Heaven* wird dementsprechend keine dauerhafte Beziehung zwischen Little und Griffin erreicht.

Von einer Meta-Perspektive betrachtet, fällt die vereitelte Rache Griffins mit dem Scheitern des Fernsehprogramms überein: er verlässt den Drehort und somit die Sendung noch bevor er seine Rache ausüben kann. Das Scheitern des Fernsehprogramms weist, in meiner Betrachtung des Films, auf eine bedeutsame Schwierigkeit in der Debatte um Wahrheitsfindung und Versöhnung hin. Der Film impliziert, dass institutionalisierte Initiativen die friedvolle gesellschaftliche Koexistenz nicht fördern können, solange sie die emotionalen Bedürfnisse der Opfer nicht anerkennen, die eventuell außerhalb des sozial und politisch erwünschten Diskurses liegen können. Als Instanz des institutionalisierten Diskurses unterminiert sich der Film auf diese Weise selbst: Indem er institutionalisierte Ansätze zur Wahrheitsfindung und Versöhnung kritisiert, hinterfragt *Five Minutes of Heaven* gleichzeitig die eigene fiktive Darstellung von Littles und Griffins Begegnung und erkennt an, selbst nur eine der möglichen Erzählweisen anzubieten.

Meine Analyse von Glenn Pattersons *Gull* fußt zum einen auf Frederic Jamesons und Zygmunt Baumans Betrachtungen zur Postmoderne und damit assoziiertem Ausprägungen des Konsumismus, und zum anderen auf Marc Augés Vorstellung des „non-place" als einen dezidiert nicht sozialen, nicht identitätsstiftenden Ort (63). In *Gull* kehrt Patterson zurück zu seiner Beschäftigung mit der Reduktion von individuell einnehmbarem, nutzbarem Raum durch sowohl militärische als auch paramilitärische Interventionen, die der Logik gesellschaftlicher Teilung folgen. In seinem Werk zeigt er, dass diese Logik einem dreiteiligen Ansatz folgt, durch den öffentlicher Raum zunächst geteilt und dann in der Form von „non-places" (Augé 63) gleichgeschaltet wird. Im dritten Schritt wird die Mobilität innerhalb dieser „non-places" radikal eingeschränkt. In *Gull*, einem Roman, der sich der historisch realen DeLorean-Automobilfabrik zuwendet, die von 1978-82 in Belfast betrieben

wurde, wird diese Reduktion von Raum innerhalb der Fabrikgrenzen aufgehoben: die Fabrikabläufe folgen den räumlichen Maximen erhöhter industrieller Produktivität. Die Fabrik rekrutiert sowohl katholische als auch protestantische Arbeitskräfte. Die Ausbildung, die die Arbeiter erhalten, befähigt sie alle gleichermaßen dazu, jedwede Tätigkeit entlang der Produktionskette auszuüben. Die Positionen innerhalb des Produktionsprozesses werden also austauschbar und sind so der rigiden sozialen Ordnung außerhalb der Fabrikmauern unmittelbar entgegengestellt. Durch den Niedergang der Fabrik ist die Arbeiterschaft schließlich gezwungen, zur Geographie sozialer Trennung zurückzukehren. Der vorliegenden Analyse zufolge zeigt der Roman, dass diese trennende Geographie hauptsächlich deshalb überdauert, weil Nordirland fremden (britischen als auch international neo-liberalen) Hegemonialdiskursen unterworfen ist, die die Undurchlässigkeit seiner sozio-politischen Grenzen verstärken.

Gull unterminiert also, was Eamonn Hughes als "the most common perception of the North [… as] a category of one" ("Northern Ireland – Border Country" 1) kritisiert hat. Während Randall, der US-amerikanische Protagonist des Romans, Nordirland zunächst als eine solche soziale und geographische Einzelkategorie wahrnimmt, wird in *Gull* im Verlauf der Handlung der narrative Rahmen maßgeblich erweitert, innerhalb dessen die Darstellungen der sozialen und räumlichen Beziehungen Nordirlands betrachtet werden. Der Roman unterstreicht, dass Nordirland ebenso in die wirtschaftlichen Prozesse des globalisierten Kapitalismus eingebunden ist wie es auch der Ästhetik des Postmodernismus und des europäischen Surrealismus unterliegt – und bekräftigt so Hughes, der bereits 1991 feststellte, dass Patterson und andere Schriftsteller seiner Generation das Eingebundensein Nordirlands in internationale Entwicklungen und Geschehnisse in den Vordergrund rücken (8). Dementsprechend porträtiert *Gull* Nordirland als in solcher Weise in internationale Netzwerke eingebunden, dass die eine Wahrnehmung der Region als "conjunction of many histories and many spaces" (D. Massey, "Places" 191; cf. "Imagining" 14) ermöglicht wird. Der DMC-12, das DeLorean-Modell, das in *Back to the Future* als Zeitmaschine diente, dient in *Gull* als narrativer Kristallisationspunkt und erlaubt dem Roman das Einschlagen eines historischen und kulturellen Umwegs. Ausgehend von einer Automobilfabrik in Belfast, die in den späten siebziger und frühen achtziger Jahren existierte, beleuchtet *Gull* in semi-fiktionaler Weise die historischen Ereignisse der Zeit aus der Perspektive des aktuellen Friedensprozesses und nutzt dazu das Vehikel eines früheren kulturellen Produkts, nämlich der DMC-12 Zeitmaschine. Der DMC-12 wurde durch seine Verwertung in der Filmindustrie zu einem ikonischen Objekt US-amerikanischer Populärkultur und aktiviert

