

Introduction: Post-Agreement Northern Irish Culture

Shane Alcobia-Murphy

The tragedies of the past have left a deep and profoundly regrettable legacy of suffering. We must never forget those who have died or been injured, and their families. But we can best honour them through a fresh start, in which we firmly dedicate ourselves to the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust, and to the protection and vindication of the human rights of all.¹

When searching for ways to impose a meaningful order upon reality, we rely on memory for ‘the provision of symbolic representations and frames which can influence and organize both our actions and our conceptions of ourselves’.² Yet following the Belfast Agreement, which was signed on 10 April 1998, a pronounced tension emerged in Northern Irish society between the urge to remember and the desire to forget the atrocities carried out during the period of the so-called ‘Troubles’, with politicians time and again walking the fine line between amnesty and amnesia, whether willingly or not. In the effort to maintain existing ceasefires, and to seek a political solution, it had been deemed expedient for Justice to remain blind (or rather, to turn a blind eye) to certain past crimes: for example, due to the early release scheme negotiated under the auspices of the Agreement, Torrens Knight, convicted of eleven murders carried out at Greysteel and Castlerock, served only seven years out of eight life sentences, and Norman Coopey was allowed to align himself with the Loyalist Volunteer Force whilst in prison and thereby claim political status (and eligibility for early release) for what was a non-politically motivated sectarian murder.³ Thus, there appears to be a determined effort to overwrite the ‘legacy of suffering’, a reflex symbolised most visibly in the Belfast City Council’s new logo for the city with its heart-shaped ‘B’, a design which, as Colin Graham has contended, effectively ‘pitches Belfast as a place of unspecified but all-encompassing “warmth”, its history bundled safely into a kind of distanced quaintness attuned to its function as a spectacle of and for tourism’.⁴ Graham’s recent research demonstrates how a recurrent trope has emerged within post-Ceasefire Northern Irish culture, namely ‘an ache which notices, knows, but can barely comment on the cauterisation of the dark complexity of the past, since to point to, or even test out, the fragile post-consociational consensus would be to remember a future that is now consigned to history’.⁵ This chapter examines the poetic, novelistic and photographic responses to the Agreement, and explores the ways in which the writers and artists expose an uneasy relationship to Northern Ireland’s violent past. If, as Andreas Huyssen argues, ‘[r]emembrance shapes our links to the past, and the ways we remember define us in the present’,⁶ then what does the erasure of one’s past say about one’s self-conception in the present?

¹ Paragraph 2 of *The Agreement*, 10 April 1998: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/agreement.htm> Accessed 10 November 2016.

² Barbara Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003), 13.

³ See Susan McKay, *Bear in Mind These Dead* (London: Faber, 2008), 151-7, 165-7.

⁴ Colin Graham, ‘Gagarin’s Point of View: Memory and Space in Recent Northern Irish Art’, *Irish Review* 40-41 (Winter, 2009): 105.

⁵ Colin Graham, ‘“Every Passer-by a Culprit?”: Archive Fever, Photography and the Peace in Belfast’, *Third Text* 19.5 (September, 2005): 568.

⁶ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 249.

A perfect (and much commented upon) example of the ‘cauterisation’ of the past is Michael Winterbottom’s *With or Without You* (1999), a film which aestheticises the Belfast urban environment and which searches for “a new imagery” that would rescue the city from its association with “violence, fear and division”.⁷ Rather than featuring sectarian murals, peace-lines and graffiti, the film erases markers of conflict, ‘replacing the rundown streets, the Saracens, and the ever-hovering helicopters with a new vision of Belfast as a glass and chrome space of pleasurable consumption’.⁸ Symbolising the forward-looking nature of the city is the film’s focus on the Waterfront Hall, the ‘ultra-modern concert, conference and exhibition centre that came to symbolise the new, aspiring and increasingly affluent Belfast of the late 1990s’.⁹ That urge to forget is also encapsulated by the images used for the part played by Belfast in Coca Cola’s *Open Happiness* (2009) global marketing campaign. Designed by the *eboy* collective¹⁰ and commissioned by the McCann Erickson service communications agency, the pixel art and isometric projections used for the advertising posters depicting the ‘Coke Cities’ which were displayed throughout Belfast on billboards, bus-shelters, phone kiosks and other advertising spaces, portray the city as being over-run by tourists and culture vultures: in the post-Troubles context, the weather is always sunny, airport security is surprisingly lax, the Titanic is resurrected and filmed, and the only potential violence is from a wayward golf shot and a Ravenhill rugby fracas. In the words of one of Colin Bateman’s characters, it is as if ‘the entire country had ducked into Mr Benn’s changing room and emerged fresh and vibrant’.¹¹

However, a significant trend has emerged within Northern Irish cultural responses to the Belfast Agreement and the ensuing peace process, one which indicates a determined resistance to amnesia and which promotes an ethical-political approach towards the act of remembrance. For example, in Ciaran Carson’s poem ‘Peace’ (2008), the speaker does not foreground the progress resulting from the paramilitary decommissioning of arms and the prisoners’ amnesty; rather, he underscores the inherent dangers of the strictly presentist concerns of Northern Irish *real-politik* by meditating on significant absences:

And all the unanswered questions of those dark days come back
To haunt us, the disabled guns that still managed to kill,

The witnesses that became ghosts in the blink of an eye.
Whom can we prosecute when no one is left fit to speak?¹²

In these lines, as Neal Alexander observes, ‘the imperfect present is haunted by the past, by a silencing of memory that renders justice impossible and the duty to remember unfulfilled’.¹³ Here, Alexander refers to Ricoeur’s contention that remembrance is an ‘action’, one that is a

⁷ John Hill, *Cinema and Northern Ireland: Film, Culture and Politics* (London: BFI, 2006), 230.

⁸ Ruth Barton, *Irish National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2004), 174.

⁹ Martin McLoone, *Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland: Cityscapes, Landscapes, Soundscapes* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), 59.

¹⁰ The *eboy* collective was founded in 1998 by Steffen Sauerteig, Svend Smital and Kai Vermehr to explore and expand the possibilities of pixel art.

¹¹ Colin Bateman, *Belfast Confidential* (London: Headline, 2005), 278.

¹² Ciaran Carson, ‘Peace’, *For All We Know* (Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 2008), 55.

¹³ Neal Alexander, *Ciaran Carson: Space, Place, Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 136.

prerequisite for bearing witness to atrocities and the subsequent achievement of justice. 'The first reason why it is a duty to tell,' Ricoeur states, 'is surely as a means of fighting against the erosion of traces';¹⁴ hence, the rush to forgive and forget may bring about 'peace', but it utterly fails to salve the mind's wounds. Ricoeur does admit that, in order to get beyond fixating on anger and to become reconciled with the past's legacies, there is, alongside the duty to remember, a complementary 'duty to forget';¹⁵ nevertheless, he concedes that the two duties are not comparable and that progress cannot be achieved by the erosion of traces and archives.

Such an erasure is (understandably) writ large in Belfast Council's glossy window into the future, *Invest in Belfast: A City Guide for Investors*. The document highlights the significant investment in infrastructure, commercial ventures and urban regeneration, including the £5 billion waterfront development, the Titanic Quarter, which aims to utterly transform 185 acres on the site of the former Harland & Wolff shipyards, and the projected development of the Lagan Corridor.¹⁶ It has been noted that, in the recent past, factors such as the inner city developments, incorporating high-rise buildings out of scale and sympathy with already existing edifices, and traffic pressure have each contributed to the decline in Belfast's visual character,¹⁷ but that the main contributor has been the legacy of the thirty years of violence (peace-lines, sectarian graffiti, destroyed buildings). Nevertheless, official responses to city planning have tended to strategically implement a policy of cultural amnesia. The graphics employed by the Belfast Urban Area Plan (1989), for example, projected 'a suite of positive images of newly built or planned developments' which were 'counterpointed by anaemic-toned panoramas of the city of the past'; indeed, as William J.V. Neill points out, all reference to 'the sectarian divisions with which the city is riven was studiously avoided in both text and photographs'.¹⁸ However, when artists and writers address the impact of Belfast's economic growth their approach is far more diachronic, rarely losing sight of the past. For instance, in Alan Gillis' 'Progress' (2004), the speaker wryly comments upon the effects of the city's newly found prosperity by positing, via a surreal filmic rewind, what it can never ultimately achieve, namely the resurrection of those killed during the Troubles and the healing of old wounds:

They say that for years Belfast was backwards
and it's great now to see some progress.
So I guess we can look forward to taking boxes
From the earth. I guess ambulances
will leave the dying back amidst the rubble
to be explosively healed.¹⁹

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, 'Memory and Forgetting', *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, eds. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999), 10.

¹⁵ Ricoeur 11.

¹⁶ See <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/investinbelfastguide/docs/investinbelfast2010.pdf>, 7.

¹⁷ C.E.B. Brett, 'Victorian and Edwardian Belfast: Preserving the Architectural Legacy of the Inner City', *Urban Planning and Cultural Inclusion: Lessons from Belfast and Berlin*, eds. William J. V. Neill and Hanns-Uve Schwedler (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 90.

¹⁸ William J. V. Neill, 'The Urban Planning Context in Belfast: A City between War and Peace', *Urban Planning*, eds. Neill and Schwedler, 47.

¹⁹ Alan Gillis, 'Progress', *Somebody, Somewhere* (Oldcastle: Gallery Press, 2004), 55.

Similarly, in John Duncan's photographic exhibition, *Trees from Germany* (2003),²⁰ the modern Belfast cityscape resulting from recent economic investment is caught in an uneasy juxtaposition with evidence of continuing sectarianism. One image, *Days Hotel, Sandy Row*, features a worker in the process of laying turf in the front area of the largest hotel in Northern Ireland. As part of the Cordia Hotel Group, the location is an emblem of global capitalism, and the activity symptomatic of promised new growth; however, facing this area, but separated from it by the hotel's railings, is an emblem that bespeaks a defensive local insularity, namely a large mural declaring 'You are now entering Loyalist Sandy Row Heartland of South Belfast Ulster Freedom Fighters'. The adjacent photograph is taken from behind the hotel and features a gigantic 11th July bonfire (once again separated from the hotel by railings). Thus, familiar and backward-looking markers of the Troubles lay siege to the indices of consumer-led progress. As Aaron Kelly has noted, with such photographs Duncan 'achieves a collision between a fragmented past and a fractious future'; the images 'do not simply document the ruins of the past but also form an inventory of the present and its future trajectory, which does not live up to its own apparent promise'.²¹ Divisions between communities are not erased here; rather, they are intensified.

What is remarkable is the consistency of approach by contemporary photographic projects focused on Belfast. Duncan's *Trees from Germany* echoes an earlier exhibition by John Davies, *Metropoli* (2000), which sought 'to document the multi-layered character of metropolitan areas and to produce a coherent series of images which [would] reflect the positive achievements and realities within our continually changing urban space'.²² His black and white photographs of Belfast depict a city in transition with modern and Victorian designs uneasily co-existing within the frame. The elevated vantage-point from which the images are taken enables the photographer to capture the icons of global capitalism in the same frame as the crowded terraced houses of the Donegall Pass. Davies here combines a synchronic gaze, that which 'registers the varieties and patterns of present usage', with a diachronic gaze that 'opens up the urban palimpsest' and 'goes back through layers and accretions, perceiving history, influence, development, change'.²³ In one key image, that of an almost completed apartment block covered by scaffolding and tarpaulin, Davies, as Colin Graham astutely argues, 'catches the moments in which a city's nostalgia is made, when the tarpaulin is pulled back like the curtain on an unveiled plaque, and in the midst of the achievement we feel that twinge of regret for its completion, because the future of a city space revealed is the beginning of a life-in-death for many pasts'.²⁴ That past is never fully erased in Davies' photographic texts, nor is it in Lai-Olaf Hesse's *Topography of the Titanic* (2007), a project which resonates with the work of both Davies and Duncan.