als Teil des Romans eine Ansammlung kultureller Assoziationen, die die binären Elemente des nordirischen Gesellschaftsdiskurses überschreiten.

Die beiden verbleibenden Texte, die diese Dissertation diskutiert, sind Eoin McNamees *The Ultras* und David Parks *The Truth Commissioner*. Beides sind hochpolitische Romane, die im Genre des Thrillers zu verorten sind, auch wenn sie diese Genrezugehörigkeit auf unterschiedliche Weise zum Ausdruck bringen. Beide Texte untergraben die formelhaften Gewissheiten des Genres (cf. E. Hughes, „Fiction" 102), indem sie suggerieren, dass historische Ereignisse ihrer eigenen, unvorhersehbaren Logik und Dynamik folgen. Sie illustrieren somit den Trend, den Eamonn Hughes bereits 2001 in nordirischer Literatur erkannte: "Chance and coincidence, far from being flaws in fiction, are actually being used as a way of countering a previous reliance on fate and inevitability" ("Fiction" 102). Die Handlung beider Romane lebt von der Dynamik, die durch „Zufall und Beliebigkeit" entfaltet wird. Im Gegensatz zu *The Truth Commissioner* bietet *The Ultras* jedoch keine Hoffnung auf Wiedergutmachung oder Erlösung. *The Ultras* ist eine düstere, hoffnungslose, paranoide Erzählung, die sich mit der Tätigkeit der britischen Geheimdienste während des Bürgerkriegs beschäftigt. Der Roman beschreibt die geheime Zusammenarbeit zwischen Vertretern der Staatsmacht und loyalistischen Paramilitärs als Teil der britischen „Counterinsurgency"-Strategie im Kampf gegen den republikanischen Terror, die jedoch keinen klar erkennbaren, übergeordneten sicherheitspolitischen Zielen zu folgen scheint.

Meine Analyse der im Roman geschilderten „Counterinsurgency"-Maßnahmen basiert zu großen Teilen auf Herbert Clarks Betrachtung des Schachspiels als „joint activity," die er im gleichnamigen Kapitel seiner Abhandlung *Using Language* (1996) formuliert. Dort bemerkt Clark: "What is remarkable about chess […] is that the current state of the activity is represented in quite a concrete form. The chess board and its pieces are an external representation of the current state [of the activity]" (45). Clarks Ausführungen über das Schachbrett, das gemeinsam mit den Schachfiguren den „aktuellen Stand" der Partie anzeigt, korrespondiert auf interessante Weise mit A.T.Q. Stewarts Betrachtung der sozial und kulturell getrennten und trennenden Geographie Nordirlands als „chequerboard," also Schachbrett (182). Aufgrund der verborgenen und oft illegalen Bewegungen der geheimdienstlichen und paramilitärischen Akteure ist in *The Ultras* das Schachbrett Nordirlands keine verlässliche Informationsquelle; die „gemeinsame Aktivität" des Konflikts führt gerade nicht zur „kumulativen" Ansammlung von Information. Clark schreibt: "If joint activities are cumulative, what accumulates? I will argue that it is the common ground of the participants about that activity – the knowledge, beliefs, and

suppositions they believe they share about the activity" (38). Im krassen Gegensatz dazu ist der Bürgerkrieg *The Ultras* vielmehr eine Aktivität, in der Wissen und Gewissheit nachhaltig zerstreut und zerstört werden. Die Aktivitäten der Geheimdienste zielen hauptsächlich darauf ab, die ‚geographical imagination' der katholischen Bevölkerung Nordirlands derart zu manipulieren, dass sie ihre Lebensräume zunehmend als furchtsam, unverständlich und unbewohnbar wahrnehmen. Diese quasi-kolonialen Eingriffe in die Geographie des Landes entfremden die katholische Bevölkerung von ihrer Umgebung und führen zu einem fundamentalen Gefühl der Desorientierung, das Widerstand letztendlich vereitelt. Im Zuge dieser willkürlichen Interferenz vernichten die britischen Akteure auch das Leben einheimischer Einsatzkräfte wie das des Protagonisten Blair Agnew, dessen Verantwortung für die von ihm begangenen Verbrechen im Nachhinein nicht mehr eindeutig festgestellt werden kann.