Hesse's interior and exterior shots of vacant and eerily depopulated spaces centre on the site of the projected Titanic Quarter development. Juxtaposed with contemporary images of memorial statues, abandoned docks, disused workshops and fenced-off areas are archival

²⁰ See John Duncan, *Trees from Germany* ((Belfast: Belfast Exposed Photography, 2003).

²¹ Aaron Kelly, 'Spaces of Politics', *Where Are the People?: Contemporary Photographs of Belfast, 2002-2010*, ed. Karen Downey (Belfast: Belfast Exposed Photography, 2010), 96.

²² John Davies, *Metropoli Project*, <http://www.johndavies.uk.com/metropoli.htm>. Accessed 20 July 2016.

²³ For the distinction between the two types of gaze, see Peter Barry, *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 224-26.

²⁴ Graham, 'Metropoli', *Source Magazine* 26 (2001): 10.

photographs from 1907-1912 documenting the building and first sailing of the Olympic-class passenger liner, R.M.S. Titanic. Past, present and projected-future are conjoined, yet sit uneasily together. One image, taken at a motorway underpass off Corporation Street, presents two differently coloured pieces of graffiti: U.D.A. (the acronym for the Ulster Defence Association) is sprayed in red, whilst over it we have in black a door, window and the phrases 'What was here before? Who was here before?'²⁵ While the niggling, insistent questions bespeak a loss and erasure, they act as a call for remembrance of a past which is in danger of being by-passed. As Aaron Kelly has noted, the photograph suggests 'that some people pay the price for the progress of others, that progress is not necessarily so progressive after all or a thing that is universally enjoyed'.²⁶ The acronym 'U.D.A.', although faded, still persists in the background: as a graffito, it functions as a marker 'not only in the material, territorial sense but also of political possession and assertion'.²⁷ The past, then, has not been successfully archived here.

One of the crucial thematic foci of art centred on post-Agreement Belfast, particularly by those artists sponsored by Belfast Exposed Photography, is that of the archive itself. In *Archive_Belfast* (2004), Claudio Hils' photographs of 'inaccessible video recordings, files and books stowed away on shelves, in locked and closed cabinets'²⁸ self-reflexively engage with how memories are recorded and kept for posterity. In one image, taken at Schomberg House, the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, Hils presents the viewer with competing forms of data storage, each differently encoding the past: three framed images — a photograph and a colour portrait of people in Orange Order regalia, an illustration of King Billy — hang over two computer terminals and two colourfully decorated lambeg drums, replete with commemorative inscriptions. Juxtaposed to this photograph is a similarly composed image taken at the headquarters of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, Costello House: hanging over the computer terminals and ceremonial pikes are plaques commemorating the St Patrick's Day parades in San Francisco. In both images there is a tension between traditional and modern methods of recording and displaying historical memory; no indication is provided as to which takes precedence or which is more effective, and no interpretative framework is provided to guide the viewer as to what they are actually witnessing. The computers in both are turned off, thus suggesting that the archives of these institutions are closed off to outsiders. Similarly, while the viewer can see rows of video cassettes in a photograph taken at Knocknagoney Police station, only someone privy to the classification codes will know what each contains when glancing at their individual covers. In many of the photographs we see storerooms full of photographs, uniforms and iconic memorabilia, yet the organisational principle in each is uncertain: which items have evidential status and which constitute unimportant clutter is uncertain. The lack of a coherent archival structure could connote historiographical uncertainty whereby a society in transition has yet to determine the shape of public memory; however, while an archive is meant to be a repository in which important public documents and records are kept, Hils' photographs depict spaces in which items are disregarded, suffer wilful neglect and are shielded from the public gaze. Thus, rather than

²⁵ See Kai-Olaf Hesse, *Topography of the Titanic* (Belfast: Belfast Exposed Photography, 2007), 35.