Indem sie die Grenzen zwischen Opfer und Täter verwischen, unterstreichen McNamees *The Ultras* und Parks *The Truth Commissioner* die Umstände, durch die ihre jeweiligen Protagonisten brutalisiert worden sind und unterstreichen so die Komplexität und Uneindeutigkeit der Opferfrage (cf. Magennis 127). *The Truth Commissioner* erfindet eine Wahrheitskommission für Nordirland und beleuchtet durch dieses institutionelle Prisma die Lebensgeschichten dreier nordirischer Männer deren Leben durch ihre Aktivitäten während des Bürgerkriegs beschädigt wurden. Sie alle tragen einen Teil der Verantwortung an Connor Walshes Mord, einem fiktiven Jugendlichen aus Belfast, der von der IRA getötet und an einen unbekannten Ort begraben wurde. Diese drei streitbaren Charaktere sind alle gleichermaßen Opfer des Bürgerkriegs, wenn man die Definition der offiziell gültigen „Victims and Survivors Order" von 2006 in Betracht zieht. Obwohl sie Connor nicht selbst ermordet haben, sind sie ebenso sehr in die Umstände seines Todes verwickelt wie sie nachhaltig von ihnen beeinträchtigt werden. Durch seine einfühlsame Darstellung dieser drei Männer verweigert der Roman eine einfache Antwort auf die Frage nach Schuld und Verantwortung, und unterstreicht effektiv die soziale Komplexität der Nachkriegssituation.

Durch die Aussagen, die die drei Männer vor der Wahrheitskommission tätigen, kann letztendlich der Ort identifiziert werden, an dem Connor begraben von der IRA wurde. Trotz verschiedener Manipulationsversuche von Seiten des britischen Geheimdienstes und der IRA fließen die Aussagen der Männer vor der Kommission zusammen und ergeben ein kohärentes Narrativ über die Grenzen der gesellschaftlichen Teilung hinweg. Die Narrative, die sowohl von der Wahrheitskommission als auch von Parks Roman als Ganzes ausgehen, heben auf allegorische Weise hervor, dass die implizite und explizite Verantwortung für die

Vergangenheit sich zwangsläufig in komplexen Mustern über die gesamte Gesellschaft erstreckt. Adrian Little schreibt,

> most attempts to resolve social and political conflict will fail because of the void between the linguistic constructions through which conflict resolution is expressed and the complex political terrain to which these discourses apply. […] It seems inevitable that conflict resolution discourses end up simplifying the irreducible complexity of the very conflicts that they seek to address. (Little 221)

Littles Feststellung, dass die Diskurse, die der Lösung von Konflikten verschrieben sind, zwangsläufig zur „Vereinfachung der nicht reduzierbaren Komplexität dieser Konflikte" führen, spiegelt auf gewisse Weise Brian Lynchs Desillusionierung mit der „anti-language" des Friedens, die den sozialen und politischen Gegebenheiten der Situation nicht gerecht werden kann und will (2). Parks *The Truth Commissioner* vermeidet und beseitigt diese diskursive Sackgasse, indem er den umstrittenen Diskurs der Wahrheitsfindung in räumlichen Begriffen und Metaphern ausdrückt und greifbar macht.

Obwohl verschiedene Akteure sich für eine entsprechende Institution stark gemacht haben, ist bislang keine Wahrheitskommission in Nordirland etabliert worden. Die Exhumierung von Connor Walshes Leiche am Ende des Romans kann jedoch als allegorischer Moment der Wahrheitsfindung gedeutet werden. *The Truth Commissioner* korrespondiert auf diese Art und Weise mit dem Eames/Bradley Report aus dem Jahr 2009, der die Etablierung einer Wahrheitskommission empfiehlt und feststellt. Dort heißt es: "the past cannot be forgotten. Buried memories fester in the unconscious minds of communities in conflict, only to emerge later in even more distorted and virulent forms to poison minds and relationships" (Report of the Consultative Group 52). Im Kontext von Parks Roman kann Connors Leiche als Verkörperung solcher "vergrabener Erinnerungen" verstanden werden, deren Wiederherstellung es seiner Familie erst erlaubt, mit der Vergangenheit abzuschließen. Parks Roman rekonzeptualisiert die sozio-politische Debatte über die Vergangenheit in dezidiert räumlichen Begriffen und vermeidet so die ausgehöhlte „anti-language" des Friedensprozesses. Ebenso wie die fünf anderen Texte, mit denen sich diese Dissertation auseinandersetzt, hinterfragt *The Truth Commissioner* die narrativen Fundamente des geteilten Nordirland und entwirft kreative Komplementärdiskurse zur politischen Debatte um Friedenskonsolidierung und Machtverteilung, die nicht in den limitierenden Paradigmen von Parteipolitik und umkämpfter Vergangenheit verortet sind.