²⁶ Aaron Kelly, 'Spaces of Politics', 100.

²⁷ Declan McGonagle, 'Troubled Land', *Troubled Land: The Social Landscape of Northern Ireland* (London: Grey Editions), 1987, n.p.

²⁸ Anna M. Eifert-Körnig, 'Of Memory Spaces: Photographic Thoughts on the Repressive Effect of Media', *Archive_Belfast* (Belfast: Belfast Exposed Photography, 2004), 104.

mere uncertainty about the historical record, what the exhibition presents is a form of archival amnesia, or the 'erosion of traces' against which Ricoeur had warned. The consequence of such amnesia is psychic dislocation, or trauma.

The forceful return of an uncontainable, recalcitrant past, resulting from attempted repression or denial, is writ large in contemporary fiction focused on Northern Ireland. In her recently published monograph on Scottish and Irish fiction, Stefanie Lehner analyses Glenn Patterson's *That Which Was* (2004) and Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras* (2004) in a post-ceasefire context and argues persuasively that 'both novels emphasise the importance of accounting for this burdensome past which the official *arkhe*-taintment attempts to lighten'.²⁹ Such an approach could equally be applied to Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* (1996), with its key motifs of enclosure and haunting. In that novel, the characters attempt to seal off and re-write the past. As such, it is, as Elmer Kennedy-Andrews contends, 'a story of the suppressions, omissions, withholdings and evasions that are part of the narrative process'.³⁰ Throughout, the reader witnesses the wilful erasure of uncomfortable familial and communal truths. Indeed, in the concluding chapter the narrator surmises that perhaps the only way 'they [...] could go on was by forgetting, forgetting'.³¹ Yet Deane's text suggests that the consequence of such enforced amnesia is paralysis and not progress: suppressing her story, the narrator's mother suffers from aphonia. Archive fever is here both an activity and an ailment with disabling symptoms. She moves, we are told, 'as though there were pounds of pressure bearing down on her; and when she sat, it was as though the pressure reversed itself and began to build up inside her and feint at her mouth or her hands'.³² That 'pressure' must find a release. That which is repressed returns in the form of a spectre: 'I would come in to find her at the turn of the stairs, looking out the lobby window, still haunted, but now with a real ghost crouched in the air around her'.³³ In Deane's text, forgetting can only result in a hiatus: the ghost is neither of this world nor the next; the lobby window is located between the interior and exterior. Indeed, the mother's position is doubly liminal, caught as she is at 'the turn of the stairs.'

The return of the past in spectral form is also central to the plot of Stuart Neville's 2009 novel, *The Twelve*. Set during the Peace Process, it focuses on Gerry Fagan, an ex-prisoner and paramilitary haunted by the ghosts of those whom he has killed. When focalised through Fagan, the narrative reflects with some bitterness on the politicians' rewriting of the past: 'The politicians on the outside had bartered for his freedom, along with hundreds more men and women. They called people like him political prisoners. Not murders or thieves, not extortionists or blackmailers. Not criminals of any kind, just victims of circumstance'.³⁴ In the new political climate, Fagan is viewed as a casualty of war and thus absolved of all responsibility for what were once deemed 'crimes'. Like Duncan's *Trees from Germany*, Neville's text suggests that capital investment, the development of the city's infrastructure and historical amnesia must go hand in hand for progress to occur: 'The lights of the Odyssey

²⁹ Stefanie Lehner, *Subaltern Ethics in Contemporary Scottish and Irish Fiction: Tracing Counter-Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), 114.

³⁰ Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, *De-constructing the North: Fiction and the Northern Ireland Troubles since 1969* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 217.

³¹ Seamus Deane, *Reading in the Dark* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996), 228.

³² Deane 139.

³³ Deane 139.

³⁴ Stuart Neville, *The Twelve* (London: Harvill Secker, 2009), 7.

complex shimmered across the water. The nightclubs inside it would be thronging with the young and the affluent; young enough to have no memory of men like Fagan, affluent enough not to care'.³⁵ For Fagan, however, memory persists and is seen as a 'curse'.³⁶ To stave off psychic collapse he is conjoined by the ghosts to take vengeance on those who 'engineered' their deaths. While the plot may be crude, nevertheless the central spectral motif works to suggest that the machinations of the new political regime are self-defeating if they simply erase the traces of the past: as the narrator states, 'The old ways were dead and gone, but still their ghosts might come to haunt the political process'.³⁷

Memory in both Deane and Neville's texts is of a particular kind, and is qualitatively different to that explored in Davies, Hesse, and Duncan. Rather than simply looking at historical memory as such, the novels focus on trauma which, as Cathy Caruth states, 'describes an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena'.³⁸ Trauma is characterised either by the compulsion to repeat the initial experience either in order to achieve a belated mastery or, as Otto Fenichel states, due to 'the tendency of the repressed to find an outlet'.³⁹ The power of the traumatic experience lies not simply in the fact that it is 'repeated after its forgetting' but, as Caruth argues, 'that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all'.⁴⁰ A key text which demonstrates this in a Northern Irish context is Willie Doherty's 2007 exhibition *Ghost Story* which comprises a fifteen minute colour video installation and an accompanying soundtrack, both of which are continuously played on a loop. Structurally, the piece is unending and lacks closure. The voiceover by the actor Stephen Rea presents a narrative that is said to 'evoke memories of the dead and a sense of loss and foreboding'. More specifically, the speaker's first memory returns to the events of 30 January 1972 in Derry and to what he witnessed on Bloody Sunday:

I found myself walking along a deserted path. Through the trees on one side I could faintly make out a river in the distance. On the other side I could faintly hear the rumble of far away traffic. The scene was unfamiliar to me. I looked over my shoulder and saw that the trees behind me were filled with shadow-like figures. Looks of terror and bewilderment filled their eyes, and they silently screamed, as if already aware of their fate. The scene reminded me of the faces in a running crowd that I had once seen on a bright but cold January afternoon.⁴¹

Doherty's previous work on Bloody Sunday, in works such as *30 January 1972* and *How It Was*, focused primarily on the transmission and dissemination of memory and emphasised 'how mediated images become the dominant images and replace or embellish other forms of forgetting'.⁴² Doherty's interest in *Ghost Story* lies elsewhere:

³⁵ Neville 14.

³⁶ Neville 16.

³⁷ Neville 213.

³⁸ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 11.

³⁹ Otto Fenichel, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* (London 1946), 542.

⁴⁰ Caruth 17.

⁴¹ Willie Doherty, *Ghost Story* in *Buried*, ed. Fiona Bradley (Edinburgh: Fruitmarket Gallery, 2009), n.p.

⁴² Willie Doherty, 'Ylimaz Dzierwior in Conversation with Willie Doherty', *Willie Doherty: Anthology of Time-Based Works* (Ostfildern, Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2007), 40.

The subtext of the work I'm showing here, *Ghost Story*, addresses the deeper-seated problems of how we deal with the memory and loss and tragedy of the past 30 years — or some people might say of the past 300 years — of the conflict in Ireland. That is what the political process is not dealing with, but there is an opportunity of being here in the context of representing Northern Ireland to flag up these issues.⁴³

The opening statements of *Ghost Story* are characterised by passive constructions, indicative of the subject's lack of both volition and agency. His inability to engage with his memories results in incomprehension. The lexis used places us in the realm of representational discourse: 'scene', twice mentioned, marks the experience as unreal and this is symptomatic of his dissociative behaviour. He remains a witness rather than an active participant in the experience being related. Lacking corporeality the disembodied 'shadow-like presences' which crowd the speaker's memory all suggest the spectral return of the repressed. The silent scream is an emblem of the subject's own current predicament since the initial event 'is such that beyond it there remains only a speech in pieces, splinters and fragments of speech'.⁴⁴ With trauma, there is an inherent tension between the desire to recount and master one's experience and the need to repress the memory. As Gabriele Schwab notes, '[w]riting from within the core of trauma is a constant struggle between the colonizing power of words and the revolt of what is being rejected, silenced. [...] Trauma as a mode of being halts the flow of time, fractures the self, and punctures memory and language'.⁴⁵ As spectators, we follow the subject as he retraces his footsteps along the paths and streets that, as he relates, he had thought he had forgotten. Yet all that remains are shadows, footprints, tracks and traces of the crowd. At one point the narrator finds that his 'train of thought' is interrupted by what he calls 'a further incursion of unreality:

My eyes deceived me as I thought I saw a human figure. No matter how quickly or slowly I walked the figure did not seem to get any closer. When I took my eye off the figure he disappeared. When I stared at the point where the path vanished the figure emerged once again from the trees or from the path itself. I could not tell.

This irruption of the uncanny once again marks the return of the repressed but the fact that he 'cannot tell' also suggests that the trauma marks the limits of both perception and narration. That Doherty gives *Ghost Story* a circular, looped structure, one that is endlessly replayed in the exhibition space, is important as it conveys the subject's experience of trauma. What we have here is trauma in the sense of 'a disease of time [which] permits the past to relive itself in the present, in the form of intrusive images and thoughts'.⁴⁶ Because trauma is a 'breach in the mind's experience of time',⁴⁷ the standard experience of time as a linear, chronological progression from past to present to future is disrupted. Traumatic events are timeless: for the victim, trauma appears to have 'no beginning, no ending, no before, no

⁴³ Doherty cited in Louise Jury, 'Whose Art Is It Anyway?' *The Scotsman*, 11 June 2007.

⁴⁴ Marc Nichanian, 'Catastrophic Mourning', *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 112.

⁴⁵ Gabriele Schwab, 'Writing against Memory and Forgetting', *Literature and Medicine* 25.1 (Spring, 2006): 95, 96.

⁴⁶ Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 7.

⁴⁷ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

during, and no after'.⁴⁸ Lacking closure, *Ghost Story* allows the viewer to get an understanding of what trauma may be like; as viewers we adopt the subject's point of view and are forced to bear witness to his pain. 'Pain,' as Veena Das argues, 'is not that inexpressible something that destroys communication, or marks one's exit from one's existence in language. Instead, it makes a claim [...] which may be given or denied. In either case, it is not a referential statement that is simply pointing to an inner object'.⁴⁹ If the viewer is receptive to the claim that *Ghost Story* makes on us, then we become more inclined to question the institutional imperatives to forget, move on or progress.

With the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement fast approaching, it is worth taking some time to analyse its merits and achievements, as well as the problems which have arisen since its signing. Some of the authors in this second issue of *R.I.S.E.* explore the insufficiencies of the consociational nature of the settlement, the (effective) depoliticisation of the state's role, and the imposition of a singular, inflexible 'roadmap' towards peace; they reveal and critique contradictions and silences in key areas of governmental policy. At the same time, the role and treatment of victims and survivors in post-conflict Northern Ireland is analysed, as well as the roles given to and taken by museums in addressing the legacy of conflict and contributing to reconciliation in Northern Irish society. Many of the authors look closely at cultural responses to the Agreement, particularly those which unearth lacunae in its underlying assumptions and projected policies. The areas covered in these essays — politics; history; gender studies; museum culture; literary and visual culture; policy making — are as diverse as the opinions and stances towards the Agreement's aims and efficacy, but they are united in offering reflections on how better to promote peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

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⁴⁸ Dori Laub, 'Bearing Witness, or, the Vicissitudes of Listening', *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature*, eds. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992), 69.

⁴⁹ Veena Das cited by Jill Bennett, *Empathetic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 49.

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